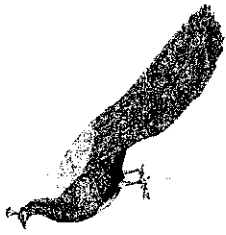


Morning Ritual



Those childhood mornings before Pettie would rise from bed, it was always the same.

At first it would be that single strip of light easing its way between the shade and Mama's lace curtains, and it would always be the same spot--the bottom right-hand edge next to the guardian angel who, Pettie's mama said, watched over Pettie when her mama couldn't. Or maybe it would be the sounds, the constant gentle rumbings--soothing sounds--like a giant tabby cat's purr or the sound of the sun warming up for the day or maybe just the peacocks, the bishop's peacocks calling down the lane, Argus and his one hundred eyes, Pettie would think. Something else to watch over her as she slept, Pettie's daddy would always say.

Pettie could never really be sure what would actually call her from sleep those mornings just as she could never be sure the nights before which of her favorite dreams she could look forward to that night.

Maybe it would be the one where she climbed the great oak in Mrs. Fagin's backyard--oh, how many steps there were--hand-hewn steps fastened painlessly to the sprawling tree so that neighborhood kids could rise to its height, position themselves on a makeshift platform, attach their eager little hands and feet to their beloved trolley and sail down the tree, down the hill, down the other side of the world, it seemed,

and land smack-dab in Mr. Fagin's squash or tomato plants--anywhere they could to relish the thrill of it all.

Or perhaps the dream would be the one where Pettie played hide-and-seek with her daddy. He'd call her name over and over. "Where's my little Pettie?" he'd sing and she would try to hold her breath, try not to give herself away, but it was always her giggles that did her in. Her daddy would come running, scoop her up from this nook or that cranny and off they'd go. Sometimes Pettie and her daddy would climb fallen trees, hundred-year-old pines making way for progress, and in her dreams the trees would grow bigger and bigger still, rising like mountains in the vacant lot next to their house. And from their very tiptops she could see all the way to China, Pettie always said. And in her dreams Pettie and her daddy would play longer and run faster and laugh and laugh and their adventure would never seem to end.

But whichever the dream on any particular night, she would ease from it gradually like the light finding its way up and over the angel, cutting a bold, confident path almost to Pettie's bed. On those childhood days one minute Pettie would be up in that old oak or at the top of her fallen pines and the next, she'd hear them--the peacocks--the bishop's peacocks down the lane. And before she would even turn over, before she would even stretch, her nighttime body still tucked lovingly under layers of the past--Grandma Rollo's cross-stitched sheets, Aunt Frieda's quilt and at her feet Gertrude's throw knitted in just three months for Eileen's wedding--before Pettie really woke to the world, she would hear her mama.

From Pettie's antique four-poster bed-acquired from Pettie's Grandma Wilson-she'd hear her mama in the kitchen, sizzling bacon, plunking down silverware and plates and cups to be filled with thick, steaming, chicory coffee like her daddy liked. But most especially Pettie would hear her. Her mama. The rise and pitch of her voice. Pettie couldn't hear the words, she could never hear the actual words, but that didn't matter. It wasn't what she was saying that Pettie needed to hear. She just needed to know that her mama was there, doing what she always did, drawing out the aunts and uncles and Cousin Kallie. Kallie, like the brother and sister Pettie never had, all rolled into one hundred stringy pounds.

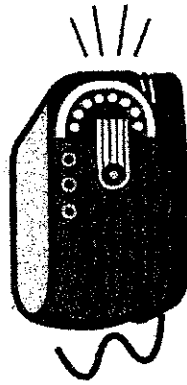
Pettie would hear Kallie giggle at something one relative or another said or at a tomboy tale of her own, one Kallie would spin out of nowhere those early mornings while Pettie lay in bed.

And some mornings Pettie would stop to think about it all-Kallie practicing to perfect a story, like Aunt Frieda and Grandma Rollo and Gertrude must have practiced sewing and stitching and knitting. All those people busy weaving their lives with hers. And sometimes she would think she would hear Aunt Frieda in the kitchen starting up her pitch: "How're your potatoes comin' out, old man? ... They're not comin' out at all-you have to dig 'em out." Starting her famous-at least in their neck of the woods-knuckle rap: old lady sharp knuckles rapped on wood, like a vaudeville ending to a joke, something done in a minstrel show maybe, something done as a practiced finale to a practiced bit.

But it would be only Kallie that Pettie would hear, Kallie sounding like Frieda, but that was something still.

And Pettie would hear her daddy's bedside radio, a show-tune sort of station, a dash of Music Man cadence to most of the songs and a pinch of her daddy himself every once in a while. She'd hear his electric razor buzz up and over bone and flesh, around nose, then down. Four times down. Always four swipes for top of the lip. Then shaver would pause, humming like a bee midflight, before it would take its last two passes--one sideburn, then the other, and then only the music.

Pettie would hear it all-the peacocks, Mama, Kallie, Daddy, the house. The whir of it all. She would hear them as they called out to her, wrapping her in their world, those mornings long ago.



NAME: _____ CLASS: _____ DATE: _____

Analysis of "Morning Ritual"



1. The author paints a picture of childhood mornings primarily using **SENSORY IMAGES** based on the sense of **SOUND**. Quote **FIVE PASSAGES** that represent five different sounds Pettie hears.

A. _____

B. _____

C. _____

D. _____

E. _____

2. Authors use **SPECIFIC DETAILS FOR EFFECT** rather than general, less vivid word choices so that readers can truly visualize a scene. Quote **THREE EFFECTIVE SPECIFIC DETAILS** from the piece.

A. _____

B. _____

C. _____

3. **FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE** is another way for authors to present their images to readers. Often authors show their readers what something **IS** and also what it is **LIKE**. The literal and figurative details combined add up to a more vivid, more interesting picture.

Quote **TWO EXAMPLES** of each of the following **FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE DEVICES**:

A. SIMILE: (Be sure to quote **BOTH** elements being compared.)

_____ & _____

B. METAPHOR: (Remember that **EXPLICIT** metaphors use a "**BE**" **VERB** and **IMPLICIT** do not.)

_____ & _____

C. PERSONIFICATION:

_____ & _____

D. HYPERROLE:

_____ & _____

4. QUOTE examples of the following and **EXPLAIN** their effect.

A. FULL-CIRCLE ENDING

① QUOTE: _____

② EXPLANATION: _____

B. ALLITERATION

① QUOTE: _____

② EXPLANATION: _____

C. DIALECT

① QUOTE: _____

② EXPLANATION: _____

5. List **FIVE ASPECTS** of Pettie's **RITUAL** (e. g., "At first it would be that single strip of light. . .").

A. _____

B. _____

C. _____

D. _____

E. _____

6. A. Quote two references the author uses to indicate a **LINK** between Pettie and her **PAST**.

① _____

② _____

B. How do these references help establish the **THEME** of the piece?

7. Explain from what **POINT OF VIEW** the story is written and give **EVIDENCE** to support your choice.

8. Writers are concerned not only about **WHAT** their works say but about **HOW** they are written as well. An author's **SENTENCE STRUCTURE** helps create his or her **VOICE**. Quote passages that serve as examples of the following stylistic structures:

A. **FRAGMENT FOR EFFECT**: _____

B. **MAGIC THREE**: _____

C. **PARTICIPIAL PHRASE**: _____

D. **REPETITION FOR EFFECT**: _____