Ceremony

INTRODUCTION

BRIEF BIOGRAPHY OF LESLIE MARMON SILKO

Leslie Marmon Silko is often known as the first Native American woman author published in the United States. She is of Laguna, Mexican, and Anglo-American heritage, and in her work often explores multicultural themes exploring the intersection and tensions inherent in her background. Silko grew up on the Laguna Pueblo Reservation in New Mexico, then attended the University of New Mexico. She considered becoming a lawyer and briefly attended law school, but soon dropped out to pursue a literary career. She burst onto the writing scene with her first, widely acclaimed short story, "The Man to Send Rain Clouds," and followed by publishing more stories, and poems as well as her *Ceremony* in 1977. Silko was awarded the MacArthur Grant in 1981 as well as the Native Writers' Circle of Americas Lifetime Achievement Award in 1994. Silko has since won numerous awards for her novels, short stories, and poetry, and is considered one of the most important living Native American writers. She now lives in Tucson, Arizona.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

In the aftermath of World War II, many veterans returned with no resources to address the mental health issues caused by the intense situations and trauma they faced in the war. Like Tayo, many struggled to go back to their previous daily lives. Some turned to alcohol as a comfort as Harley does, while others committed suicide, unable to cope with the changed worldview. Though after the war the United States was now cemented as a world superpower, the methods used to win the war wreaked havoc on many veterans' psyches. In a world that had now seen the destruction that an atomic bomb could cause, hope for peace could appear futile. The country as a whole was also laboring to heal from wartime policies. Japanese American citizens had been forced into internment camps during World War II, ostensibly to limit the threat of Japanese-American spies on American soil while the United States fought Japan. Yet these camps served to do nothing other than discriminate against Japanese-American citizens, and in many cases hid corrupt policies designed to take Japanese American possessions and properties and reallocate them to Anglo-American citizens. Native American Reservations also suffered from corrupt practices in the post-WWII era. Some of the most pressing problems facing Native American Reservations were addictions to drugs and alcohol, the loss of history that resulted from education programs that were designed to discredit Native American culture, a widening gap between generations, and continued discrimination by the United States Government – issues that are still in play today. In the 1950s especially, reservations were under attack from the removal and termination policies designed to break up Native American Reservations, relocate residents to urban cities, and retrain Native Americans to give up their cultural identities and become "modern" American citizens. Issues such as these threw the Southwestern regions of the United States into ever-greater cultural clashes as the Native American, Mexican, Anglo-American and Asian-American populations all strived to make a new and better life for themselves.

RELATED LITERARY WORKS

Ceremony was one of the first works of what has come to be called by some critics the Native American Renaissance, inspiring other classics of Native American Literature, including authors and work such as Louise Erdrich's *Tracks*, Sherman Alexie's *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian* and *Reservation Blues*, and the works of N. Scott Momaday, including *The Way to Rainy Mountain*. The themes of veterans returning home and modern man's alienation from the natural world also run through Simon Ortiz' *From Sand Creek*, a work of prose poetry that blends Native American legends with a fictional narrative much like Silko's work.

KEY FACTS

- **Full Title:** Ceremony
- **When Written:** 1973-1975
- **Where Written:** Ketchikan, Alaska
- **When Published:** 1977
- **Literary Period:** Modern
- **Genre:** Fiction, Poetry, Native American Literature
- **Setting:** American Southwest, New Mexico
- **Climax:** Tayo chooses not to kill Emo, though Emo is sadistically killing Harley. Tayo therefore avoids adding more evil to the world and can leave to restore the ecosystem and return his uncle's cows to their rightful lands.
- **Antagonist:** Witchery, intolerance, human greed
- **Point of View:** 3rd person omniscient.

EXTRA CREDIT

Unexpected hero. Harley was originally supposed to be the main character of the novel, as Silko set out to write comedic short stories about Harley's family futilely trying to keep Harley away from alcohol. Yet Tayo soon took over the narrative, and Silko realized she had to write a much darker novel exploring

the emotionally weighty experiences of Tayo's return from the war.

The Wright stuff. The poem-stories in *Ceremony* are influenced by both the Laguna Pueblo oral traditions and the work of the poet James Wright. Wright and Silko met at a writer's conference in 1974 and began a fruitful correspondence, which benefited both artist's works. One of the poem-stories in particular, in which Silko describes the witchery that brought white men to Earth, was expanded in Silko's collection *Storyteller*.

PLOT SUMMARY

The novel opens by describing Ts'its'tsi'nako, the Thought-Woman, who is telling this entire story. Stories are the only way to fight off illness and death and stand up to evil. The story begins with sunrise.

Tayo, a Pueblo man, wakes up in his spare ranch house, dreaming deliriously of different scenes from his life. One memory in particular bothers Tayo – he was unable to execute a Japanese soldier in the Philippines during World War II because he saw his Uncle Josiah in the Japanese uniform. The ranch where Tayo lives in New Mexico, unlike the wet Philippines, is suffering from a drought that came because, Tayo believes, he prayed for the rain to stop while he was in the jungle during the war. Tayo tells a story about Corn Woman scolding her sister, Reed Woman, who then takes the rain away in her anger. Tayo thinks back to his return from the Veteran's Hospital in Los Angeles where he felt like a white spirit and couldn't keep any food down.

Tayo's friend Harley, a fellow war vet, comes riding on a burro and convinces Tayo to ride with him to the nearest bar, even though Tayo doesn't like to drink. As they ride the burro, Tayo thinks about his cousin Rocky, who joined the army with Tayo but died overseas. Thinking of Rocky makes Tayo fall off the donkey and throw up.

The story moves back to the time just after Tayo return home from the Veteran's Hospital. Auntie takes care of Tayo instead of sending him back to the Veteran's Hospital, but Tayo knows that Auntie resents him as much as ever for his mixed blood. Grandmother wants to call a medicine man to cure Tayo's illness, but Auntie thinks that a medicine man won't be able to help Tayo because Tayo is not full-blood Pueblo. Grandmother stops Auntie complaining about Little Sister (Tayo's mother) sleeping with white men, and calls the medicine man Ku'oosh anyway. Ku'oosh comes to Tayo's sickbed, speaking only the native Laguna language, and tells Tayo that the world is fragile. Tayo realizes that he must do something to restore the damage the war has done to the world. When Ku'oosh leaves, Tayo is finally able to keep a meal in his stomach. Tayo gradually gets better and starts to help Auntie's husband, Robert, with the ranch work.

Tayo goes out drinking one night with some other war veterans to numb his pain. The other veterans, Emo, Harley, and Leroy, tell stories about the white women that they had sex with while on leave during war time. Tayo, agitated by these stories, begins to rant about the loss of respect that Native Americans face once more but the other men only want to relive their glory days. Tayo flashes back to his capture by Japanese soldiers. He carried Rocky, even though Rocky was already dead, but the Japanese soldiers forced him to leave Rocky's body behind and took Tayo to a prison camp.

The novel returns to Tayo's present, as Harley picks him up from the ditch where Tayo ended up after the night drinking. Tayo notices how dusty the land is due to the drought, and remembers Uncle Josiah telling him how droughts happen when people forget their duty to the land they come from. The novel switches to a story about a town that became so obsessed with doing magic that they stopped caring for their mother corn altar. The Corn Mother, angered by their neglect, takes all rainclouds away from the town.

Returning to Tayo and Harley, the two men finally make it to the bar. While Tayo drinks a beer, he remembers a time when he went deer hunting with Rocky. Tayo paid respect to the deer for its death, but Rocky pays no attention to these old rituals. Rocky was a star student and football player at their boarding school in Albuquerque, and believed that he had to give up the old ways to be a success. Harley breaks into Tayo's thoughts, reminding Tayo of the last time they went to a bar and Tayo almost killed Emo.

Tayo remembers that night night. Emo begins raving about how they all deserve to take white women as payment for everything that white people have stolen from Native Americans. Then Emo insults Tayo for being half white. Emo takes out a bag of teeth that he says came from Japanese prisoners of war. Tayo, drunk and enraged, breaks a beer bottle on the table and stabs Emo in the **stomach**.

The novel flashes back to Tayo and Rocky enlisting in the army. As they sign up together, Rocky calls Tayo brother for the first time. As children, Auntie made sure that Tayo and Rocky were not close friends, constantly reminding Tayo that his white blood keeps him from being part of the family. Tayo thinks that Auntie gave up on helping Little Sister, Tayo's mother, because Auntie's Christian morals separate her from the native community. In the Corn Woman story, Hummingbird tells the people about a ceremony that will help them bring the rain back. The ceremony creates a fly. This fly goes with Hummingbird to the fourth world to talk to the Corn Mother.

Auntie is angry that Tayo wants to join the army with Rocky instead of staying to help Josiah care for the ranch. Josiah has recently bought new **cattle**, a special hybrid breed that he says

will be able to survive a drought. Josiah goes to Cubero to visit the woman who helped him buy the cows, a Mexican dancer named Night Swan. Josiah fell in love with Night Swan and visited her often before the cattle took over his free time. Auntie believes a drought will come as punishment for Josiah sleeping with a Mexican. Tayo tries to do all the old rituals meant to bring back rain, still believing in the old stories. The next day, storm clouds gather and Josiah sends Tayo to Night Swan to tell her that Josiah won't be able to visit because of the rain. Night Swan invites Tayo in, sleeps with him, and tells Tayo that she has been watching him because of his **green eyes**.

In Corn Woman's story, Corn Mother tells Hummingbird and Fly to get Old Buzzard to purify the town so that she can send rain again. Buzzard tells Fly and Hummingbird to get tobacco to give him as an offering. Tayo thinks back to when he visited Gallup with Robert, where homeless people from every ethnicity live under the bridges. Tayo himself lived under a bridge with his mother for the first four years of his life, watching the other hopeless children and avoiding his mother when she brought men back to their hut. When Rocky and Tayo enlisted, they threw coins off the bridge in Gallup. Rocky wished for a safe return, but Tayo didn't wish at all. Standing on the bridge with Robert after coming back from the war, Tayo finally wishes for a safe return.

Seeing that Ku'oosh's rituals only partially helped Tayo, Grandmother and Auntie send Tayo to Betonie, a medicine man in Gallup. Betonie lives in a hogan near the poorest part of the city, and has green eyes like Tayo. Betonie tells Tayo that his illness will only be healed when he does his part to help heal the world, a new ceremony that will help put right the wrongs that white men do to the land. Betonie tells a story about a boy who lived with bears and had to be carefully called back to his life with humans. Betonie leads Tayo through a ceremony that will bring him back to life, a ceremony that includes Mexican and white power as well as Native traditions.

In the Corn Mother story, Fly and Hummingbird go back to Corn Mother to ask where to get tobacco. She sends them to caterpillar. In Tayo's present, Betonie sends Tayo on a journey to find his uncle's cattle and heal the drought. Tayo heads off on foot, but Harley and Leroy soon see him and pick him up. A Native American woman named Helen Jean is with them and they all go to a bar. Helen Jean leaves the Native American men in favor of some Mexican men. Harley, Leroy, and Tayo get kicked out of the bar when Harley starts a fight. Tayo leaves Harley and Leroy behind to continue Betonie's quest on horseback.

As he searches for the cattle, Tayo meets a woman who invites him in to her house to rest on his journey. In the Corn Mother story, the caterpillar gives Hummingbird and Fly tobacco. Tayo sleeps with the woman that night, then has a dream about his uncle's cattle. The next morning, Tayo follows a barbed wire fence until he sees his uncle's cattle in the distance, then cuts a hole in the fence to herd the cows through later. He stops for the night and sees a mountain lion pass by, then puts yellow pollen in the mountain lion tracks.

The next morning, Tayo sets off at a fast gallop, but some white men catch up to him. Tayo falls off his horse and hits his head. The men hold him at gunpoint until they are distracted by mountain lion prints and leave Tayo in favor of hunting the mountain lion for its pelt. Tayo falls unconscious. When he wakes again, it is snowing. Tayo hears someone chanting a traditional Laguna hunting song – it is a hunter. The Hunter takes Tayo back to his house, which turns out to also be the house of the woman he slept with earlier. The man is her brother. And the woman has Uncle Josiah's cattle with her near the house.

That spring, Robert and Tayo go get the cattle from the woman's house. Tayo takes care of the cattle all spring on his uncle's ranch, noticing how much healthier and peaceful he feels. One day, the woman returns to visit Tayo and finally tells him her name: Ts'eh. Ts'eh asks Tayo to gather a specific plant for her if she isn't there to do it herself.

That fall, Ts'eh has to leave and Tayo returns to town to finish his healing ceremony with the other veterans. Harley and Leroy see him on the road and pick him up again. They have been drinking heavily and convince Tayo to drink too. Tayo blacks out in the truck, then wakes to find Harley gone. Tayo grabs a screwdriver and follows Harley and Leroy's footprints. Tayo goes into an abandoned uranium mine, thinking of **the atomic bomb** that caused so much destruction. While he is inside the mine, he sees Emo and some other veterans drag Harley into the mine and start to torture him for letting Tayo get away from the truck. Tayo is sick at Emo's evil actions, and wants to use the screwdriver to murder Emo. Yet Tayo is able to get control of the witchery's influence on him and choose not to add more evil to the world.

Tayo leaves the mine and gathers the last plant for Ts'eh, then begins to travel back to his Aunt's house. The Corn Mother story ends as Hummingbird and Fly give Old Buzzard tobacco to purify the town. The storm clouds return and Corn Mother warns the people not to get distracted with magic anymore. Tayo tells Ku'oosh and the other men his whole story and Ku'oosh says that Ts'eh is the Reed Woman who will bring back the rain. Harley and Leroy are found dead and Emo later escapes to California. Grandmother wonders at the end of this story, thinking that she has heard the story before with different names. The novel ends with a sunrise.

CHARACTERS

MAJOR CHARACTERS

Tayo – A Laguna Pueblo man with a white father, Tayo returns to the Laguna reservation after World War II sick in mind and

body after the trauma of war. Tayo grew up homeless with his mother, Little Sister, who eventually left him with her sister, Auntie. Auntie then raised Tayo out of a sense of duty, but resents Tayo for his mixed blood and **green eyes**. As a child, Tayo believed wholeheartedly in the traditional Native American stories and ceremonies, unlike his cousin Rocky (Auntie's son). After Rocky's death during the war, Tayo is wracked with guilt and doubt, and no longer believes so strongly in the sanctity of the old ways. Tayo's pessimism has merit, as even the Laguna medicine man Ku'oosh admits that in the modern world the old ceremonies no longer work as they once did. Yet Tayo continues to search for healing, and after he meets the Navajo medicine man Betonie he works to create a new ceremony that will work – this ceremony involves Tayo reconnecting with his past and accepting his "hybrid" ancestry by reclaiming his dead uncle Josiah's lost **cattle**, as well as reconnecting with the native spirit world by falling in love with Ts'eh, who seems likely to be the human form of the Laguna goddess Reed Woman. Tayo comes to understand the necessity of cultural cross-over in order to build a stronger, more sustainable future, as well as the need to protect the land from human greed. The novel suggests that Tayo's mixed blood is an asset to the future, allowing Tayo to better adapt to the changing, modern world and a future of increased cultural diversity. And in refusing a final deadly face-off with the murderous Emo, Tayo asserts his connection to the balance and respect of native philosophy, as opposed to what the novel portrays as the egotism and dominance-based ethic of white culture. In this way, Tayo himself stands as a kind of symbol of the choice that all humans have between adding to the destruction of the world and contributing to the salvation of the world.

Harley – Tayo's friend and a fellow war veteran. Harley is an alcoholic who tries to find the joke in every situation, which the novel portrays as an attempt to hide from the emptiness of his life. Harley loved being in the military because when in uniform he was respected by white Americans, and has trouble adjusting to the "normal" discrimination against Native Americans that he once again faces after the war is over. Harley continues to drink because the alcohol gives him a brief respite from the pain and anger of his life after the trauma of war, even though the drink itself is a self-destructive practice. Harley is murdered by Emo after Harley fails to betray Tayo to Emo.

Rocky – Tayo's cousin. Rocky is an A student and a star player on the high school football team. He believes that he must reject all the traditional native ways in order to be successful in the white world. Rocky convinces Tayo to enlist in the military during World War II, but dies at war in the Philippines. The novel implies through his death that, for Native Americans, abandoning the old traditional ways entirely is a dead end that will lead ultimately to obliteration.

Emo – Another Laguna war veteran who believes in the necessity of racial purity among Native people in order to escape oppression by white people. Emo hates all white people for the things they have stolen from Native Americans, planning to seek vengeance on white people by "stealing" white women. Though the novel affirms that white culture has negatively affected Native Americans, it does not condone Emo's ruthless need for revenge. In fact, the novel portrays Emo's bloodthirsty desires as the result of manipulation by the "witchery" that wants to destroy the entire world, which the novel uses as a metaphor for what it sees as the greed, selfishness, and disrespect of life and nature endemic to white culture. Emo drinks constantly, hates Tayo for his mixed blood, and ends up murdering three other veterans. Emo is eventually banished from the Laguna tribe for his actions, but never faces physical consequences – a fact that the novel holds up as a testament to Tayo's commitment to refrain from the dominance-based ethos of white culture.

Josiah – Tayo's uncle and Auntie's older brother. He teaches Tayo about the traditional native ways, with lessons that help Tayo see how to respect the land and the spiritual elements that help humanity survive. While Josiah certainly respects the Native tradition, though, he does not insist on cultural purity. Josiah starts a relationship with the Mexican woman Night Swan and, with Night Swan's help, buys a herd of **hybrid cattle**, further strengthening Josiah's association with cultural boundary crossing. Josiah's death while Tayo is away at war accounts for some of Tayo's postwar guilt, as does the fact that Josiah's cattle have gone missing (they are stolen by a white rancher, Floyd Lee). Tayo's quest to find and reclaim the cattle is also a quest to reconnect to the history and legacy of hybrid strength that Josiah left behind.

Auntie (Thelma) – Tayo's aunt, and Rocky's mother. Thelma is a Christian Laguna woman, who stubbornly resents Tayo for his mixed blood and the gossip he invites about their family. Despite her bitterness towards these "sins," Auntie also takes care of Tayo out of a sense of duty to the traditional values of the tribe. Even so, her insistence on the importance of Native American "purity" is portrayed in the novel as contributing needlessly to a loveless family life for Tayo, and her strict Christianity is depicted as actually alienating her from the Pueblo community and as motivating her to act cruelly toward Tayo and Little Sister as opposed to trying to bring them back into balance with the tribe. Auntie's strictness, her stinginess with love, her way of thinking like an individual as opposed to seeking a balance with a tribe, are all portrayed in the novel as being both destructive and influenced by white culture.

Little Sister (Laura) – Tayo's mother and Auntie's younger sister. After internalizing the discrimination towards Native Americans, Laura becomes an alcoholic and shames the Laguna community by sleeping with men of many different ethnicities. She gets pregnant with a white man, resulting in Tayo. She raises Tayo for four miserable, homeless years, then runs off,

leaving Tayo with Auntie.

Grandmother – Tayo's grandmother. She believes firmly in the value of following old traditional ways, and teaches Tayo the old stories and rituals as a child. Unlike Auntie, Grandmother fully accepts Tayo as a member of the Laguna Pueblo community. The novel portrays Grandmother's loving care of Tayo as a far better response to an otherwise scandalous situation. Grandmother also is the one who first sets Tayo on his quest for healing by connecting him to Ku'oosh.

Ku'oosh – A Pueblo Laguna medicine man. He performs a healing ritual on Tayo, but admits to Tayo that the old rituals no longer work in the modern world as they used to. Indeed, the ceremony provides Tayo with only partial healing. But Ku'oosh also seems to recognize that there is the possibility of creating new ceremonies, even if he himself is not the one who can create them. He connects Tayo with Betonie for just this reason.

Betonie – A Navajo medicine man who is able to heal Tayo by combining traditional rituals with modern, multicultural elements. Betonie's green eyes and Mexican grandmother show his own connection to hybridity, which the novel makes clear gives him the strength and knowledge to help guide Tayo toward a future for Native peoples that builds on the old ways but adapts to the new conditions of "white culture" in America. Betonie is feared by the other Navajo of Gallup, but he cares far more for the ultimate well-being of the earth than for making other people comfortable. Betonie recognizes that Tayo also is hesitant when they first meet, but Tayo is eventually able to see Betonie's good heart through the old man's eccentricities. In the novel, Betonie acts as a patient agent for change that will benefit the southwest region rather than add to its destruction.

Night Swan – A Mexican woman who Uncle Josiah loves. Night Swan was a cantina dancer all over the southwest, and was even run out of town for her "improper" relationships with men of other races. Night Swan represents another figure of cultural hybridity in the novel, moving easily between towns and settling where she feels most comfortable rather than where she is most accepted. Night Swan teaches Tayo about the power of his **green eyes**, explaining that she too has been the object of scorn for her place in the changing cultural face of the region. Night Swan remains confident in her own power, and makes choices for herself rather than for social acceptance.

MINOR CHARACTERS

Ts'eh – A Montaño woman who helps Tayo on his quest to find his uncle's **cattle**, and falls in love with Tayo in the process. Ts'eh follows the traditional native ways and may or may not be the Reed Woman of Laguna legends.

Corn Mother (Nau'ts'ity'i) – A goddess of the Pueblo Native tradition, who helps the people care for the crops but can take away the rain if she is neglected.

Reed Woman – A goddess in the Pueblo Native tradition who has the power to take away the rain clouds. Ts'eh, a montaño Native American woman, may or may not be the human form of the Reed Woman.

Fly – A character in the mythic Laguna Pueblo tale of the Corn Mother. Fly is a messenger for the people who helps them get the rain clouds back.

Hummingbird – A character in the mythic Laguna Pueblo tale of the Corn Mother.

Old Buzzard – A character in the mythic Laguna Pueblo tale of the Corn Mother, who purifies the town in exchange for tobacco.

Caterpillar – A character in the mythic Laguna Pueblo tale of the Corn Mother, who gives Hummingbird and Fly tobacco.

Robert – Auntie's husband. A quiet, easy-going man who takes care of the ranch after Uncle Josiah dies.

Pinkie – Tayo's cousin, who suffers from alcoholism.

Leroy – Another Pueblo man from Laguna, a war veteran who is friends with Emo and Harley.

Helen Jean – A Native Laguna woman who sleeps with men in order to borrow money for rent. She tends to avoid Native American men because she assumes that they are poor.

Mike – An Apache ranch hand who helps Josiah with the **hybrid cattle** for a few weeks.

The Hunter – Ts'eh's brother, and another mythic character in Laguna stories. The Hunter is connected to the mountain lions, as he can be a mountain lion at times and is helped by mountain lions. Tayo initially believes that The Hunter is Ts'eh's husband.

Descheeny – Betonie's grandfather who married a Mexican woman.

Ulibarri – The Mexican rancher who sells Uncle Josiah the **hybrid cows**.

Shush – Betonie's helper, whose name means "bear."

Floyd Lee – A white logger who steals Josiah's cows.

THEMES

In LitCharts literature guides, each theme gets its own color-coded icon. These icons make it easy to track where the themes occur most prominently throughout the work. If you don't have a color printer, you can still use the icons to track themes in black and white.

THE INTERCONNECTED WORLD

A major theme in *Ceremony* tracks the ways that each aspect of the Earth interacts with and affects

everything else. For their own well-being, Tayo, and the other human characters have to learn how to be in harmony with the people around them, the environment, and the spiritual beings of the Earth. Tayo's well-being is shattered by his experiences and loss while fighting in World War II, where Tayo was unable to properly honor the spirits of his fellow warriors, is traumatized by the death of his cousin, Rocky, and loses touch with his connection to Laguna history and stories. Tayo's time at war also affects his life back home, as his prayer that the incessant rain in the Philippine jungle stop is portrayed by the novel as one of the reasons that the American Southwest is suffering a massive drought. When Tayo returns to the Laguna reservation, his problems are exacerbated by the conditions of poverty and discrimination, as well as the news that his uncle Josiah died because he had no help on the ranch with all the young men at war. Faced with these interrelated traumas and their resulting despair, Tayo and his fellow soldiers turn to alcohol. But while alcohol offers a form of comfort, it is a deadening comfort that cuts off the drinker from the world and offers numbness and self-destruction rather than healing.

Tayo's predicament at the beginning of *Ceremony* mirrors what the novel sees as a problem facing the entire world. Put bluntly, the novel portrays the world as out of balance, full of people who have lost connection with and respect for it. The lack of balance shows through in the extreme weather conditions, which are made even worse by farmers who do not care about the world or other people enough to use sustainable methods to preserve the resources that are left. Even more powerfully, the lack of balance in the world is symbolized by the creation of the **atomic bomb**, which threatens not only human existence, but all life. The novel never resolves this profound imbalance and loss of connection that it sees in the world. The atomic bomb does not magically disappear. However, Tayo does manage to reconnect with his family, the environment, and the spiritual world in the journey that culminates in saving his uncles' stolen **cattle** by honoring a mountain lion and meeting the possibly divine Laguna goddess of Ts'eh who helps end the drought. The healing culminates in Tayo's decision to maintain a spirit of life by refusing to kill Emo. In Tayo's successful quest for his own healing, in his reconnection to the physical and spiritual worlds and his own past, the novel offers a path forward and a kind of hope: that the rest of humanity, too, can shift its path and reconnect to the world, and in doing so heal themselves and the Earth.

NATIVE AMERICANS IN THE MODERN WORLD

Set after World War II in and around a Laguna Pueblo reservation in the American Southwest, *Ceremony* portrays the lives and situations of Native Americans in the modern world. This portrayal is largely bleak, and shows the ways that the modern world, and America in particular, destroy Native American lives and dishonor Native American spiritual practices. Silko focuses on a group of Pueblo men who have returned from fighting for America in WWII, only to come home to the same rampant racism, objectification, and commodification that Native Americans have suffered in North American since the arrival of Europeans. In response to that abuse, the veterans – and indeed many other Native American characters in the novel – turn to alcohol as a source of comfort in an otherwise empty future, though drinking alcohol is itself self-destructive. While drinking, the veterans show how they have internalized the idea that they are inferior by telling stories of their sexual conquests during the war, when in fact those conquests hinged on hiding their Native American identities so that white women will agree to sleep with them. Meanwhile, after the war, even other Native American women, like Helen Jean, refuse to sleep with Native American men because of the stereotype that they are all poor and lazy. By centering the men's feelings of inferiority on sex, the novel hints at a possible lack of future for native populations. If Native American people cannot procreate without hiding or giving up their heritage, it seems likely that future generations of Americans will not include Native Americans.

The sense in the novel that Native Americans are fundamentally displaced in the modern world is also emphasized by the supposed failure of their spiritual beliefs founded on respect for life, the natural world, and balance. The medicine man Ku'oosh attempts to heal Tayo's war trauma, but his traditional ceremonies only partially work, and he and Tayo both recognize that such ceremonies can no longer counterbalance the new machine warfare that focus on mass death and domination above all else – a type of war symbolized most potently by the **atomic bomb** that threatens all life on the planet.

Had the novel ended there, *Ceremony* would be a profoundly depressing book. However, the second half of *Ceremony* involves Tayo's efforts – guided by a different medicine man, Betonie, who has more knowledge of the white world – to create a *new* ceremony that *will* work. Tayo is ultimately successful in this quest, and the journey to his success can be read as a kind of recipe for what is necessary more generally for Native Americans to adapt to the modern world. To complete his quest, Tayo comes to terms with his broken family history in the context of the white world by finding his Uncle Josiah's long lost **cattle** that have been stolen by a white rancher. In the process, Tayo reconnects with nature and with his tribe's spiritual life in his encounter with Ts'eh, who seems likely to be the goddess Reed Woman.

Beyond rekindling the roots of Tayo's Native American identity, Tayo's quest builds to a final confrontation with the murderous Emo in an abandoned uranium mine, where Tayo must choose between the good of his traditional values and the evils of modern culture. In an action movie, Tayo would of course kill

Emo. But in *Ceremony*, he chooses not to. As the novel sees it, had Tayo killed Emo he would have given in to the forces of "witchery" and acted according to the white culture's principles of domination. This choice would have been proof that "it takes a white man to survive in this world and ... these Indians couldn't seem to make it." By not killing Emo, Tayo shows that the response to evil and death does not have to be more evil and more death. Instead, Tayo chooses to stand firm in his belief in the sanctity of life, creating a new space for Native traditions and spirituality in the modern world. And by setting this scene in an abandoned uranium mine – uranium being the element that powers the atomic bomb, and the atomic bomb itself symbolizing what Silko sees as the endless destruction that is at the heart of white-dominated modernity – Silko asserts that Native American culture and wisdom will not only endure, but that it is crucial for the survival of the world.

STORYTELLING

The practice of storytelling is an intensely important spiritual element in many Native American cultures, encompassing both entertainment, moral guidance on the proper way to live, and connection to a shared past. In *Ceremony*, Silko honors the power that storytelling carries in these communities, weaving elements of the traditional Native American art of oral storytelling into a modern narrative story that seeks to educate and instruct readers about ways to heal the world. Interspersed through the episodes of Tayo's return from war and quest to build a new ceremony are poem-stories that reveal lessons that apply to Tayo's search for healing, as well as giving the reader a small look into the stories that govern spiritual life, education, and daily actions in Native American communities. Silko marks out the ancient stories in broken lines that look more like poetry than the prose that makes up the majority of the novel. In the poem-stories, Silko does not limit herself to chronological storytelling, instead weaving the many stories together to highlight how each influences or comments on another. A story contains the ability to speak something in to being, whether literally as when the story of a Native American witch speaks white people into existence, or metaphorically, as when a community chooses to act according to the ideals set forth in a particular story. Because of the intense power of stories, each word in a story must be carefully chosen so that it brings healing to the world instead of harm. By deliberately and respectfully using the stories of many different Native American tribes, Silko commemorates the strength of these stories throughout native history and grounds *Ceremony* itself in that storytelling tradition.

Tayo, as the main character in his own story, gains both comfort and inspiration from the native stories of his past. Betonie, a Navajo medicine man, tells stories that show Tayo a path to reconnect with his past as well as the possibility of building a new future for himself. Another story about Fly and Hummingbird's attempts to end the drought mirrors Tayo's journey to heal his own spiritual drought, and words from the ancient poem-stories are spoken by some of the characters in prose in moments when Tayo needs strength most. Yet Silko also marks out some of Tayo's memories and experiences in *Ceremony* in the same poem stanza form she uses for the ancient poem-stories she includes. By doing this, she makes Tayo a part of the grand storytelling cosmology from which he draws strength. In *Ceremony*, then, Tayo functions as a kind of living story, carrying forward the traditional storytelling practice with the addition of modern situations and problems. Just as Tayo listened to the stories and learned how to live in a way that respects the Earth, respects other cultures, and strives for balance in all things, Tayo's story as written in *Ceremony* can now act as a guide for others who want to accomplish the same goals.

CEREMONY, TRADITION AND ADAPTATION

The title of *Ceremony* refers to the ceremonies and rituals that, according to the novel, all humans must perform in order to keep themselves and the world happy and healthy. These ceremonies can be formal or informal, but all, the novel asserts, are intensely important for both the well-being of individual people and the larger world that they live in. Ceremonies are performed through physical actions, such as a hunter giving salt to a deer he has killed. But these physical actions connect to a deeper metaphysical understanding, viewpoint, or way of being in the world. For instance, in giving salt to the fallen deer, the hunter enacts his respect for the deer's spirit, and more broadly acknowledges the earth and the taking of life. The ceremony physically connects the hunter to both the deer he hunts and the world in which he hunts. A ceremony doesn't just represent the connectedness of things; performing the ceremony maintains and strengthens that connection.

The novel, however, depicts a world in which these ceremonies are in crisis, whether from abandonment or loss of power. Some Native Americans, such as Rocky, believe they need to forget the old ceremonies in order to succeed in the white world. Rocky dismisses ceremonies like the deer ritual as superstition in the face of modern science, but in so doing loses connection to the earth and his own history. That Rocky dies in World War II while Tayo does not, the novel implies that without the ceremonies and the connection they provide, Rocky could not survive.

But the crisis also results from the fact that the ceremonies have lost their power: the traditional ceremony for warriors who have killed in battle that the medicine man Ku'oosh performs in order to try to heal Tayo doesn't work. The solution to this crisis arises through the character of Betonie, a different

medicine man who lives in the city of Gallup and is therefore more knowledgeable of the modern world. While some Native Americans in the novel believe that the ceremonies must stay exactly the same in order to retain their power, Betonie believes that ceremonies must change along with the world in order to be able to connect to that new world. And so Betonie sets Tayo out to find and build a *new* ceremony, one with the power to heal both Tayo and the world. The novel affirms Betonie's beliefs through Tayo's success. Only through the adaptation and evolution of the specific content and form of ceremonies can those ceremonies continue to offer connection to the deeper metaphysical truths and needs. Respect for the old traditions coupled with an awareness of the new world brings true healing and keeps humanity in harmony with the world.

Finally, it is worthwhile to consider how the idea of ceremonies functions in a novel that connects its main character *Tayo's* imbalance and need for healing with the *world's* own imbalance and need for healing. While Tayo's story is brought to conclusion by the novel and he finds the healing he seeks, the post-WWII world receives no such clear resolution. Tayo's healing, after all, doesn't mean that **the atomic bomb** has ceased to exist in the real world, or that world war has been forever put behind us. But the novel's insistence that ceremonies can both heal the individual and the world creates a vague feeling that Tayo's healing *should* correspond to a healing of the world. What resolves this tension is the recognition that Silko means for *Ceremony* novel itself to be a new kind of ceremony – that reading the novel can offer the healing and connection to address the destructive imbalance that Silko sees in the world.

CULTURAL DOMINANCE, PURITY, AND HYBRIDITY

Ceremony's setting in the American Southwest naturally includes the broad mix of cultures that call this region home. Silko explores the Anglo-American, Laguna Pueblo, Mexican, Navajo, Japanese, and other cultural influences on this region. The novel also suggests a very clear argument for the ways that those of different cultures can and should interact.

The novel asserts that cultures that are intolerant of cultural diversity, that seek either purity or domination, are destructive. The novel depicts "white culture" in these terms, portraying it as focused solely on wealth and dominance, and as a result showing no respect for other cultures or the earth itself. The novel shows how white Americans use, discard, and discriminate against every other group and explicitly connects white culture to a mindset that will lead to destruction, whether through thoughtless and greedy farming practices that worsen the drought or through the dominance-based logic that could result in the creation and use of a weapon like the **atomic bomb**. Yet while the novel's attack on what it sees as "white culture" is unrelenting, it also depicts many Native Americans who believe in the need for a kind of Native American racial purity, to just as devastating effect. Auntie, for instance, hates Tayo for his "half-breed" blood from a Pueblo mother and a white father, and scorns her brother Josiah's involvement with a Mexican woman. Emo, for his part, hates Tayo for being half-white, and seeks to kill him. In both cases, the insistence on racial purity in the novel leads only to the breakup and destruction of families and Native American communities more generally.

As opposed to one culture dominating another or the total separation of cultures, the novel sees hope in hybridity – the crossing of cultural boundaries while respecting what makes each culture unique. Again and again the novel portrays cultural mixing as a sign of strength. Tayo's **green eyes**, a sign of his mixed blood, are singled out by the medicine man Betonie as a sign of the power that Tayo has to "speak to both sides" and form a bridge across cultures. Similarly, after Uncle Josiah falls in love with a Mexican woman named Night Swan, he buys a herd of **hybrid cows** that mix Mexican breeds with the northern Hereford breed. These cattle are smarter and tougher than pure-bred cattle, and are better able to survive in the drought conditions. Further, Betonie's ceremonies that eventually heal the Southwest of the drought take power from many different cultures. Betonie's native Navajo heritage combines with the power of his Mexican grandmother, who in turn takes power "even from the white man," to create a ceremony that Tayo, a Pueblo Indian, completes using the Pueblo story of Reed Woman, Hummingbird, Fly, and the Corn Woman. Through these multiple examples, the novel builds up the argument that those who are able to take the best from different cultures will have the strength and adaptability to survive while those who remain stuck in one cultural mindset won't.

To this end, the novel itself combines many different cultural influences, both in terms of form and content. Silko includes the Western prose style as well as Native American poetry/oral telling techniques, and she references stories from the Pueblo tradition, eastern philosophy, Christianity, and the beliefs of the Haida, Tlingit, and Tsimshian nations of Ketchikan Alaska. Within *Ceremony*, Silko has made clear that only through adaptation and hybridization can new ceremonies be found that properly address the needs of the modern world. And so the novel, which Silko intends to function as just such a ceremony, itself must be a product of adaptation, itself must be a hybrid.

SYMBOLS

Symbols appear in **teal text** throughout the Summary and Analysis sections of this LitChart.

GREEN EYES

Tayo has **green eyes**, a physical symbol of his mixed heritage. Born from a Pueblo Native American mother and a white father, Tayo's green eyes show that he is a "half-breed" that doesn't belong fully to the Native or the white world. At first, these eyes are a source of shame for Tayo. As a child, the other kids tease him and call him "Mexican Eyes" while Auntie resents Tayo's presence as a constant reminder that her little sister (Tayo's mother) embarrassed the tribe by sleeping with men of other races. As Tayo grows, though, he begins to see the strength he has from the two sides of his identity. When Tayo sleeps with Night Swan, a Mexican woman, Night Swan tells him not to be scared that he doesn't look exactly like the other people of the tribe and that his eyes show he is uniquely suited to the changing world, implying that his hybrid background will help him to adapt and thrive in a world that is swiftly replacing cultural purity with cultural hybridity. The childhood jeer, "Mexican eyes," now carries the weight of Mexican history, a nation which began in violence but eventually embraced the cultural mixing of indigenous and European peoples. Tayo later views his green eyes as a sign that he can "speak for both sides," that is, understand both the Native and the white perspectives on the world in order to make a bridge between the two cultures.

Tayo later meets a medicine man named Betonie who also has green eyes due to the genes of Betonie's Mexican grandmother. Betonie's green eyes are a sign that Betonie is open to cultural diversity and adaptation. Betonie's ceremonies are complex rituals that honor the traditions of the Native past while interweaving elements of the modern world that Native Americans now live in. Betonie, as shown by his green eyes, is able to take the best elements of many Native tribes (including Betonie's own Navajo heritage and Tayo's Pueblo heritage), as well as the Mexican and white cultures in the American Southwest and bring them together to form a ceremony that will return the entire region to balance with nature and end the drought. Tayo is the only one who can complete the ceremony because Tayo also understands the value of looking to all of these cultures for power instead of insisting on cultural purity. With their green eyes, Betonie and Tayo can see a future in which cultural hybridity is celebrated as an asset rather than a stigma.

HYBRID SPOTTED CATTLE

Uncle Josiah buys **spotted cattle** that come from Mexican breeds crossed with the prestigious Hereford breed of northern America. These cattle are meant to be stronger, tougher, and smarter than any pure-bred cattle, making them more likely to survive drought years in the Southwest. With the athletic frame of the Mexican cattle and the stocky shoulders of the Hereford breed, these cows symbolize the advantages of cultural hybridity and are able to survive through extreme conditions, symbolizing how humans should also look to the many cultural influences in the Southwest to build a better future for the region. The cows' coats, brown with white spots, pays homage to both the "brown" (that is, Mexican and Native American) and "white" (that is, Anglo-American or European) cultures of the Americas. The spotted cows, unlike the pure Herefords, also have the intelligence to look for water even if their farmer does not herd them in that direction. This shows how Native wisdom about how to live off the land is often more useful for human survival than the structure of Anglo-American farming techniques.

More than symbolizing the strength and survival advantage of cultural hybridity, the cows also symbolize Tayo's connection to his family history and his homeland. Tayo was supposed to help his Uncle Josiah with the cattle before he left to enlist in the army, an act which forced Uncle Josiah to care for the cattle alone. While Tayo is overseas, Uncle Josiah dies and the cattle are stolen, symbolizing how Tayo has forsaken his duty to his family and the land where he was born. Tayo returns physically from the war, but is unable to return mentally and emotionally as long as the cattle are still gone from his late uncle's ranch. Tayo's search for the cattle mirrors his search for mental and emotional peace with his family after the traumas of the war and the drought. When Tayo finds the cattle and returns them back to the pastures of his family's ranch, Tayo is able to restore his health and reconnect with the community of Pueblo Native Americans at New Laguna. By taking care of the cattle, Tayo both continues his uncle's legacy and adds his own contribution of cultural hybridity to this heritage.

BELLIES (STOMACHS)

One of the poems at the beginning of *Ceremony* explains that stories are kept in the **stomach**, setting up a framework in which characters' stomachs are the site of cultural identity and history. Tayo's stomach, especially, is a symbol of how connected or disconnected he feels from the stories of his Native heritage and, therefore, his own Native identity. Just as the stomach digests food to nourish a person's body, it also symbolically digests stories in order to nourish a person's soul. At war, Tayo stopped believing in the power of the traditional stories and begins to wonder if he should give up his native identity in order to fit in the modern white world, causing his stomach to stop working properly. When Tayo returns to the New Laguna reservation, he is still estranged from his native heritage and cannot keep any food down. Ku'oosh's healing ceremony allows Tayo to eat again, but it does not work completely. Tayo still vomits at many moments of the novel when he questions or is ashamed of his native heritage, symbolically distancing himself from the power of the Native American community and stories.

During a fight with Emo, a fellow veteran, Tayo stabs Emo in the stomach, symbolizing how far Emo has gone from his own Native American heritage. Emo became an instrument of death and destruction during the war and has no interest in returning to balance once the war is over. Emo seemingly rejects the native philosophies on balance and respect for life, and is interested only in dominating as many other people as possible and achieving vengeance against white people and half-breeds like Tayo. Tayo's attack on Emo's stomach symbolizes Emo's permanent disconnection from the Native American philosophy and stories. Unlike Emo, Tayo searches for healing and eventually starts to believe in the power of the Native American stories once more. As Tayo gradually recovers, he can feel in his belly when things are right with the world, and when he is fulfilling his part in a new Native American story that describes the ceremony for returning to balance and healing trauma in the world.

THE ATOMIC BOMB

As *Ceremony* focuses on a WWII veteran, the threat of atomic warfare looms large over the novel. Silko ties the **atomic bomb** to "white culture," and sees the bomb as a kind of logical and yet horrifying outcome of what she sees as white culture's focus on domination and destruction instead of balance or harmony. Tayo does not understand why the white men would create a weapon that shows so little regard for human life, or any life at all. The atomic bomb, and the new form of warfare that it represents, is such a horrible threat that all of the old Pueblo ceremonies meant to heal warriors who have taken lives on the battlefield cannot balance out death on such a large, impersonal scale. According to the novel, the atomic bomb is the worst extreme of the white culture that seeks victory at whatever cost to the environment and other people. While the atomic bomb might have allowed the Americans to win what the medicine man Betonie calls "the white man's war," atomic weapons also carry the potential to annihilate all of humankind. As such, the atomic bomb is the only thing that can force all the warring clans of humanity to be "united by the fate the destroyers planned for all of them."

Tayo's final confrontation with Emo takes place in an abandoned uranium mine on the Trinity test site where the American government secretly gathered uranium before the war. The mine further underscores how the atomic bomb represents an unsustainable attitude towards natural resources. Regardless of the damage the bomb will do when it is deployed against America's enemies, making the bomb at all has devastating effects on the New Mexico test site. Meeting Emo in the mine represents the choice that Tayo must make between remaining a tool of the witchery that wants to destroy the world or, instead, working towards the life affirming philosophy of his Pueblo heritage. If Tayo had killed Emo on the land that was stripped to create the atomic bomb, he would have furthered the agenda of evil in the world. Refusing to indulge in vengeance and violence in this place is a powerful statement of respect for life and the earth. While Tayo's choice certainly does not nullify the damage that the atomic bomb could still do, his choice to seek peace above all else is a forceful blow against the ideals of superiority and subjection that the bomb represents.

QUOTES

Note: all page numbers for the quotes below refer to the Penguin Books edition of *Ceremony* published in 2006.

Section 1 Quotes

I will tell you something about stories,
[he said]
They aren't just entertainment. Don't be fooled.
They are all we have, you see,
all we have to fight off
illness and death.
...
He rubbed his belly.
I keep them here
[he said]

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 2

Explanation and Analysis

Ceremony starts with three poems, one of which describes a man telling this story. The man is unspecified – he doesn't function as a character but rather sets up the framework for storytelling within the novel. As the man says, stories are not just entertainment in this Native American culture. For many Native Americans tribes, including the Laguna Pueblo community that Silko focuses on in the novel, stories are vital as repositories of knowledge and moral lessons, and also as links to a a centuries old oral tradition that keeps Native peoples in communication with their past and their ancestors. Put another way, for Native Americans stories are the means of building and preserving their culture. Using stories to "fight off illness and death" implies that stories are the primary tool in the life or death issue of teaching people how to live healthy, happy lives. By following the lessons of the stories, people like Tayo can achieve a far better life than the selfishness, greed, and

disrespect practiced by those who do not have the stories to guide them.

The man also says that he keeps the stories in his belly, introducing the symbolism of stomachs in the novel and establishing the stomach as the site of a person's connection to Native heritage. The health of the stomach then becomes a barometer for how well a person is following the messages of the stories in his or her life. When Tayo is sick to his stomach, he is not in line with the lessons of the stories. Directing this symbolism through the stomach reinforces the ties between stories and health, and makes concrete the idea that stories serve as a kind of nourishment and are a tangible part of people's physical lives. Those who hear the stories are not meant to simply listen and think idly about them, they are meant to actively engage with the stories and only in that way can they ensure that illness and death are kept at bay.

❝ So Tayo stood there, stiff with nausea, while they fired at the soldiers, and he watched his uncle fall, and he knew it was Josiah; and even after Rocky started shaking him by the shoulders and telling him to stop crying, it was still Josiah lying there.

Related Characters: Tayo (speaker), Josiah, Rocky

Related Themes:

Page Number: 7

Explanation and Analysis

While Tayo was in the Philippines fighting in World War II, he was unable to execute a Japanese soldier because he saw his Uncle Josiah in one of the Japanese uniforms standing in the firing line. Josiah, a Pueblo Native American man, was certainly nowhere near that battle field as he was at home on the ranch in New Mexico while Tayo and his cousin Rocky went to war. Tayo's hallucination of Uncle Josiah, then, is a sign of how deeply the trauma of war has damaged Tayo's mental state, but it is also more than that. Seeing Josiah on the battlefield forces Tayo to grapple with the fact that his actions thousands of miles away have the power to critically alter his life at home due to the interconnected web of cause and effect that covers the whole Earth.

The entwined nature of the world happens on two levels: the literal and the metaphysical. At the literal level, Tayo's absence while he was at war really did lead to Josaih's death. With both Tayo and Rocky overseas and no one else capable of helping Josiah care for his cattle, Josiah was forced to travel large distances of difficult desert terrain on his own in search of his constantly moving herd. On one of these trips, Josiah ran into trouble looking for his cattle and died. Though Tayo never finds out exactly how or when Josiah died, Tayo sees chain of events that flows from his own time in the war to Josiah's death at home. On a metaphysical level, Tayo is adding more evil into the world by participating in a war that steals human life through mechanical weapons and does not honor the souls of those who fall in battle. These sins give the destroying spirits of the Pueblo cosmology more power and allow them to wreak more havoc on the Pueblo people (and world) at large. The spiritual elements that draw together these seemingly disparate events are far more important in terms of Tayo's healing.

Section 2 Quotes

❝ "You know what people will say if we ask for a medicine man to help him. Someone will say it's not right. They'll say, 'Don't do it. He's not full blood anyway."'

Related Characters: Auntie (Thelma) (speaker), Grandmother, Tayo

Related Themes:

Page Number: 30

Explanation and Analysis

After Tayo returns from fighting in World War II, he remains sick in body and mind for months. After western medicine at the Veteran's Hospital in Los Angeles fails to help Tayo, Tayo's Old Grandmother wants to call a traditional Pueblo medicine man for a real cure. Tayo's Auntie resists, saying that Tayo's mixed blood will prevent a medicine man from properly doing anything for Tayo. Tayo's parentage is under constant scrutiny in the novel, as many other Native Americans distrust Tayo because Tayo's father was white. People like Auntie, and Emo – another veteran who harbors extreme hatred for all white people – believe that the best way for Native Americans to succeed is to insist on cultural purity among Native Americans. As Auntie sees it, any relationships between Native people and white people (or indeed people of any other races) "weaken" their Native American community as a whole. Auntie's faith in cultural and racial purity is shown to be misplaced in the novel, as the medicine man *is* able to help Tayo a little. Furthermore, Tayo visits another medicine man from the Navajo tribe who is able to cure him completely by taking advantage of the

power that comes from embracing cultural diversity rather than fearing it. By adapting the old ways to a new, more culturally open world, Tayo is actually better off than Auntie and the others who cling to a system that keeps all cultures separate.

Yet Auntie's anger about the medicine man is more complicated than just her resentment over Tayo's white blood. Auntie seems especially concerned over what other people will say about a medicine man, prioritizing gossip and public opinion over her nephew's health. The novel portrays Auntie's selfish care about her own reputation as more destructive to the Pueblo people than crossing cultural boundaries could ever be. In the novel's eyes, it is far better to work towards the health of all people through whatever methods available than to close off certain options due to pride and ambitions of superiority.

> "But you know, grandson, this world is fragile."
> The word he chose to express "fragile" was filled with the intricacies of a continuing process, and with a strength inherent in spider webs woven across paths through sand hills where early in the morning the sun becomes entangled in each filament of web.

Related Characters: Ku'oosh (speaker), Tayo

Related Themes:

Page Number: 32

Explanation and Analysis

Ku'oosh, a Pueblo Medicine Man in Laguna, comes to cure Tayo of his illness after Tayo's traumatic experiences in WWII. Before starting a curing ceremony meant for warriors who have killed or touched dead enemies on the battle field, Ku'oosh talks to Tayo about the state of the world. By calling the world "fragile" in a way that connotes continuing processes and spiders' webs, Ku'oosh reinforces the connections between all events on Earth. The world is one large community that never stops growing and changing, and all the various shifting parts have the power to harm or help all the other parts. Like a machine that depends on each part doing its exact job, the world can easily be knocked out of balance if something disturbs this "fragile" web of entangled pieces. When Tayo was at war, he participated in actions that caused major damage to the balance of the world. By killing people with impersonal machine weapons and giving in to the "us" versus "them" mentality of war, Tayo broke some of the ties between all people that keep the fragile world intact.

When Ku'oosh calls Tayo "grandson," though the two men are not actually biological grandfather and grandson, it calls attention to the relationships that govern all human interactions. Tayo and Ku'oosh are related by their places in keeping the world running properly, even if not by literal blood. The nuances of the words "grandson" and "fragile" point to the ways that every word has significance in *Ceremony*. The novel recognizes the weight of storytelling, asserting that each word must be carefully chosen to provide the precise meaning that the teller desires. Even a wrong word in a story has the potential to disturb the "fragile" world.

> "There are some things we can't cure like we used to," he said, "not since the white people came. The others who had the Scalp Ceremony, some of them are not better either."

Related Characters: Ku'oosh (speaker), Tayo

Related Themes:

Page Number: 35

Explanation and Analysis

When Tayo returns from World War II, he is sick in both body and spirit. His Grandmother calls Ku'oosh, a traditional medicine man of their Laguna Pueblo community, to try to cure Tayo's illness. Ku'oosh explains that many of the veterans from WWII have also been sick but that his medicines and ceremonies no longer work as well as they used to. Ku'oosh blames this failure on the arrival of white people in the Americas, an event that fundamentally changed the entire environment and culture of the region. Ku'oosh makes it clear that he thinks the white people have changed the world for the worse, both by reducing the power of traditional Pueblo ceremonies and creating new problems that the Pueblo ceremonies cannot counter-balance. The ceremonies have not changed even though the world is very different now, and thus the ceremonies can no longer do the ritual work of healing that they used to do. Ku'oosh sees this problem, but does not see the solution: adapting the ceremonies so that they can better apply to a world that includes white people.

The Scalp Ceremony was meant to cleanse warriors who have killed and touched dead enemies on the battlefield. Yet the old, Pueblo style of warfare meant that warriors knew personally how many enemies they were responsible for

killing. Mechanical warfare, and especially the atomic bomb, removes the warrior from the deaths he causes, such that it is impossible for the veterans to know who or how many people they have killed. This guilt at anonymously causing immense loss of life eats at Tayo, as his actions in the war oppose the respect for life that forms a fundamental part of the Pueblo worldview. The Scalp Ceremony is not yet equipped to handle the part Tayo has played in a new type of evil in the world. To be fully cured, Tayo will have to seek out a new kind of ceremony.

"I'm half-breed. I'll be the first to say it. I'll speak for both sides. First time you walked down the street in Gallup or Albuquerque, you knew. Don't lie. You knew right away. The war was over, the uniform was gone. All of a sudden that man at the store waits on you last, makes you wait until all the white people bought what they wanted. And the white lady at the bus depot, she's real careful now not to touch your hand when she counts out your change."

Related Characters: Tayo (speaker)

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 39

Explanation and Analysis

Soon after Tayo returns from the war, he goes out drinking with some of his fellow Native American war veterans. The other veterans only want to talk about their glory days while in the military, when white people respected them for their service to the country, and white women would sleep with them as long as they didn't bring attention to their native heritage. Tayo gradually grows more and more angry at this talk, unable to believe that the other veterans don't see how the broader American society has once again decided that Native Americans are not worthy of the same rights and respect as white people now that the war is over. While the veterans might have felt accepted in white society during the war, this feeling was another trick as white culture used the Native Americans as soldiers and physical labor during the war but never actually respected them as people. Here, Tayo describes the injustices committed against Native Americans in America, even after so many of them gave everything to fight for "their" country.

Tayo is uniquely situated to speak about Native Americans in white society, as Tayo is half white and half Laguna Pueblo. Tayo's green eyes, the physical marker of Tayo's white father, mark him as someone who is slightly outside both white and Native American communities. That gives Tayo the chance to objectively look at both ways of life, and speak across the divide between them. While the other veterans sub-consciously worship white culture as the dominant successful power in America, Tayo sees the cracks in that belief that keep Native Americans from seeing their own power As a "half-breed," Tayo knows that an endless search to please white society will never satisfy Native Americans. Instead, he believes the other veterans should hold white society accountable for their abuse of Native peoples.

They told him, "Nothing can stop you now except one thing: don't let the people at home hold you back." Rocky understood what he had to do to win in the white outside world.

Related Characters: Rocky

Related Themes:

Page Number: 47

Explanation and Analysis

When Rocky and Tayo are in high school, the teachers and coaches push Rocky to be successful by the mainstream measure of grades and sports performance. Rocky is on track to gain a football scholarship to college and escape from the cycle of poverty that keeps many Native Americans on reservations. In order to achieve this definition of success, Rocky believes that he can't let the people at home hold him back, that is, Rocky must leave behind his family. More than that, Rocky believes he must reject all the traditions of his Native heritage. In other words, for Rocky to "win" in the white world, he would have to lose touch with his past and his very identity.

This vision of Native American success was the prevailing idea in the 1950s for solving the problems of poverty, addiction, and high mortality rates on Native American reservations. The American government hoped to "kill the Indian and save the man," that is "recivilizing" Native American peoples so they would become mainstream Americans. Through boarding schools, like the one that Rocky and Tayo attended in Albuquerque, many Native children were encouraged to erase any markers of their distinct Native tribes and forget all of their cultural legacy. While this may have facilitated "success" by one definition,

the novel clearly depicts the violence of this choice. Rocky may win in the white world, but he will not be healthy or happy. Indeed, Rocky dies a successful "war hero," as the novel suggests that it is impossible for Rocky to live after he turns his back on the Native ways.

"They took our land, they took everything! So let's get our hands on white women!" They cheered... Maybe Emo was wrong: maybe white people didn't have everything. Only Indians had droughts.

Related Characters: Emo (speaker), Tayo

Related Themes:

Page Number: 51

Explanation and Analysis

When Tayo goes out drinking with Emo and the other Native American veterans, the topic of conversation often turns to the veterans' sexual experiences with white women. For most of the veterans, sleeping with white women is a way to feel that they are included and accepted in white society. For Emo, sleeping with white women takes on a more sinister meaning. Emo wants to use white women as pawns to hurt white culture as pyaback for the hurt it has caused Native Americans by taking their land and making them powerless. Tayo too sees the disparity between the lives of white people and the lives of Native Americans. White people enjoy privilege, comfort, and wealth in America, such that Tayo feels white people have "everything" that Native Americans long for. White culture in America takes all the resources with no consequences, damaging Native American communities as well as the American land. Native Americans meanwhile are left to deal with the negative effects that the white commercial culture has on the environment. As Tayo notes, Native Americans are the ones who have droughts, with the implication being that white culture is wealthy enough to ignore the problem and continue their destructive methods.

While Emo is justified in feeling that he has been wronged by white culture, as Native Americans have been systematically oppressed and as a result struggle with poverty and addiction, the novel makes it clear that Emo's response is incorrect. Fighting violence with violence will never actually solve the problem. Tayo takes a more measured approach, hoping to solve the drought that white people have caused instead of adding more pain to the world by bringing white people down.

Section 3 Quotes

She was careful that Rocky did not share these things with Tayo, that they kept a distance between themselves and him. But she would nor let Tayo go outside or play in another room alone. She wanted him close enough to feel excluded, to be aware of the distance between them.

Related Characters: Tayo, Rocky, Auntie (Thelma)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 62

Explanation and Analysis

Tayo comes to live with Auntie and his cousin Rocky when he is four years old, after his mother's alcoholism and prostitution becomes too dangerous for a young boy to be around. Auntie clearly resents Tayo because Tayo is a half white; his very existence is a reminder that Auntie's Little Sister slept with white men and shamed their family in the eyes of the Laguna Pueblo elders. Auntie treats Tayo the same as Rocky, her biological son, when they are in public, but keeps Tayo at an arms length when they are alone. Rocky gets special privileges that Tayo does not, as Auntie's embarrassment at Tayo's "impure" blood causes her to lash out against an innocent boy despite the fact that according to the Pueblo traditions Tayo should be accepted by his family. This is yet another example of how Auntie's loyalty to cultural purity as a means of keeping the Pueblo traditions strong actually hurts her family and the solidarity of the Native Community.

The way Auntie keeps Tayo just close enough to see what he is missing echoes the experience of Native Americans in America. Native American communities are kept away from "normal" American society on reservations, but they are not allowed to be fully separate sovereign nations. This means that many Native Americans must go into larger cities, such as Gallup, in order to buy supplies or special goods. In the city, the gap between the poverty of the reservation and the comparatively wealthy lives of the white citizens is clearly apparent. Even Native Americans who choose to go live in cities to try and take advantage of the economic opportunities there are discriminated against and only given menial jobs for second-class citizens. The novel describes many who end up homeless, watching the white Americans go about their happy lives on land that was once theirs to care for. In terms of American society, Native Americans are portrayed as "close enough to feel excluded" in the novel, just as Tayo is within his family.

Christianity separated the people from themselves; it tried to crush the single clan name, encouraging each person to stand alone, because Jesus Christ would save only the individual soul; Jesus Christ was not like the Mother who loved and cared for them as her children, as her family.

Related Characters: Auntie (Thelma)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 62-63

Explanation and Analysis

Auntie is a Christian, Pueblo woman, and her focus on this religious salvation prevents her from remaining in touch with her family and her Native community. While the basis of the Pueblo philosophy is a family that cares for and supports one another, the novel sees the basis of Christianity as a fundamentally isolating experience. In order to be a good Christian, Auntie must separate herself from the members of her family and tribe who commit sins. Rather than strengthening the community as a whole by helping a lost or ill member find their way back to right relationship with the earth and health, Auntie can only save herself as a Christian. The novel depicts this as dividing people "from themselves," suggesting that the bonds between family and tribe members are so strong that many people are, in essence, one person. A Pueblo person can only be happy and healthy if they are connected to their community, making it impossible for a Pueblo person to succeed or fail on their own. Everything an individual Pueblo person does affects the other members of the community, rippling out to affect the environment and the world. Though Christianity speaks of its followers as "Children of God," the novel does not see this religion as capable of addressing communal.

They think that if their children have the same color of skin, the same color of eyes, that nothing is changing." She laughed softly. "They are fools. "You don't have to understand what is happening. But remember this day. You will recognize it later. You are part of it now."

Related Characters: Night Swan (speaker), Tayo

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 92

Explanation and Analysis

Tayo delivers a note from Uncle Josiah to Night Swan, a Mexican woman with whom Tayo's Uncle Josiah has formed a relationship. At Night Swan's apartment, Night Swan sleeps with Tayo after telling Tayo that she has been watching him because of Tayo's green eyes. Tayo scoffs, saying that the other people of the Pueblo community tease him for having lighter eyes than is normal for a Pueblo. Tayo's green eyes come from his white father, and serve as a reminder that Tayo's mother slept with a white man and weakened the cultural purity of the Pueblo tribe by introducing a "half-breed" child. Night Swan reminds Tayo that change is a necessary and inevitable part of human society, though close-minded communities may fear it. Though not all Pueblo people have green eyes, they all must deal with a new reality that includes white people.

By sleeping with Night Swan, Tayo also becomes part of a new future that lovingly embraces crossing cultural boundaries, instead of fearing it. By telling Tayo that he is "part of it," Night Swan implies that Tayo has now joined a future that celebrates cultural diversity rather than remaining stuck to a dead-end vision of cultural purity. Night Swan helps Tayo see that his green eyes are an asset to this future, and not something of which he should be ashamed.

Section 4 Quotes

There was something about the way the old man said the word "comfortable." It had a different meaning-not the comfort of big houses or rich food or even clean streets, but the comfort of belonging with the land, and the peace of being with these hills.

Related Characters: Betonie

Related Themes:

Page Number: 108

Explanation and Analysis

When Tayo has to keep looking for a cure to his sickness after WWII, he goes to a Navajo Medicine Man named Betonie. Betonie lives in the foothills outside of Gallup, in a traditional hogan like the Navajo have built for generations. Betonie is at odds with the modern world, rejecting the idea that Native Americans must leave the old ways in order to be successful and happy in the white world. Betonie actually finds more comfort in these hills than he would in the "big

houses or rich food" that mark wealth and security in the city. It is more important for Betonie to be connected to the land, as the land provides life-giving resources for humans. In order to be at peace with himself, Betonie must be at peace in the land.

Yet though Betonie does not want to leave the old ways behind, he is also not a purist about the ancient traditions. Betonie freely uses English, though some look on that as the modern, white man's language, and carefully finds the nuance in the English word "comfortable." Betonie's care with language echoes the more traditional Pueblo Medicine Man, Ku'oosh, who precisely chose the correct Laguna word for "fragile" earlier in the novel. Betonie also fills his hogan with objects from the modern world that mark the passage of time and the changing culture, such as his calendars with many styles of artwork. Betonie seeks to be a bridge between the old Native American way of life, and a new Native American way of life that maintains the unique strengths of the Native American philosophies without ignoring all traces of the modern world. Looking to both cultural norms for inspiration makes Betonie stronger, more adaptable, and ultimately more comfortable in his own identity.

> The people nowadays have an idea about the ceremonies. They think the ceremonies must be performed exactly as they have always been done, maybe because one slip-up or mistake and the whole ceremony must be stopped and the sand painting destroyed. That much is true. They think that if a singer tampers with any part of the ritual, great harm can be done, great power unleashed…That much can be true also. But long ago when the people were given these ceremonies, the changing began, if only in the aging of the yellow gourd rattle or the shrinking of the skin around the eagle's claw, if only in the different voices from generation to generation, singing the chants. You see, in many ways, the ceremonies have always been changing."

Related Characters: Betonie (speaker), Tayo

Related Themes:

Page Number: 116

Explanation and Analysis

Tayo goes to see Betonie, a Navajo medicine man in Gallup, after Ku'oosh's Pueblo ceremony did not cure Tayo of his illness. Betonie is a very different type of medicine man, believing that the power of the ceremonies lies in their ability to adapt rather than the ability to staunchly cling to tradition. Betonie acknowledges the power of the ceremonies and the need to be careful, echoing Ku'oosh's earlier reminder that the world is fragile. Yet Betonie also recognizes that there is no such thing as stasis. Preserving anything perfectly is tantamount to death in a world that is always changing. Rather than copying previous generations, Betonie adds his voice to the legacy that the past leaves, making the ceremony a living ritual that can survive in new situations. In order for the ceremonies to continue to have power in the world, the ceremonies must change as well.

> Some people act like witchery is responsible for everything that happens, when actually witchery only manipulates a small portion." He pointed in the direction the boy had gone. "Accidents happen, and there's little we can do. But don't be so quick to call something good or bad. There are balances and harmonies always shifting, always necessary to maintain.

Related Characters: Betonie (speaker), Tayo

Related Themes:

Page Number: 120

Explanation and Analysis

After Betonie, a Navajo medicine man, completes part of the ceremony meant to call Tayo's spirit back home from the trauma of WWII, Betonie tells a story about Native American witches who unwittingly unleased witchery into the world. This witchery is made up of human greed and selfishness, the worst parts of human nature that contribute to the destruction of land and other people rather than respecting the sanctity of life. Yet though the witchery is evil, Betonie cautions against believing that the witchery has complete power over someone. In the "balances and harmonies" that all humans must fight to maintain, there will always be an element of witchery to oppose the good. The trick, as Betonie tells Tayo, is not to let the small amount of witchery outweigh the good you might see in other people. The true goal of Betonie's healing ceremonies is never to destroy witchery altogether, as that would be impossible. Betonie seeks only to restore balance to the world by keeping the witchery in its proper place. This focus on balance underpins the Pueblo religion as well, and plays a large role in Tayo's recovery.

Take it back.
Call that story back."
But the witch just shook its head
at the others in their stinking animal skins, fur and feathers.
It's already turned loose.
It's already coming.
It can't be called back.

Related Characters: Betonie (speaker)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 128

Explanation and Analysis

Betonie, a Navajo medicine man, tells a story about Native American witches – those who use magic for unnatural purposes – who tried to outdo one another in the evil things they could create. The worst evil thing was actually a story that created white people in the world. Storytelling is a sacred and significant act in many Native American cultures, including Betonie's Navajo heritage and the Pueblo heritage of the majority of the characters in *Ceremony*. This evil story in particular is incredibly powerful, as it speaks new beings into life and sets them on a path to destroy the entire world. Betonie's story about the evil story is a cautionary tale about using stories for evil purposes, as the words can never be called back once they are spoken into the world.

Yet though the Native American witch cannot call the story of white people back, the very act of placing all of white history and creation within a Native American story gives Native Americans some measure of control over their future. If Native Americans created white people with a story, they should also be able to undo the damage white people cause with a story. *Ceremony* then acts to fulfill this purpose, to be a story that works to combat the evil that the white people story unleashed.

'it never has been easy. It will take a long long time and many more stories like this one before they are laid low. ...
"He reasoned that because it was set loose by witchery of all the world, and brought to them by the whites, the ceremony against it must be the same. ...
This is the only way,' she told him. 'It cannot be done alone. 'We must have power from everywhere. Even the power we can get from the whites.'

Related Characters: Betonie (speaker), Tayo, Descheeny

Related Themes:

Page Number: 139

Explanation and Analysis

Betonie, the Navajo medicine man, tells Tayo a story about his (Vetonie's) grandfather, Descheeny, who first started the ceremony meant to heal the witchery of white culture in the world. Part of this story involves discovering where white people came from in the first place, an origin that explains that white people were brought to life by a witch who harnessed human greed, selfishness, and violence. With white people, the tools of witchery, loose in the world, the environment suffers and a horrible drought affects the American Southwest. During this time, Descheeny met a Mexican woman who helps him put together a ceremony to combat the drought. Crucially, this ceremony departs from the strict traditional guidelines for ceremonies by including elements of power from the Mexican girl's heritage as well as the white culture that other Navajo see as their ultimate enemy.

In order to combat an evil that affects all mankind, Betonie, Tayo, and the others will need to combine the strengths of as many different cultures as they can. Even white culture, which is seen as fundamentally destructive in the novel, has something to offer in this quest for healing. The healing also depends on retelling stories, as stories are the vehicle for teaching proper values to the new generation in many Native American communities. Through this particular story about his grandfather, Betonie is able to help Tayo see that white people are not the ultimate problem. Tayo really has to fight against the worst of human nature in general in order to heal himself from the trauma of the war and the land from the drought.

He was thinking about Harley and Leroy; about Helen Jean and himself. How much longer would they last? How long before one of them got stabbed in a bar fight, not just knocked out? How long before this old truck swerved off the road or head-on into a bus?

Related Characters: Helen Jean, Leroy, Harley, Tayo

Related Themes:

Page Number: 155-156

Explanation and Analysis

After Tayo leaves Betonie's home in Gallup, Harley and Leroy pick him up off the side of the road. Harley and Leroy are on another drinking bender, this time with a Native American woman named Helen Jean along for the ride. After his experience with Betonie, Tayo can see how his fellow veterans follow a destructive lifestyle in their attempts to distract themselves from the emptiness and pain of life after the trauma of WWII. Similarly, many Native Americans turn to drink in the face of the poverty and lack of opportunity on Native American reservations. Tayo's question "how much longer would they last?" literally applies to the dangerous situation of drunk driving Harley and Leroy, but it also has a wider meaning about the fate of Native Americans in the modern world. Mainstream white culture wants to believe that Native Americans are dying out, unable to cope with the fast pace of urban life that keeps Native Americans from their historical farming and hunting methods. In some senses, Native Americans must adapt to the new circumstances of a world that includes the heavy influence of white culture, or they *will* die out.

❝ The power of each day spilled over the hills in great silence. Sunrise. He ended the prayer with "sunrise" because he knew the Dawn people began and ended all their words with "sunrise."

Related Characters: Tayo

Related Themes:

Page Number: 169

Explanation and Analysis

After leaving Betonie and starting on his quest for healing, Tayo meets Ts'eh for the first time, who helps him remember the traditions and rituals of his Pueblo heritage. One of these traditions is to start and end stories with the word sunrise, as sunrise is an important transitional time in the Pueblo culture. The Dawn people, divine beings who live in the more spiritual world underneath the human world, can only cross over into this world at sunrise. Invoking sunrise at the beginning and end of stories invites the dawn people to give their spiritual wisdom in the story, to connect the story to the legacy of knowledge that the Pueblo people have about how to act in the world and live in harmony with nature. As Tayo begins here to reconnect with his heritage and nature, he honors the sunrise in the traditional manner of his people.

Ceremony itself begins and ends with the word sunrise, wrapping the entire novel in the traditions of the Pueblo people, and making it a story that can hold the spiritual advice of the Dawn people. Just as the stories help Tayo return to health, *Ceremony* can help its readers act in ways that benefit both human kind and nature.

Section 5 Quotes

❝ So he had gone, not expecting to find anything more than the winter constellation in the north sky overhead; but suddenly Betonie's vision was a story he could feel happening - from the stars and the woman, the mountain and the cattle would come.

Related Characters: Betonie, Tayo

Related Themes:

Page Number: 173

Explanation and Analysis

After Tayo leaves Betonie, the Navajo medicine man who described a ceremony that would cure Tayo of his post-war trauma, Tayo waits for a sign that Betonie's ceremony is beginning. Betonie had described four things that Tayo must look for: a certain constellation, a woman, a mountain, and spotted cattle. As four is a sacred number in the Pueblo religion, these four things draw together the entire world – with the constellation representing the sky, the woman representing humanity, the mountain representing the land, and the cattle representing the animals. Tayo must bring all these things back into harmony in order to heal himself, as the health of the world is tied up in the health of all of the participants of the world.

In order to restore his own health, Tayo must trust in the power of ceremonies. In traditional Pueblo culture, ceremonies are a way for people to both maintain and strengthen their connections *to* the natural world and the proper ways of living in harmony *with* the entire world. These ceremonies give respect to all life, unlike the destruction of life that the novel sees as inherent to white culture. After the war, Tayo lost faith in the ceremonies and doesn't expect Betonie's ceremony to actually be effective. Yet Tayo still goes on the journey and gradually starts to believe again in the truth and sanctity of the old ways.

It was a cure for that, and maybe for other things too. The spotted cattle wouldn't be lost any more, scattered through his dreams, driven by his hesitation to admit they had been stolen, that the land - all of it - had been stolen from them. The anticipation of what he might find was strung tight in his belly…

Related Characters: Josiah, Tayo

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 178

Explanation and Analysis

After seeing the medicine man Betonie, Tayo leaves on a quest to find his Uncle Josiah's spotted cattle. These cattle were Josiah's greatest dream, as the cows were bred with both Mexican breeds and the northern Hereford breed to create a stronger animal that Josiah believed would be better able to survive drought years in New Mexico. While Tayo is at war, Josiah dies and these cattle are stolen by a white man. Wracked with guilt for his failure to help his uncle, Tayo cannot properly return home from the war in spirit as long as the cattle are missing. Tayo faced many different traumas during his time at war, mostly centered around the white man's greed, selfishness and disrespect for life. Getting the cattle back from a white rancher is one way for Tayo to find closure on the emotional turmoil about serving as a tool of violence for white culture, and also a way to reconnect with his family legacy. Only then can Tayo fully return home, no longer lost.

The cattle are also a symbol of the triumph of Native wisdom over the dominating ideals of white culture. Josiah knew that his idea to breed hybrid cattle would work out, despite the white scientists who argued in favor of pure-bred animals. Tayo was not sure about the hybrids' strength at the time, but he is now positive that the cattle are indeed everything Josiah hoped they would be. Tayo feels this in his stomach, the physical location of Native stories and wisdom according to Pueblo tradition. Even if Tayo's quest for these cattle looks insane to members of white culture, Tayo's stomach alerts him to the proper path of living according to Pueblo traditions and his gut approves of bringing the hybrid cattle home. Living in peace with his identity is now more important to Tayo than futilely searching for the approval of oppressive white culture.

Section 6 Quotes

He lay there and hated them. Not for what they wanted to do with him, but for what they did to the earth with their machines, and to the animals with their packs of dogs and their guns. It happened again and again, and the people had to watch, unable to save or to protect any of the things that were so important to them.

Related Characters: Tayo

Related Themes:

Page Number: 189

Explanation and Analysis

After Tayo finds his cattle, he is chased by white patrolmen who want to punish Tayo for "trespassing" on white land. Though the white men leave Tayo alone in favor of hunting a mountain lion instead, Tayo is badly injured after falling from his horse and rests in a small clearing, underneath a blanket of leaves. As he rests, Tayo think about the damage that white people do to the land and the natural world. White culture, as portrayed by the novel, is concerned only with material possessions and personal wealth. White people take the land and its resources for granted, using up anything they want and causing pain for their own amusement in a sport they call hunting. Many animals, including deer and mountain lions, are sacred to the Pueblo traditions, and Tayo is incensed that white people would hunt these creatures without respecting their lives and making full use of their bodies once the animals are dead. In its constant quest for complete dominance, white culture ignores the Pueblo wisdom that ensures sustainable hunting and farming methods that keep both the earth and its people healthy. At this point in the novel, Tayo is ready to place the blame firmly at the feet of white people and embrace the strength of his hybrid background by acting on the values he learned as a Pueblo Native American.

Section 7 Quotes

…occasionally a calf bolted away bucking and leaping in a wide arc, returning finally to its mother when it tired of playing. Tayo's heart beat fast; he could see Josiah's vision emerging, he could see the story taking form in bone and muscle.

Related Characters: Josiah, Tayo

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 210

Explanation and Analysis

Tayo is finally able to find his uncle's stolen cattle and returns them to his family's ranch. Once there, Tayo cares for the cows and starts to breed them again. In the calves, Tayo can see the strength that Josiah expected from these cows. With both Mexican and Hereford blood, the calves are both strong and smart – therefore better able to handle the difficult terrain and harsh drought years of New Mexico.

Speaking of the cows as a "story" of bone and muscle suggests that Tayo believes that people can learn from these cows. Stories in the Pueblo culture carry important lessons about how to act in the world in order to be at peace with other people and nature. Throughout the novel, these cows have symbolized the value of cultural hybridity, just as people in the novel who are able to embrace the good points of many cultures are better able to adapt and thrive in a new world that includes Native Americans, whites, Mexican, Asians, and others in the Southwest.

"The end of the story. They want to change it. They want it to end here, the way all their stories end, encircling slowly to choke the life away. The violence of the struggle excites them, and the killing soothes them. They have their stories about us – Indian people who are only marking time and waiting for the end."

Related Characters: Ts'eh (speaker), Tayo

Related Themes:

Page Number: 215

Explanation and Analysis

Ts'eh and Tayo live together in harmony through the summer, but Ts'eh knows that she will have to leave by the time fall comes. As she gets ready to go, Ts'eh mournfully tells Tayo that he will have to make sure that the destroyers are not allowed to twist the "story" to make it end in pain and destruction. The destroyers mentioned here are understood as the evil spirits that guide humans into making destructive choices. They have a particular control over white men and women, but can also infect Native Americans, as they have with Emo. Ts'eh explains that people who follow the destroyers are tools in a worldview that prioritizes violence over peace and uses pain as a distraction from the emptiness and boredom that comes from not being connected with a culture that respects life.

White culture, led by the destroyers, believes that Native Americans are now powerless in the face of their "progress" towards a selfish, greedy population who cares nothing for the well-being of the world. In the larger story that *Ceremony* tells about the fight between good and evil on a global scale, white culture thinks it has already won and that Native Americans will gradually die out as a defeated enemy. This echoes the idea that many Americans actually had in the 1950s and 60s, that Native Americans belonged to history and could not persist in the modern. Ts'eh challenges that assumption, not only that Native Americans can continue to exist, but that they *must* continue to exist if the destroyers are to be withstood. By saying that the destroyers want to "change" the end of the story, Ts'eh recognizes that complete destruction is not the natural end for the world. It is up to Native Americans who trust in the traditional wisdom to keep the world on its proper path and save humanity from the destroyers.

From the jungles of his dreaming he recognized why the Japanese voices had merged with Laguna voices, with Josiah's voice and Rocky's voice; the lines of cultures and worlds were drawn in flat dark lines on fine light sand, converging in the middle of witchery's final ceremonial sand painting. From that time on, human beings were one clan again, united by the fate the destroyers planned for all of them, for all living things; united by a circle of death that devoured people in cities twelve thousand miles away, victims who had never known these mesas, who had never seen the delicate colors of the rocks which boiled up their slaughter.

Related Characters: Rocky, Josiah, Tayo

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 228

Explanation and Analysis

As Tayo hides in an abandoned uranium mine while Emo is searching for him, he notices a pattern that Betonie had described earlier in the novel. This pattern brings together all of mankind, despite the boundaries that white culture tries to place between white people and all other cultures. At a few points in the novel, Tayo has had flashbacks that

intertwine his family in New Mexico and the Japanese he was fighting against in WWII. In this moment that intertwining finally makes sense to him, as Tayo realizes that the creation of the atomic bomb (connected to the cave Tayo is in because uranium is the key ingredient of the bomb) unites all humanity, for the simple reason that the fate of the entire world is bound up together in the imminent destruction promised by an atomic war.

The novel sees the atomic bomb as the extreme result of the worst of human nature, combining both the human desire for domination and absolute disregard for human or any other kind of life. An atomic bomb's devastating power means that it destroys everything in its path, impersonally and without distinction, and the logic of a world with atomic bombs is one of mutual assured destruction, where use of a single bomb would ensure use of other bombs until nearly everything is annihilated. Tayo sees this threat for what it is, but also sees the possibility in it, that the terror inspired by the atomic bomb could unite humanity despite the boundaries that separate them.

> It had been a close call. The witchery had almost ended the story according to its plan; Tayo had almost jammed the screwdriver into Emo's skull the way the witchery had wanted, savoring the yielding bone and membrane as the steel ruptured the brain. Their deadly ritual for the autumn solstice would have been completed by him.

Related Characters: Emo, Tayo

Related Themes:

Page Number: 235

Explanation and Analysis

At the climax of the novel, Tayo hides in an abandoned uranium mine while Emo tortures Harley just outside the opening. Emo truly wanted to kill Tayo, but contents himself with taunting Tayo by hurting Tayo's friend. Enraged at this display of pointless pain and destruction, Tayo wants desperately to kill Emo with the rusty screwdriver he stole in case he had to fight in self-defense. Yet Tayo controls himself and does not attack Emo.

The novel identifies this moment as completing the ceremony that Tayo has been pursuing. He completes the ceremony not by acting, but by refusing to act. Not by punishing a monstrous person (and Emo is undoubtedly monstrous), but by refusing to respond to killing with more killing. The novel argues that fighting pain and destruction with more pain and destruction is a no-win situation that drags the whole world deeper into darkness. Instead, fighting pain and destruction with kindness and self-control balances out some of the "witchery" in the world.

The novel describes this "witchery" as the worst parts of human nature, embodied in white culture's relentless pursuit of profit, self-importance, and victory above all else. Killing Emo would have satisfied Tayo personally, but it would not have helped the world recover from Emo's evil actions. Tayo understands the larger implications of this conflict, reading his life as a story in which Emo represents evil and Tayo himself must represent good. As stories in the Pueblo tradition carry important morals, Tayo must ensure that his own story ends in a return to the harmony that preserves life rather than a descent into violence and death.

Section 8 Quotes

> "I guess I must be getting old," she said, "because these goings-on around Laguna don't get me excited any more." She sighed, and laid her head back on the chair. "It seems like I already heard these stories before . . . only thing is, the names sound different."

Related Characters: Grandmother (speaker)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 242

Explanation and Analysis

At the very end of the novel, Auntie tells Old Grandma that Emo has been chased out of the New Laguna community for killing Pinkie. Old Grandma reacts oddly, saying that she thinks she has heard this story before, with different names. Through Old Grandma's comment way, the novel again asserts that the stories it contains – Tayo's own story, the Corn Mother story, the many stories told by Betonie – are all both old and new. The stories repeat and echo each other, but in new ways. The stories capture the same timeless truths about evil and witchery and goodness the right way to act, but shift so as to communicate these truths in ways that match the changing world.

Ceremony as a whole also takes on this element of a story that has been told before. The Corn Mother story within *Ceremony* follows Fly and Hummingbird as they try to get the rain back, paralleling Tayo's own efforts to complete a ceremony that will end the drought. Betonie, the Navajo medicine man, tells many stories about people who were stolen by animals and have to find their way back to human

life, just as Tayo has to find a way to return home in spirit as well as in body.

As long as there are humans and stories, the novel asserts, mankind will act in ways that follow the stories – for good and ill. *Ceremony* does not ever argue that with Tayo's story that cycle will end. Instead, it makes clear the cycle won't end. It offers Tayo's story as a response to the destructive story that led to the atomic bomb and to Emo's murderous nature, and it argues that such stories must be kept alive and allowed to change, because they will one day be needed again.

SUMMARY AND ANALYSIS

The color-coded icons under each analysis entry make it easy to track where the themes occur most prominently throughout the work. Each icon corresponds to one of the themes explained in the Themes section of this LitChart.

SECTION 1

The novel begins with three poems. The first introduces Ts'its'tsi'nako, the Thought-Woman, who is thinking up this entire story. The second poem, titled Ceremony, explains that stories are the only thing humans have to fight off illness and death, and stand up to evil. Stories grow in man's **belly** and offer life, rituals, and ceremonies to humankind. Ceremonies are the only cure. The third poem is a blank page that says only, "sunrise."

These poems fall into the oral storytelling tradition of the Pueblo people and many other Native American tribes. They introduce the importance of stories in the lives of Native people. Further, by placing within the human body (in the stomach), this beginning underscores how important stories are to physical well-being. The story officially starts with the word sunrise, an important ritual among the Pueblo people as sunrise is the time when the spiritual Dawn people come into contact with this world.

The narrative of the story begins with Tayo, as he sleeps fitfully in his sparse bedroom. Tayo dreams in a mix of English and Spanish, as well as Japanese and Laguna. He has nightmares of being in the humid, Philippine jungle during World War II and all the dead men he saw during the war. Tayo tries to calm himself by thinking of a deer, but he is distracted by a memory of seeing his Uncle Josiah among Japanese soldiers who have been executed. Tayo's cousin Rocky tried to reason with Tayo that Uncle Josiah couldn't possibly be in the Philippines, but Tayo is unable to ignore his emotions through logic.

The mix of languages in Tayo's dreams mirrors the mix of cultures that Tayo has come into contact with, and the mix that must learn to coexist in the American southwest. While Tayo's vision of Josiah is a sign of his guilt at leaving his uncle without help when Tayo enlisted for the war, it can also be seen as suggesting the broader interconnected world: Tayo's experiences in the war still affects his own mental health, but Tayo's actions in the war also had a deep impact on his entire hometown.

Tayo wakes up and goes outside. He sees the ranch animals, a cat and goats, peacefully going about their morning. Tayo tries to make breakfast, but is distracted by memories of his Uncle Josiah living in this house. The ranch is experiencing another drought, and the land is dryer than Tayo has ever seen it. Tayo has heard that it has been dry and windy for the past six years while he was at war, and he watches anxiously for storm clouds coming from the southwest.

The drought is the ultimate sign that the world is out of balance and unhealthy. The fact that the drought corresponds with Tayo's years at war suggests that the action of going to war – and the very war itself – had a part in causing the drought in the first place. Yet though the war is over, the drought continues – a sign that the world remains out of balance after the war and requires active human intervention to be brought back to equilibrium.

Tayo remembers the jungle, where he could never escape rain. He blamed the rain for Rocky's infected injuries, though he knows that Rocky was really hurt by a Japanese grenade. While Tayo and the army corporal carry Rocky on a blanket, Tayo prays for the rain to stop. When the corporal slips in the mud and drops Rocky, Tayo urgently damns the rain with a song.

Tayo blames a natural phenomenon – rain – for a death that was caused by human weapons. Tayo clearly thinks that his prayer to the rain led to the drought in his home – and the novel doesn't really question that belief. The suggestion of the novel is that Tayo is out of balance with the world, that all humans are out of balance with the world, and that the world (symbolized by its overabundance of or lack of rain) is in turn out of balance itself. Health – the novel implies over and over – is not an overabundance of anything, but a balance.

Tayo's song describes two sisters: Reed Woman and Corn Woman. Corn Woman does all the work in the fields while Reed Woman takes baths all day. Corn Woman gets angry and scolds Reed Woman, until Reed Woman goes back to their original world and takes the rain with her, causing a massive drought.

The mythical figures of Corn Woman and Reed Woman stand in for natural processes in the land, as the Pueblo philosophy honors nature by giving it sentience. Stories like this make nature into a sentient being that humans can relate to and more importantly have relationships with. That Tayo's song of these sisters leads to a real drought in the novel also establishes the power of stories and songs within the novel and the way that the spiritual and "real" world are connected, and also begins to connect Tayo's own story to the traditional Pueblo stories.

Tayo blames his song in the Philippines for causing the drought at the ranch in New Mexico. He looks mournfully at the yellow grass and his gray mule looking desperately for food. The mule's white snout reminds Tayo of when he was "white smoke" in the veteran's hospital in Los Angeles after the war.

The connections that tie together the whole world are strong enough that Tayo's song in the jungle can have vast effects in his homeland of New Mexico. Calling himself "white" smoke associates whiteness with illness. Throughout the novel, pure white connotes death and destruction, flipping the assumed symbolism of white for good and black for evil – and establishing the foundation of the novel's later contention that much of the evil in the world is a function of "white culture."

Tayo felt invisible in the veteran's hospital, and unable to interact with people through the fog that constantly surrounded him. He is unable to eat without **throwing up** and the entire world seems white to him. The doctors tell Tayo they are sending him home so that Tayo can return to his old life. Tayo cries.

Tayo's experiences in the war leave him unable to participate in the world, one of the worst outcomes for a Pueblo Native American whose spirituality depends on being in harmony with the environment and other people. The feeling is again described as white, tying whiteness to isolation. Tayo's illness is tied to his stomach, showing that part of his disease is a lack of connection to the old stories that are traditionally kept in the belly.

Tayo takes his luggage to the LA train station, trying to get used to life outside of the fog. Tayo is wary of a Japanese family that waits for a train beside him, and faints on the concrete. The Japanese family calls one of the train attendants to help Tayo. Tayo tells the train attendant that he does not need to go back to the Veteran's Hospital, then asks why the Japanese people are not locked up. The train attendant says that the Japanese have been released now that the war is over, then walks away. Tayo, thinking of the smiling face of the Japanese boy from the family and of Rocky's smile, **throws up** into a trash can.

Though the Japanese family only wants to help Tayo, the war has caused Tayo to put up barriers between himself and other cultures. This hostile "us vs. them" mentality is at odds with Tayo's Pueblo spirituality, which causes Tayo to be physically ill once again. The Japanese boy, someone Tayo wants to hate, and Rocky, someone Tayo clearly care for deeply, are actually more similar than they are different, showing the connections that span all humanity.

Returning to Tayo's present in the ranch house, Tayo sits on his bed watching the sunlight crawl across the walls. He thinks about the time he and Rocky climbed Bone Mesa, and how he used to believe that humans could touch the sky – indeed transcend any barriers – if they knew the right stories. After Indian school and Uncle Josiah's death in the Philippines, Tayo no longer believes in the power of the stories.

Tayo's memory hinges on two important concepts: stories and barriers. Stories have the power to let humans do things they otherwise could not, like touch the sky. Tayo used to believe that crossing barriers was a good thing, given his excitement to touch the sky. Yet now, just as Tayo does not believe in the power of stories, he also builds barriers between himself and other people by living in isolation.

Tayo goes outside and sits under an elm tree. Tayo's friend Harley rides up on a black burro, making slow progress as the burro resists Harley's direction. Harley jokes with Tayo about the burro's disobedience, as Harley always finds the humor in every situation. Harley asks if Tayo has any beer. Tayo replies that he does not, remembering the first time he, Rocky, and Harley tried beer. Harley used to think beer tasted like poison, but now Harley pursues beer non-stop.

Harley cannot control his burro, showing how Harley is rarely in control of anything in his life. It seems as though Harley simply drifts to where he will find his next beer, as the novel implicitly shows him to be an alcoholic. While Harley plays this addiction for laughs, Tayo's memory shows the insidious nature of beer – it truly is the poison that Harley originally thought it was.

Tayo is content to sit with Harley in silence, but Harley is restless. Harley jokes about how they have it easy now that they are "war heroes" and don't have to help with the sheep herding. Tayo laughs, but remembers how Harley was so distracted by chasing his next beer that he recently let 30 sheep be killed by wild animals.

Harley is a veteran like Tayo, but he does not seem to suffer from the same post-war illness. Yet Harley's addiction to alcohol is actually far more destructive than Tayo's sickness. Being unable to sit in silence or care for sheep because he is so intent on alcohol, Harley is not at peace with the world and nature, and has given up on caring.

Since the incident with the sheep, Harley's family tries to keep him away from bars and beer. Yet Harley always finds a way to get his next drink. Harley convinces Tayo to go with him and ride the burro "up the line," that is to the string of bars along route 66. Tayo puts a gunny sack on the gray mule as a saddle and ties the mule's lead rope to the burro's reins. Tayo mounts the mule, feeling like a little kid again and remembering how Uncle Josiah taught him to ride a horse.

Harley will do seemingly anything to get to a bar, not even caring for his own comfort or dignity by riding a bony burro or mule. Though Tayo is not an alcoholic, he is easily swayed into Harley's quest for a drink. Tayo's memory of Uncle Josiah suggests both the fluid nature of time in the novel, as past and present blur together, and that Tayo has reverted to childhood. As when he first learned from his Uncle Josiah, Tayo must learn once again how to be a man after he has been destroyed by the war.

Tayo and Harley set off for the closest bar, as the wind blows constantly. The burro tries to drift off to the side of the road to graze, stubbornly resisting Harley's half-hearted attempts to keep it on course. The burro reminds Tayo of his grandmother. Old Grandma stubbornly holds on to Rocky's memory, telling everyone how Rocky promised to buy her a kerosene stove with his army pay. After Rocky died, Auntie bought Grandmother a stove with some of Rocky's insurance money.

Instead of working with the burro's natural instincts, Harley fights against them. As Harley mostly fails, it seems as though nature is still stronger than human desires. It is humans who must adapt to living in harmony with nature. Old Grandma turns Rocky into a story. Auntie focuses on the material object that Old Grandma wanted, ignoring the fact that buying the stove will not actually solve Old Grandma's stubborn desire to keep Rocky's memory alive through story.

Auntie and Old Grandma still talk about Rocky and his plans to go to college and play football, so much so that Tayo feels as if Rocky is still alive and Tayo himself was the one who died in the war. Thinking of Rocky makes Tayo start to cry and he falls off the gray mule. Harley helps Tayo up and pretends that Tayo is just suffering from sunstroke. Tayo blames his fall on the wind, then turns to the side and **vomits**.

Auntie and Old Grandma keep Rocky alive by speaking about him, showing the power of oral storytelling in this novel, Rocky practically becomes a legendary figure in Tayo's eyes. The boundary lines between Rocky and Tayo, and death and life, are also blurred as Tayo feels as if he *is the dead one. This feeling is worse than actually being dead, and Tayo's stomach troubles continue to show that he is out of balance with the world and his native legacy.*

SECTION 2

When Tayo returns to New Laguna from the Veteran's Hospital, Auntie takes care of him. Tayo knows that Auntie does this out of duty, not love, the way that she took care of him as a child to cover up the shame of Little Sister (her sister and Tayo's mother) sleeping with a white man. Tayo knows that Auntie never loved him as much as she loved Rocky, her biological son. Auntie resents Tayo for surviving the war while Rocky did not, even as she relishes the sympathy and respect that Rocky's death gains for her from her fellow Christians.

Though the Pueblo people are supposed to honor family above all things, Auntie does not accept Tayo because he is of mixed blood. Auntie insists on cultural purity among the Pueblo people, ironically making her own family weaker in the process. Especially once Rocky is gone, Auntie focuses only on her own purity rather than welcoming the chance to strengthen her family in its time of mourning.

Auntie still makes Rocky and Josiah's beds when she comes into the room to check on Tayo. Tayo gets off his own bed so that Auntie can clean his sheets. Tayo tries to sit in a chair, but Auntie forces him into Rocky's bed. Laying in Rocky's bed makes Tayo vomit. Old Grandma comes in and Tayo blames his upset **stomach** on the light coming in from the window. Old Grandma shuts the blinds, and Tayo lays in the darkness thinking of Rocky and Josiah.

Auntie forcing Tayo in Rocky's bed suggests that Auntie wants to have Rocky back instead of Tayo. Tayo is, of course, unable to be Rocky, and does not want to dishonor Rocky's memory by trying. His upset stomach shows how Tayo is not in tune with his Native heritage or the world because he is so focused on the loss of Rocky and Josiah. In closing the blinds, Grandma shows that she understands Tayo's lack of harmony with the outside world. The implication is that her connection to her own native history and senses gives her that understanding.

Old Grandma and Robert, Auntie's husband, mostly leave Tayo alone as he recovers. Now that Josiah is dead, Robert must take care of all the ranch work. Tayo offers to help Robert when he gets better, realizing that he never would have spoken to Robert if Josiah was still alive. Robert gratefully accepts, but Tayo does not recover quickly. Finally, after many days, old Grandma suggests they call a medicine man to help Tayo. Auntie refuses, saying that a medicine man will be unable to help Tayo because of Tayo's white blood.

The silence and distance between Tayo and the other members of his family seems unnatural. The novel suggests that Tayo should be closer to his grandmother and to Robert. One way to recover from the tragedy of Josiah's death would be to get closer to his remaining family, but Tayo is not yet able to do so. Grandmother stays faithful to traditional Pueblo ways by suggesting a medicine man, but Auntie shows both her distaste for the old rituals and her resentment over Tayo's mixed blood by refusing.

Old Grandma sends for Ku'oosh despite Auntie's protests that a medicine man will reignite gossip about Tayo's mother and her wild ways. When he comes, Ku'oosh sits at Tayo's bedside and speaks to Tayo in the Laguna language. Ku'oosh describes a cave that Tayo remembers exploring as a child with Rocky. Ku'oosh then tells Tayo that the world is fragile, choosing a specific Laguna word for fragile that connotes an intricate web of entangled processes.

Ku'oosh's care with language reinforces the power of stories, as one wrong word can have undesired consequences. Ku'oosh explicitly mentions how the world is interconnected. The danger in these connections is that one misstep can be enough to knock the entire world out of balance. According to Auntie, Tayo has disrupted the world's balance since his birth because of his mixed blood. She continues to believe in purity as the answer to imbalance.

Ku'oosh asks Tayo about his experience in the white people's war, and tells Tayo that Tayo has to do something to help heal the world now that he is home. Tayo frets over his part in the war, as the mechanical weapons he had to use in the war mean that Tayo doesn't even know for sure if he personally killed someone. The novel provides the lyrics to a song that describes the old ritual Scalp Ceremony meant to honor and purify warriors who had touched dead enemies. Ku'oosh explains that the Scalp Ceremony no longer cures warriors, however, after the interference of white people in the Native American world.

Ku'oosh (and the novel) explicitly ties the war to white people, making "white culture" the cause of death and destruction. Modern, mechanical methods of war, in which death happens not face to face but from a distance, are far different from the old Pueblo ways of warfare. These changes mean that the ceremony meant to help warriors will no longer be enough to cure the sickness that comes from causing the loss of life. Life is sacred in the Pueblo philosophy – and even life taken in battle must be given respect – but the mass war of "white culture" that was on display in WWII seems to take life for granted.

Tayo is dejected after Ku'oosh leaves, convinced that his actions in the war cannot be cured. Auntie comes in with Indian tea and a bowl of sweet cornmeal mush. Though Tayo no longer cares if he lives at all, he is finally able to eat the cornmeal and keep it in his **stomach**. Gradually, Tayo begins to gain strength and eat again.

Though Ku'oosh's Scalp Ceremony may not have cured Tayo completely, Tayo's conversation with the medicine man seems to have brought Tayo closer to peace with the old Native ways – indicated by the fact that Tayo's stomach is better able to take in food and nourish Tayo's body.

Tayo goes out with Emo and Harley to a bar with some other war veterans. The war vets all spend their disability checks on beer and whiskey, and the alcohol helps Tayo numb his anger and loss. The veterans tell stories of nights they went out on leave in Los Angeles. Their uniforms earned attention from women, even white women. Tayo knows that these women were attracted only to the uniform, not the Native American men inside them.

The call of alcohol is tempting because it allows the veterans to ignore or hide from the emptiness of their lives. When they are drunk, the veterans can pretend they are still a valued part of American society, the way they were as soldiers during the war. Acceptance in American society is shown through sexual desirability. Modern American culture, as seen in the actions of white women, was apparently happy to use Native Americans as soldiers (thus respecting the uniform), but does not accept them as people.

The other veterans push Tayo to tell a story from the glory days as a Marine. Tayo stands and begins to tell a story about Indians who went to war and earned the respect of their country, only to return to discrimination and second-class treatment once the war was over. Tayo invokes his half-breed status to "speak for both sides," and call out white people for their prejudice. Harley and Leroy force Tayo to sit back down, noticing that the rest of the bar is getting nervous. Tayo calms himself, knowing that the other veterans just want to have a good time.

Tayo doesn't seem to fit in anywhere due to his white blood, as white Americans treat him poorly for his Native American looks and other Native Americans distrust Tayo's white heritage. Tayo, by speaking for both sides, has the potential to be a bridge between these two conflicting cultures. Yet the other veterans do not want to grapple with the difficult, though possibly valuable work of bringing cultures together.

Tayo knows that the other veterans use liquor and the attention of white women to feel like they belong in America, not caring that it is white people's cultural dominance that makes them feel like outsiders in the first place. Tayo begins to cry for his friends, knowing the other veterans will think that he is crying over what the Japanese soldiers did to Rocky. Yet Tayo cannot bring himself to hate the Japanese.

White culture is portrayed as destructive within the novel because it does not accept any other cultures – it seeks only dominance. The other Native Americans have unfortunately internalized the lie that white culture should be dominant, as shown by their desire for white women more than any other sexual partners. Tayo's inability to hate the Japanese who were supposedly his enemies shows that Tayo is willing to embrace different cultures, that he sees not other cultures as the enemy but hate itself as the enemy.

Tayo flashes back to carrying Rocky on a blanket in the Philippine jungle. Two Japanese soldiers, one short, one tall, stop Tayo and the corporal. The tall soldier reminds Tayo of a classmate he once knew at Indian school in Fort Defiance. Tayo tries to talk to the Japanese soldier about school, but the soldier is simply confused. The Japanese soldiers put Rocky on the ground, cover Rocky with the blanket, and then point their rifle at Rocky's face. Tayo turns away, later resenting himself for not listening for the gun shot. The corporal comforts Tayo that Rocky was already dead as the Japanese soldiers take them to a prison camp.

Tayo again brings the Philippine jungle and the Southwestern region together by conflating a Japanese soldier with an old Native American classmate. Tayo did not hear the gunshot that killed Rocky, mirroring the way he did not know if he had personally killed someone. Part of respecting the sanctity of life means bearing witness to death instead of ignoring it or allowing it to go unhonored.

Back in Tayo's present, Harley checks to see if Tayo is feeling better yet after his "sunstroke" attack. Harley tries to give Tayo some grapes to eat, but Tayo can't handle the sound of Harley's teeth crunching the grape seeds. Tayo walks a bit away from Harley, coming to a stream that is still flowing despite the drought.

The destructive force of crunching the grape seeds reminds Tayo of the battle field. The still flowing stream in the drought indicates that despite the fact that nature is out of balance, it still survives, has the potential to heal.

Tayo remembers Uncle Josiah telling him about this particular stream, when they were rinsing off with ice cold water after a hard day's work on the ranch. Josiah said that this spring is where the Laguna people first came from and they have to remember to respect that land as their birthplace. Even in drought years, people must keep in mind that wind and dust are as much a part of life as sun and sky. Josiah explains that people bring the drought when they forget how to act properly. Tayo kneels down and drinks from the stream.

At the stream, Tayo literally comes back to the source of his Native heritage, starting a journey that will bring him back in harmony with the Pueblo traditions and the land that they live on. Yet this harmony means balance in the purest sense of the word. Even the wind and dust – ostensibly harmful aspects of the drought – are necessary for life. According to Josiah's advice, Tayo can help end the drought by acting in the proper Pueblo traditions. Tayo drinking from the stream, bringing nature directly into himself, is a signal that he is starting to reconnect.

The novel shares a story about a town that was visited by a Ck'o'yo magician. All the townspeople were interested in his magic, even those that were supposed to be caring for the Corn Mother altar. The magician makes water flow out of rock and animals appear out of air. The people are so entranced that they stop caring about anything but magic. The Corn Mother, Nau'ts'ity'i, becomes angry at the people's neglect and takes away all plants, baby animals, and rain clouds from the town.

The Ck'o'yo magic can stand in for many things that distract the Pueblo people from caring for the land – that is, the Corn Mother – the way they should. The magic seems to represent all of the wonders of modern life that distance people from the work it takes to create things by promising instant gratification. Silko points out the ways that modern American culture focuses on the material things, harming people and the environment.

Harley and Tayo continue toward the bar on their burro and mule. They finally flag down a truck and catch a ride, leaving the animals by the side of the road. The bar is dark and dingy, but Tayo doesn't mind because he can focus on his memories of Rocky.

While darkness usually represents a space of fear or uncertainty, for Tayo the darkness offers space for reflection and peace. Again, Silko flips the literary device of using white for good and black for evil by making darkness a healing opportunity.

Tayo thinks about a time when he and Rocky went deer hunting. After they fell a deer, Tayo had hesitantly stroked the deer's head while Rocky sharpened his knife. Tayo covers the deer's head with his jacket when Rocky starts gutting the deer. Rocky asks why Tayo did that, though Tayo knows that Rocky remembers the old ritual of respectfully covering a deer's eyes before cutting its flesh.

Tayo follows the old tradition (covering the deer's head) by using a modern element (his jacket), showing how the ceremonies can be adapted to modern life. Rocky's question of why Tayo covered the deer's head is not a question about the action itself. It is a question about the sentiment behind the ritual, asking why it is even necessary to give respect to the deer when humans have weapons that Rocky believes makes them more powerful than nature.

Rocky is a straight A, star football and track player at the boarding school in Albuquerque. To continue looking successful in the eyes of his teachers and coaches, Rocky ignores all the old, native ways. Old Grandma scolds Rocky for rejecting his family, but Auntie is proud that her son will redeem their family in the white world.

Rocky shows how Native Americans can completely reject the old traditions in favor of "white culture." At first, this seems to be a good thing for Rocky, as he is successful in all the ways that matter for modern America. Yet Rocky has to leave his native heritage behind to do so, suggesting that modern America has no place for Native peoples.

Rocky finishes gutting the deer, then he and Tayo each take a pinch of cornmeal to feed the deer's spirit so that the deer herds will not be offended and refuse to come back the next hunting season. Rocky is embarrassed to think of all the rituals he knows that old Grandma and Josiah will do with the deer's head and carcass, but Tayo appreciates the ceremonies that honor the deer.

Rocky may be doubtful of the ceremonies, but he continues to do some of the most important actions. The cornmeal "nourishes" the deer's spirit, just as the deer will give food to the Pueblo people. The ceremony forms a relationship of mutual care between the humans and the deer, rather than humans dominating nature as is typical in the white culture portrayed in the novel.

Back in the bar, Harley jokes with Tayo about how quiet Tayo is, though Tayo knows that Harley is really worried about the last time Tayo went to a bar and almost killed a fellow veteran named Emo. Tayo reassures Harley that he won't be using any broken beer bottles as weapons tonight. Everyone blames the attack on either an old grudge between Emo and Tayo since grade school, or the fact that Tayo was drunk and is a mentally unstable war veteran.

Rather than seeing silence as peace and meditation, Harley views silence as scary and dangerous – a sign that he has become addicted to white culture's constant noise. Though Tayo's true reasons for attacking Emo are left ambiguous here, the reasons other people ascribe to the violence show the damaging conception of Native Americans as savages who cannot handle modern life.

The novel returns to the Corn Mother story, explaining how the people were starving after the Corn Mother took the rain. The people notice that hummingbird is still fat and healthy. Hummingbird explains that three worlds below this world, the plants and flowers are still blooming. Hummingbird flies down there and has plenty to eat.

By intertwining Tayo's story with the Corn Mother story, Silko asserts that Tayo's "modern" story is just as vital to Pueblo culture as the Corn Mother story is. The parallels between the stories further suggests Silko's ideas about how things both stay the same and must change, how adaptation of a story or ritual can in fact allow it to continue to access ancient truths and knowledge in a changing world. Put another way: the structure of Silko's book reflects her ideas about the necessity of adaptation. At the same time, the Corn Mother story offers a kind of "interpretive key" for Tayo's story: in this part, Hummingbird has to go down to the fourth world – a more spiritual world in the Pueblo cosmology – to find sustenance. People are not able to reach this fourth world because they have lost touch with their spiritual roots, just as Tayo and the Pueblo around him have.

In the bar, Harley laughs that Tayo was lucky not to go to jail for what he did to Emo. Tayo thinks back to the night he attacked Emo. Emo was sitting in a bar, drinking and ranting about how Indians are mistreated in America. Emo thinks tribes should take back everything that white people stole from them, starting with stealing white women. Tayo feels sick, thinking that white people don't have everything because only Indians have droughts.

Though the novel is sympathetic to the fact that Native Americans face oppression in modern America, Emo's violent reaction is clearly the wrong response. Again, white women are used as the symbol for acceptance in America. Tayo thinks that white people do not "have droughts," meaning that white people are privileged enough not to notice when the environment is not in proper balance to sustain farming. White people ignore the problem, or use overwhelming force to allow themselves to ignore it, thereby stripping the land further.

The other veterans laugh at Tayo as he silently drinks while they all talk. Tayo goes to the bathroom, thinking about how humans have the power to "create" water. When Tayo returns to his friends, Emo insults Tayo for being a half-breed with white blood. Tayo refuses to respond, thinking about what the war taught him about Indian women who sleep with white men and Indian men who sleep with white women.

Humans may cause destruction to the land, but they also have the power to replenish it if they are careful. While it is a bit unorthodox for Tayo to realize this in the bathroom, it is another sign that the novel accepts natural processes without embarrassment, unlike modern "white" culture. Modern culture also surrounds sexual relationships in shame, choosing to prioritize cultural purity and keep Native Americans and white people separate. Though Emo wants to sleep with white women as a status symbol, he hypocritically hates any sign that Native American blood has been diluted with white blood.

The novel shares one of the stories the veterans tell, about an Indian man who pretends to be Italian in order to sleep with a blonde woman. Pinkie and Leroy laugh at Emo's story then tease Emo about the time a redhead found out he was really an Indian (because another soldier called him Geronimo) and fainted in Emo's bed. Emo laughs, but Tayo can tell Emo is angry.

Native Americans may be able to sleep with white women, but they have to lie about their heritage to do so. This is another sign that Native Americans are not free to openly express their identities in modern American culture. Furthermore, it points to a future in which Native Americans will be unable to procreate or pass their Native heritage to another generation. Emo wants to believe that he is accepted, but he cannot hide his true identity forever, causing him to lash out in shame and anger.

Emo turns on Tayo and jeers at him for never telling any war stories. Emo then takes out a little bag and spills teeth onto the table. Emo explains that these teeth come from Japanese soldiers he took prisoner. Tayo fells incredibly sick and tense, drinking more to try and relax himself. Emo continues to talk about how they should have blown up all the Japanese people with **the atomic bomb** when they had the chance. Tayo flashes back to a childhood memory of smashing melons in the garden, violently describing the way the melon rinds exploded and killed ants and flies.

Emo shows no respect for the lives he took, reducing entire people to the teeth he took from them. The white teeth call to mind a view of white culture that reduces people to tools. This dishonor is pushed even further when Emo praises the atomic bomb, a symbol of the worst selfish and destructive tendencies that the novel sees in white culture. Tayo's memory compares the atomic bomb to a small child doing incredible damage to a garden. The people who died in the atomic bomb attacks were as powerless as the ants that Tayo killed by stomping on the melons.

Tayo feels as if the alcohol is loosening his anger, rather than numbing it. As Emo continues to play with his bag of teeth, Tayo snaps a beer bottle under the table. Tayo leaps on the table, calling Emo, "Killer!" and then rams the broken beer bottle into Emo's **stomach**. The cops come and drag Tayo off Emo. Tayo's hand is cut badly from the glass, but Tayo cannot feel anything. As Tayo rides in the back of the cop car, he is no longer sure who to hate: the Japanese soldiers, Emo, or himself.

Tayo's reasons for attacking Emo are made clear her. Rather than Tayo being the crazed, drunken savage that people think he is because of the attack, he actually attacks Emo for dishonoring life and Pueblo philosophy. Slashing at Emo's stomach shows that Emo is completely unconnected from the Pueblo stories and proper behavior. Yet the novel underscores the fundamental connections between all living things: though Tayo had righteous reasons for attacking Emo, it is impossible to hurt Emo without also hurting himself. The violence Tayo has done will come back to haunt him in more than just an injury to his hand, and the novel is clear here that even if Emo is monstrous, Tayo's violent response is not one that will bring healing of any sort.

SECTION 3

Rocky takes Tayo to an army recruitment meeting, where the recruiter seems disappointed to be talking to a small group of Indian men. Rocky animatedly asks the recruiter how to become a pilot while Tayo looks at the pamphlets. Rocky then asks the recruiter if he and "his brother" can sign up together. This is the first time that Rocky has ever called Tayo "brother."

The recruiter seems to resent talking to Native Americans even though he should ostensibly be grateful that these men want to serve their country. Rocky wants to join the army, an American institution that will prove he belongs to mainstream American culture. Yet at this moment when Rocky might leave his Native identity behind, he also affirms his deep family bond with Tayo for the first time.

Tayo went to live with Auntie when he was 4 years old. He can remember small details about his mother, her smell, the way her hug felt. Tayo's mother had told him that he would be happy living with a new brother, but Rocky was angry when Tayo showed up at their door. Josiah and Old Grandma treat Rocky and Tayo equally, but Auntie gives Rocky preferential treatment whenever no one is looking. Tayo thinks Auntie wants Tayo to be just close enough to the family to see how he is being excluded.

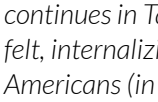
Josiah and Old Grandma are able to welcome Tayo as a normal member of the family, but Auntie cannot seem to see past Tayo's half-white parentage to see that he is still a valued part of their Native community. Auntie's treatment of Tayo echoes how Native Americans are treated in American society, as Native Americans are American but do not enjoy many of the privileges that white Americans have. Put another way: Auntie acts in a way that mirrors white society.

When Rocky and Tayo started school, Rocky pulls away from everyone in the family. Tayo understands Auntie much better than Rocky does, spending more time with her while Rocky plays sports at school. Auntie tries to be the perfect Christian, but the individual focus of the European religion keeps Auntie apart from her native community. In fact, the Laguna Elders think Auntie should have been able to bring Little Sister back to proper life in the Laguna community, and helped Little Sister give up alcohol and form a suitable relationship with a Native man instead of sleeping with white men. Auntie chose to focus on her own individual purity instead of helping her whole family.

Auntie is especially concerned with her own piety and reputation, such that she ignores the well-being of her whole community. Ironically, though Auntie resents Little Sister for "weakening" their family through her wild actions, it is actually Auntie who damages the family relationships by rejecting both Little Sister and later Tayo in favor of maintaining her own perfect image. Like her son Rocky, Auntie turns her back on some of the old ways in order to insure her own personal success.

Little Sister felt so much shame for the ways white people describe the savagery of Indians that she tries to act white by drinking and sleeping with white men. This humiliation reflects on the rest of the Laguna community, and no one can have any peace until Auntie brings Little Sister back into harmony with the tribe once more. Instead of doing so, Auntie tells Tayo stories of his mother's wild days and refuses to let Tayo keep a photo of his mother. Josiah finds Tayo crying over the lost photo, but Tayo is too ashamed to admit to Josiah why he is so upset.

Ceremony *now delves into why Auntie dislikes Tayo, showing the shame that Little Sister brought on their family by involving herself with men of other races. But in contrast with the individualism the novel sees in white culture, the Pueblo community is only strong and healthy if all of its members are well. Auntie instead chooses to forget her sister, perpetuating a cycle of unhealthy relationships that continues in Tayo. Tayo seems to feel some of the shame his mother felt, internalizing the poor opinions that others have of Native Americans (in Little Sister's case) or people of mixed blood (in Tayo's case).*



The novel returns to the poem of the Corn Mother story. The people cannot follow Hummingbird into the world below, so Hummingbird tells them how to create a messenger. They must fill a jar with dirt, corn flour and water, then repeat the incantation "After four days you will be alive" four times.

Hummingbird relates a ceremony that brings people back to the foundation of their lives, reconnecting them with the land and corn instead of focusing on the magic. The number four is also sacred in the Pueblo culture, as it is seen in the four seasons, the four cardinal directions, and the four stages of human life. The people's need for a "messenger" who can visit the fourth world suggests that, in Tayo's story, he may be that messenger who can cross borders.

The army recruiter questions whether Rocky and Tayo are really brothers, due to Tayo's **green eyes**, but Rocky insists. Rocky and Tayo enlist and then head back to the ranch. Tayo starts to have second thoughts, remembering that he is supposed to stay and help Josiah with the ranch after Rocky graduates. Auntie is angry at their enlistment, but tells Tayo he can go on the condition that he keeps Rocky safe.

The relationship between Rocky and Tayo now goes deeper than blood. Calling Tayo "brother" means more now that Ceremony *has shown how Rocky was initially angry that Tayo came to live with him. Despite the fact that Auntie does not fully accept Tayo into the family, Tayo is actually more connected to family obligations. While Rocky has always planned to leave his Native heritage behind, Tayo was set to be faithful to the traditional way of life.*

A month before Tayo and Rocky graduate high school, Josiah makes a $500 deal with Ulibarri, a Mexican rancher, to buy **cattle**. Tayo helps Josiah pick out 20 of the best cows and the two men start to herd the small group back to their ranch. Josiah is excited at the prospect of breeding these stronger, hybrid cattle instead of the weak Hereford breed. Josiah laughs at the scientific books about cattle breeding, trusting native wisdom more than white studies. Yet Rocky believes that white scientists are far more knowledgeable about the best care for these animals.

Uncle Josiah dreams of a herd of cattle that can better handle the difficult terrain of New Mexico and the constant possibility of drought, a toughness that can only be found in a hybrid breed rather than a pure-blood prestigious breed like the Herefords. Josiah knows better than the white scientists who prize pure blood over the health of the actual cow. Rocky, however, trusts white society more than his native heritage.

Auntie is also angry about the **cattle** deal, thinking that Josiah has somehow been tricked by Ulibarri and a Mexican woman who works with Ulibarri. Auntie gets ready to go to Church, muttering about how the entire town will be gossiping about Josiah and the Mexican woman. Tayo thinks that Auntie appreciates the chance to feel more righteous than her family.

Auntie trusts no one who is not Pueblo, believing that all Mexicans are only liars and cheats. While Josiah is able to see the goodness of someone of another race, and get a good deal on his cattle, Auntie cannot see any goodness in anything that is different from what she knows. Tayo sees Auntie's complaining as a self-indulgent way to make herself feel better, but with the cost of putting down the very people she should be supporting.

Josiah and Tayo unload the **cows** at their pasture and the herd nervously clumps as far from the truck as possible. They leave the cows to settle in and come back to check on them a week later. The cows are no where to be found, having broken through the pasture fence to look for water. Josiah is proud of this wildness, taking it as a sign that these cattle are survivors. The cattle constantly move south, presumably trying to return to their first home.

The cows' hybrid parentage is a huge asset. While other ranchers might resent that the cattle do not stay obediently in one place, Josiah sees that the intelligence and initiative of these cattle will keep them alive. In land as arid as New Mexico, the cows have to be able to adapt and follow the water wherever it goes. The cows' constant desire to go south towards home echoes Tayo's homecoming earlier in the novel. Silko subtly sets up parallels between the cows and Tayo.

That June, Josiah decides to brand the **cattle**, adding a small mark to the large butterfly brand that the Mexican ranch used. Some of the cows have had calves, and Tayo can see the strong Hereford shoulders mixed with the hybrid cattle's lithe athletic build in the babies.

The butterfly is a symbol of freedom, making this brand less a mark of ownership and dominance than a mark of belonging to a specific family and ranch. Tayo can already see that these cows will combine the best of both their Hereford and Mexican parents. Hybridity is not a detriment, the novel asserts over and over, but a way of taking advantage of different strengths.

Josiah goes to see the Mexican woman to thank her again for letting him know that Ulibarri had **cattle** to sell. Josiah had fallen in love with her the past spring, enchanted by her **hazel eyes**. The Corn Mother story breaks in to explain how a fly was born in the jar. Hummingbird takes Fly with him down to the fourth world to talk to Corn Mother. The novel then moves back to Josiah and the Mexican woman, as Josiah met her at Lalo's bar in Cubero and then could not get her face out of his head.

Night Swan's green eyes mark her as another character that is open to cultural diversity and hybridity. Josiah and Night Swan help each other find a way to make a living in New Mexico just as Fly and Hummingbird help each other on their mission to return corn to the people.

The Mexican Woman, called Night Swan, tells Josiah all about her past as a dancer in cantinas across the Southwest. The first time she enchanted a man with her dancing, his wife found out and Night Swan was run out of the town of Las Cruces. This man was a parasite, feeding off of Night Swan's energy to distract from his own empty life. Night Swan danced wherever she could, feeling how her dances could restore balance to the land. After Night Swan had a daughter, and then a granddaughter, she decided to retire in Cubero because she liked the view of the mountain Tse-pi'na.

White people are often portrayed as being parasitic in the novel, as the white man feeds off of Night Swan's dancing here. Night Swan sees her dances as a kind of ceremony that keeps her in touch with the earth. Night Swan lives at the fringes of "proper" white society, but she is very in tune with the needs of the land. By choosing to live in Cubero, Night Swan decides for herself where her homeland is.

The people of Cubero do not entirely trust Night Swan, seeing her as a whore, but the men visit her often. The women of Cubero content themselves with gossiping about what the old Indian Josiah does the many times his truck is parked outside of Night Swan's apartment. Auntie is livid about the rumors, claiming that Old Grandma is scandalized by what the town is saying about Josiah. Tayo knows that Old Grandma does not care what people say about their family because she already knows all the juicy gossip about everyone else in New Laguna.

People gossip about the interracial relationship between Night Swan and Josiah, as this kind of cultural mixing scares those who believe in the lie of cultural purity. Old Grandma doesn't seem to care about the relationship, understanding that gossiping about people is one way to stay involved in other's lives. Gossiping about people becomes one more thing that draws the people of New Laguna together, rather than setting them apart as Auntie does.

The **cattle** take so much of Josiah's time that he can no longer sneak away to see Night Swan. Josiah hires another ranch hand to help with the sheep camp while he focuses on the cattle. The ranch hand, Mike, is an excellent worker, but Auntie does not trust him because he is an Apache. Mike leaves the ranch to become a mechanic in California and Josiah is forced to hire his alcoholic cousin Pinkie to watch the sheep.

Even more than not trusting anyone who is not Native American, Auntie dislikes any one who is not Pueblo. These strict judgments give Auntie a very limited view of the multicultural world of the Southwest. Mike was actually far better for the ranch and the sheep than the alcoholic Pinkie is, even though Pinkie is a full-blood Pueblo man. Just as it asserts the value of hybridity, the novel consistently highlights the weaknesses of any insistence on purity.

That summer, Tayo and Josiah spend their days in the fields while Rocky ostensibly prepares for his football scholarship at the university. Tayo knows that Rocky is really planning to go into the army, and spending his afternoons in Paguete with his new girlfriend. Auntie frets about the girlfriend, but can't reprimand her favored son. Meanwhile, old Grandma starts to notice Josiah's infatuation with "that Mexican woman" and tells him a cautionary story about their old dog that was run over on the highway because he was chasing a she-dog in heat.

Old Grandma uses the story to comment on Josiah's situation, letting him (and the reader) decide if the story means that Josiah should stop seeing Night Swan or if he should simply be careful as he does so. While Old Grandma does object to Josiah's relationship with Night Swan, her cautionary tale seems to have more to do with not letting a woman distract Josiah from his work, rather than objecting to Night Swan's race in particular.

Tayo thinks back to the day they buried his mother, a dry day much like the drought they are currently having. As they left the graveyard, Josiah had given Tayo a candy cane and told him not to cry. Now, Tayo tries all the rituals he can find to help end the dry spell. He follows the stories of cloud priests for what helped in past droughts, and is rewarded with cooler air. Tayo watches a spider come out to drink from a small spring and thinks about the story where Spider Woman helps Sun Man win the storm clouds back from the Gambler. Tayo doesn't know if he should believe the old stories after his white education, but he still feels the stories' truth in his **gut**.

Tayo still believes in the old stories, going through with the actions of the traditional rain ceremonies. Still, Tayo has some doubts despite the feeling in his stomach – the home of all stories – that tells him this is right.

The next day, Tayo sees storm clouds gathering by the mountain Tse-pi'na. All the ranch hands gather to watch the rain start falling. Josiah gives Tayo a note to deliver to Night Swan, as he was going to see her today but the rain means he has too much work to do on the ranch.

The rain comes from the direction of the sacred mountain, showing how the land dictates all aspects of life and spirituality for the Pueblo people. Josiah has seemingly taken the lesson of Old Grandma's story to heart, putting work in front of his relationship with Night Swan.

Tayo goes to Night Swan's apartment in Cubero, hearing her Victrola play a Spanish record singing "y volveré" (I will return). Night Swan opens the door wearing a blue kimono and Tayo is overwhelmed by the blue of Night Swan's room, the breeze from the window, and Night Swan's perfume in the air. Tayo and Night Swan make love while the rain patters on the roof. Night Swan then tells Tayo that she has been watching him because of his **hazel eyes**. Tayo explains that the other kids teased him for his "Mexican eyes," but Night Swan reminds Tayo that fools are always afraid of change. She says that Tayo is now "a part of it," though Night Swan does not explain what "it" is.

The song that Night Swan plays reappears in many dreams Tayo has after he comes back from the war, as Tayo is still trying to return mentally even after he returns physically. Blue is a sacred color for the Pueblo people, and the intense blue-ness of Night Swan's room marks her as a good omen in Tayo's journey. Night Swan singles out Tayo's eyes, the product of another interracial coupling like the sexual relationship that Tayo and Night Swan just took part in. Night Swan's "it" seems to refer to hybridity, to bridging between cultures through love, rather than fearing the change that this might bring.

SECTION 4

Returning to Tayo's present, Tayo leaves Harley with yet another beer and walks out of the bar. Tayo looks toward the sacred mountain Tse-pi'na, and walks west until he reaches a small café. The Mexican man who owns the café brings Tayo a bowl of menudo (a Mexican stew) then goes back to swatting flies as the bugs buzz around the window. Tayo then walks back to Harley's bar, thinking about the time Uncle Josiah had caught him killing flies in the house. Josiah reminded Tayo that the green bottle fly helped the people earn the rain back from the Corn Mother. Tayo is humiliated by his actions, but Josiah tells him that the flies will forgive his mistakes.

Tayo mentions the fly of the Corn Mother story, telling the ending of the story-poem that has run through the novel so far. This story clearly affects Tayo's behavior, as he chooses not to bother the flies out of respect for fly's actions in the story. Though the flies may be annoying, Tayo upholds the Pueblo religion by respecting their place in the environment. By including this scene, the novel shows how the stories affect and live on in Tayo, even as Tayo is beginning to create his own story.

When Tayo gets back to the bar, Harley is gone. Tayo walks to Cubero and sits on Night Swan's stoop. Tayo remembers sitting here with Rocky when Lalo's bar was still profitable. Tayo is happy sitting under the cottonwood trees that have been there since his childhood. Tayo picks up a piece of old plaster and marks his hands the way ceremonial dancers paint their bodies with white clay. Tayo then goes up into Night Swan's apartment, even though Night Swan moved away after Josiah's funeral. Tayo can see no trace that Night Swan was ever there. He leaves and sleeps in an old barn that night.

When Tayo marks his hands with chalk, he adds white spots to his brown skin. This is another parallel to Josiah's hybrid cattle, which have been described as brown with white spots. These white spots are one of the few places in the novel where the color white does not have a bad connotation. It mirrors the way that Tayo accepts his white parentage without giving in to the destructive practices that the novel sees in white culture.

The novel returns to the poem of Corn Woman's story. Fly wants to eat everything but Hummingbird makes sure they get to Corn Mother. Corn Mother accepts their offerings then tells them that she will return the rain clouds if the people get Old Buzzard to purify their town. The novel returns to Tayo in the present. He tells Robert that he is feeling better and can help Robert with the ranch work. Robert tells Tayo that Ku'oosh thinks he still needs more healing.

Fly has to learn how to respect the environment and harvest in a sustainable way. This is another lesson the Pueblo people can learn from the Corn Mother story. The development in the Corn Mother story parallels Tayo's journey for healing – once fly and hummingbird reach Corn Mother, they still need to do more for the town. Tayo has healed somewhat, but there are more steps in his journey.

Robert and Tayo take a trip to the city of Gallup and Tayo is reminded of the poverty and hopelessness of the city, especially for Native peoples. Many people of color live under the bridge in Gallup, waiting for the white welfare officials to chase them out each year before the tourists come for Gallup Ceremonial time. The children born under the bridge have mixed blood and learn to survive on the fringes of society.

The Gallup ceremonial should be a time in which Native peoples are celebrated in Gallup, but the white welfare officials actually care nothing for Native Americans beyond using them as a tool to attract tourism revenue. This is another way that white culture objectifies and oppresses Native Americans. The children in the city are of mixed blood, another reminder that the future is turning to hybridity.

Tayo remembers when he was a little boy and lived under that same bridge with his mother. Tayo finds his own food and even sleeps on his own when his mother is busy with the men she meets at bars. Tayo observes the other people who live in the same miserable conditions, and is especially traumatized by a woman who miscarries a baby and then buries it in yellow sand. The white people of Gallup never notice the children who live under the bridge, only seeing the women who line up to offer their services for money or booze.

Yellow is another sacred color for the Pueblo people, underscoring the tragedy of this loss of life. Alcoholism and poverty are an even bigger problem for Native Americans in the city than they are for Native Americans on reservations, even though many Native Americans came to the city to find more economic opportunity. To the white people, these children are invisible, another privilege of belonging to the dominant white culture.

One day, police come to clear out the settlements under the bridge while Tayo's mother is out with a man. Tayo hides in a tamaric and willow grove and watches the police spray the area and burn the shelters people have built. Tayo prays for his mother to come back. Moving back to the Corn Woman story, Hummingbird and Fly find old Buzzard, but old Buzzard tells them to come back with an offering of tobacco.

Tamaric and willow are plants that the Pueblo people use for bandages and healing purposes. Tayo shows an affinity for the Pueblo culture even though he has not grown up in it. Rather than offering the Native Americans help, the police simply raze the entire area. White culture, as represented by these police, cares nothing for the welfare of Native Americans as fellow human beings. This is a low point for the Corn Woman story as well, as Fly and Hummingbird discover that they do not have all the things they need.

In Tayo's present, Robert and Tayo stop on the bridge in Gallup, avoiding the women who ask them for money. Tayo thinks back to the day he came here with Rocky, throwing coins to the Navajo, Zuni, Laguna, and Hopi people who left their reservations for better lives only to find little opportunity to work in Gallup. Rocky wishes on his coin for a safe return from the army, but Tayo is unable to make a wish. Now on the bridge with Robert, Tayo finally wishes for a safe return.

The fact that before the war Tayo could not wish to return is a sign of his feeling of being cut off from the community around him. Now that Tayo does finally make his wish, he is ready to begin the journey that will return him to health. Yet note that Rocky's wish was not in itself enough to actually return him safely from the war. Tayo will need more help to fully return to health.

Ku'oosh has sent Tayo to Gallup to see a medicine man named Betonie. Gallup is known for the Gallup Ceremonial, an annual event organized by white men "celebrating" the Indian cultures of the Southwest, but the event actually panders to the tourists looking for Indian souvenirs. Robert and Tayo arrive at Old Betonie's house, which looks down on the Ceremonial grounds. Before they can speak, Betonie explains that he keeps his hogan (the traditional dwelling of the Navajo people) off in the hills because he is comfortable living on the land. Tayo wonders how Betonie can live so close to the poverty of Gallup, but Betonie reminds Tayo that his family built this hogan here before the city was ever constructed.

Betonie seems at first like a false medicine man, with his proximity to the insulting Gallup Ceremonial that disrespects Native traditions by using them for the amusement of white culture. Yet Betonie does keep the traditional Navajo ways by living in a hogan, which uses part of the hillside as a wall, instead of a house that would be more comfortable by white culture standards. Betonie cannot control what white culture creates, he can only make sure that he continues to follow the legacy of his Navajo ancestors even as he lives in the changing world. Betonie is an example of the sort of adapting-in-order-to-stay-the-same that the novel suggests is imperative.

Betonie can see that Tayo is unsure of his eccentric ways, and tells Tayo he can leave at any time. Tayo notices that Betonie has **hazel eyes,** like Tayo's own, and decides he can trust Betonie. Tayo follows Betonie into his hogan, which is built partly into the hillside in the old way. The small house is filled with boxes full of old things and bundles of newspapers from all over the country. Tayo struggles to take it all in, and Betonie comments that "we've" been gathering things for hundreds of years.

Betonie's hazel eyes are sign that Betonie is capable of accepting cultural hybridity. Betonie will not insist on a cultural purity that upholds Native or white culture to the detriment of everyone else. As such, Tayo does not have to be afraid or hide his own hybrid heritage. Betonie is very in touch with the historical legacy of his ancestors, but he does not preserve the hogan exactly how his family built it. Instead, Betonie honors the layers and changes of history by gathering things over time and adding to his collection.

In the hogan, Tayo sees traditional medicine man paraphernalia as well as ceremonial objects and layers of old calendars. Betonie explains that he needs all of these things to continue doing the old ceremonies nowadays. Tayo sees some Santa Fe railroad calendars from 1939 and 1940 that he recognizes because Uncle Josiah used to bring calendars back from the Santa Fe depot. Betonie tells stories about traveling on the Santa Fe rail line, after he was sent to school at the Sherman Institute in Riverside, California. There at the institute, Betonie learned English because his mother told him that "it" is carried in all the languages now.

Betonie honors the old ceremonies, but he also introduces modern elements. Betonie is uniquely capable of adapting the ceremonies to modern times. Rather than abandoning his Native heritage while at a white boarding school, Betonie learned English but stayed true to his Navajo beliefs. "It" is left ambiguous, but most likely refers to the power to have a ceremony. Betonie is able to take the best of both native and white culture, using the white language in service of native purposes.

Betonie notices that a hair has come loose from his mustache and he carefully locks the hair in a footlocker. Tayo pretends he doesn't know why Betonie would do that, but he remembers the old stories about medicine men who could wreak horrible damage on people with a single nail cutting or hair for magic power. Tayo worries aloud that the tribe has sent him to Betonie to get rid of him, not cure him. Betonie laughs, and tells Tayo he is free to leave if he wishes, as Betonie can't help anyone who is afraid of him. Tayo stays.

Betonie is careful about anything that carries his DNA, as medicine men can supposedly control other people using any small part of their body. This type of ritual points to an interconnected body, in which each small piece affects the entire body – just as small events in one region can affect the entire world. Similarly, the tribe would not simply get rid of Tayo because anything bad that happens to an individual member will negatively affect the whole tribe according to this interconnected worldview.

Tayo tells Betonie about feeling like invisible white smoke when he was in the Veteran's Hospital. Betonie says that Tayo could choose to return to the white smoke, but that living in the hospital is worse than dying. Betonie knows that the Navajo tell stories about him, and that the stories scare people away from Betonie's hogan even when Betonie is not there.

Death is a natural part of the balance of life, verses the empty living that white people have introduced to the world through their medicine. Again, white is here presented as a bad thing, connoting an existence that is unhealthily isolated from the environment and the community of all mankind. Like Tayo, Betonie is not fully accepted in his Native community, but Betonie still has his connection to the earth to keep him grounded.

Tayo tells Betonie about seeing Uncle Josiah die in the Philippines, wearing a Japanese uniform. Tayo admits that Uncle Josiah died because he had no one to help him care for his **cattle** with Rocky and Tayo gone at war. Betonie asks about Rocky but Tayo can only cry. Betonie tells Tayo that seeing Josiah in the jungle was an important part of the story, reminding Tayo that the whole world suffers from the same "witchery."

Tayo puts together the interconnected nature of the world by acknowledging that his actions during the war had an affect on Uncle Josiah back home in New Mexico. Betonie's introduction of the idea of witchery – the name that Betonie uses for human selfishness, greed, and disrespect for nature – connects Tayo's own personal travails to those of the entire world.

Tayo tells Betonie about Night Swan's **hazel eyes** and Auntie's suspicions that Night Swan was evil all along. Betonie does not respond to Tayo's questions about Night Swan, instead telling Tayo that Tayo must complete a mysterious ceremony for the sake of the world. Tayo, frustrated at Betonie's cryptic references to "the ceremony," wants to yell at Betonie all the things the white doctors told him about Indian medicine, but in his heart Tayo knows that the only way to heal himself is to help heal the world.

Green eyes are generally a positive marker in the novel, as they are for Betonie and Tayo, meaning that we can safely assume that Night Swan is in fact a good person. Yet Betonie does not fully address Tayo's question. Instead, Betonie folds the questions about Night Swan into a ceremony that will help the entire world. Tayo has to choose between believing what white culture teaches about the uselessness of Native American traditions, or staying true to his identity.

Betonie describes the changes that he has had to make to the traditional ceremonies in order to adapt them to the current generation. Though it is important to respect the rituals and avoid tampering with them needlessly, he says that the rituals have to able to change or they will die and all mankind will die with them. Tayo wants to believe Betonie, but has trouble seeing the healing power in the junk cluttered around Betonie's rooms.

The specific actions and the words of the ceremonies are important, as Betonie does not advocate for completely throwing out the old traditions. Betonie simply understands that traditions can change without becoming detached from their historical roots, and in fact that only by changing can they maintain that power in a changing world.

Betonie and Tayo walk outside, and Tayo comments on all the land in Gallup that was stolen by white men. Betonie reminds Tayo that Indians need this constant reminder of everything they have lost in order to continue fighting to make things right once more. Furthermore, all the deeds and titles in the world do not truly mean that white men own this land. Betonie cautions Tayo to look for both good and bad within white people, the same as he would do for a fellow Indian.

The connection between Native Americans and the land cannot be broken, as Native Americans understand humans must care for the land in order for the land to continue to be able to support life. Though Native Americans may feel powerless, the novel suggests that they actually have an important role in fighting against the greedy over-use of natural resources and fighting for sustainable practices to be adopted by white culture. The novel here acknowledges that white culture and whites individually are not evil, but it makes clear that they are misguided and could learn from Native wisdom.

Betonie introduces Tayo to his helper, Shush, whose name means "bear." Betonie begins to tell a story, and the novel switches to a poem. The story tells of a young boy who wandered away from his family and went to live with bears. The medicine man knows that he has to call the child back quickly and rushes to the bears' cave. The medicine man makes bear noises outside the cave until the young boy comes out, yet the young boy is already crawling like a bear. The medicine man knows they have to call him back carefully to avoid leaving the boy stranded between men and bears.

Shush's name suggests that he may have been the boy in the story, or a boy very similar. The boundaries between human and animal worlds are thin here, as Betonie sees the connections between human kind and nature. Yet humans are supposed *to live as humans, fulfilling their natural role within nature rather than giving up and disappearing into another role that was not meant for them. Tayo must also return home from the war, his version of living with the bears, and assume his role.*

Betonie stops the story to remind Tayo that witchery is only responsible for a small portion of life. Good or bad are less important than finding balance in the transitions of life. The novel includes a note on bear people and witches, explaining the difference between someone who goes to live with the bears, and a person who uses a bear's skin for evil purposes.

Tayo is at an important transition, as he has now seen the worse evil of the white world in the war. He must choose whether he will continue to try to get home, or give up fighting against witchery (evil of human beings). The novel seems to make a distinction between people who just give up fighting and fade into nature (living with the bears) and people who actively use nature for evil purposes (witchery with the bear skin).

Tayo starts to tell Betonie about Emo and Rocky, because he is reminded of them by the neon lights of Gallup spread out in the valley. Rocky was supposed to be the success story of the reservation, a man who made it out and survived in the white man's world. Tayo cannot forgive himself for letting Rocky die. Tayo then tells Betonie about Emo's bag of teeth and his vendetta against white men, then asks Betonie what ceremonies can be used against the white sickness of wars, bombs, and lies.

Emo and Rocky are associated with the mechanical neon lights because each chose the white world over Native traditions, in some sense. Rocky tried to be successful according to white standards, whereas Emo lives out the worst qualities of greed, hate, and destruction that the novel associates with white culture. If Native Americans can be persuaded to join evil white actions, Tayo's question of whether the Native ceremonies will work becomes more urgent.

Betonie reminds Tayo that white people are not purely evil, they are simply one tool that the larger witchery of the world manipulates. Indeed, Indian witchery created white people. Betonie starts a poem-story about a time before white people. All the Indian witches of every tribe have gathered together to out-do one another with their dark spells. The witches do all kinds of magic, using disgusting charms made from the skin and body parts of the dead.

Betonie separates witchery, a force that was previously associated only with white culture, from white people themselves. White people are still humans, and the witchery that uses them is an evil that can be found in a human of any race. In fact, Native American witches were doing evil acts long before white people existed, according to Betonie's story.

At the end of the contest, the last Indian witch, from an unknown tribe, does dark magic by telling a story. The other witches laugh, but the witch silences them by telling of a world completely destroyed by white skin people who have no respect for life or the earth. The fear inside these white skin people will make them do horrible things, killing anyone in their path and unleashing all sorts of diseases. In a final pattern, the white skin people will use rocks with veins of green, yellow, and black (that is, the uranium in an **atomic bomb**) to explode the entire world. The other witches ask the witch to take the story back, but the witch says this cannot be undone.

The story that created white people both showcases how powerful stories are – such that they can speak an entire race into being – and gives Native Americans control over the world that white people have ruined. If Native Americans created white people in the first place, they can also undo the damage that white people caused (though it may be very difficult). The "final pattern" of the atomic bomb makes it clear that this modern weapon is the most extreme version of white culture's greed, arrogance, and destruction.

Betonie, Shush, and Tayo ride on horseback into the foothills of the Chuska mountains outside Gallup. They set up camp at a small stone hogan and Tayo feels almost as peaceful as he did before the war. Betonie goes back to the story-poem about bearskins, this time describing how a woman found out her son-in-law had been transformed into a coyote and performed a pollen ritual to call the man out of the coyote skin. Betonie performs the same pollen ritual for Tayo.

Away from the modern sprawl of Gallup, Tayo begins to feel healthy once more. Tayo's health improves as he remembers his connection to the natural world. Like the man in the poem-story, Tayo must be called back from living a role that he does not naturally fit in. But Tayo did not go to live with any animal, he went to live with white people – and it is that influence he must shed.

Tayo falls asleep and dreams about **speckled cattle** that constantly outrun him, heading south. When he wakes up, Betonie and Shush are nowhere to be found. Tayo surveys the unbroken mesa of black sand. Betonie walks back up the western ridge, then sits down next to Tayo and rolls a cigarette.

Though the cows are not explicitly said to be Josiah's cows, their spots are a distinctive marker of the hybrid cows that Josiah lost. Betonie's cigarette is another subtle reminder of the way that Betonie blends old and new. Betonie smokes tobacco, an ancient Native American practice, in a modern form, the cigarette. But Betonie rolls this cigarette himself, proving that he controls the way that modern elements affect the traditional ways.

Betonie starts to tell a story about his grandfather, Descheeny. Descheeny was with a Navajo hunting party returning from an escapade down into Mexico. They stop for the night when they realized that a girl is stuck in a nearby tree. The men are inexplicably scared of the girl, but get her down out of the tree so that they can sell her to another tribe. Only Descheeny is not afraid of the girl – who is Mexican – and decides to take her as his wife.

The girl, stuck in a tree like a bird, calls to mind Night Swan, another Mexican woman associated with birds through her name. Like Night Swan, this girl is not trusted by most of society and also begins a relationship with a Native American man the way that Josiah and Night Swan did. This repeated pattern of Native American men and Mexican women is another sign that cultural hybridity is inevitable in this region.

Descheeny speaks a little Spanish and promises to return the girl to her family in Mexico, but the girl refuses, saying that the people back in Mexico will harm her. Descheeny's other wives dislike the Mexican girl, but Descheeny knows that the girl is necessary for the ceremony that will save the world. The girl is willing to use any power she can, even power from white people, in order to set in motion rituals that future generations will have to complete. The other Navajo people become even more afraid of Descheeny.

Descheeny sees the ceremonial power that can come from using the strengths of many cultures, up to and including the white people who otherwise seem to be Native Americans' enemies. The patience of setting up this ritual for future generations is another reminder of the interconnected worldview of the novel. The past and the future affect each other in profound ways, though the actions might be small.

Betonie describes the day he was born and the other people tried to kill him for his **hazel eyes**. The Mexican woman saved Betonie and took him north to El Paso to raise him. The novel moves into the Corn Woman poem-story where Fly and Hummingbird visit Corn Mother to ask where to get tobacco. Corn Woman sends them to caterpillar.

Just as Caterpillar gives Fly and Hummingbird tobacco, a necessary ingredient for their ceremony, the Mexican woman gives Betonie the safety and confidence to accept his green eyes and his status as a hybrid, a necessary ingredient in the ceremony that Betonie plans with Tayo. Betonie also performs the role of "caterpillar" for Tayo, giving Tayo necessary information. Tayo's story and the Corn Mother story continue to echo and play off each other.

Betonie tells Tayo that the ceremony is not yet finished. Betonie draws a constellation in the dust, then tells Tayo to remember this certain formation of stars, a woman, a mountain, and the **spotted cattle**. A poem-story describes how the witchery and its effect gradually leaves the coyote-man's body and lets him return to live with people.

Betonie tells Tayo to remember four things, calling back to the sacred number four in Pueblo stories. Note how Betonie specifically says "remember" when he is actually sending Tayo to look for these things. Invoking memory calls back the language of stories, making it clear that Tayo will need to remember the old stories and the old ways in order to complete this quest. According to the poem-story, this quest should allow Tayo to come home the way that the coyote-man came home.

SECTION 5

Tayo leaves Betonie and hitchhikes back towards New Laguna. He stops at a gas station to buy some candy, but the white cashier expects Tayo to steal something. Tayo laughs off the cashier's casual racism by remembering that white people are the product of witchery. As Tayo walks away from the gas station, stepping carefully to avoid killing grasshoppers, Harley rides up in a truck. Another veteran, Leroy, and a woman, Helen Jean, are in the truck with Harley, drinking heavily.

In the white world, Tayo is not seen as more than a lazy criminal because of his Native American blood. Knowing the story of how white people came to be allows Tayo to brush off this racism because it means that white people aren't actually the dominant culture that they believe themselves to be. After meeting with Betonie, Tayo cares more for nature than he did while he was sick, being careful not to hurt even an insect.

Tayo gets in the truck with Harley, as Helen Jean and Leroy laugh about how Harley tricked the car salesman to give him the truck with no money down. Harley considers it a small repayment for the land white people have taken from him. Tayo doesn't consider it such a good joke considering the junky car will probably crash and kill Harley. When they get back to New Laguna, Tayo wants to get out but Harley forces him to come to the bar with them. Leroy keeps driving too fast and Tayo gives in to the numbed sensations.

The methods that Harley uses to "get back" at the white people who have wronged him are actually more destructive to Harley than they are to white people. Driving this truck means nothing to white people and could actually kill Harley. Similarly, alcohol as a numbing agent so that the Native Americans can live in a culture that constantly puts them down is actually more destructive to the Native Americans than it is helpful.

At the Y bar, Helen Jean stumbles getting out of the car and drops all her makeup out of her purse. Harley picks it up for her, playacting at putting some on while Leroy and Tayo tease him for being "chickish muggy." They all go into the bar and get a table next to some Mexicans who work on the railroad. Helen Jean smiles coyly at the Mexican men while Harley and Leroy try to entertain her with stories of past sexual conquests. Eventually, Harley and Leroy focus only on getting drunk, not even noticing when Helen Jean leaves their table.

Helen Jean wears copious amounts of makeup, in some sense hiding her Native American identity in order to appear beautiful by the standards of the dominant white culture. Harley also seems to be trying on a different identity by dancing around like a "chickish muggy," a term that seems to mean a man who acts like a woman. These performances of "putting on another skin" recall the story of the bear boy that Betonie told Tayo. Meanwhile, Harley and Leroy display their own performance of being accepted by white culture by bragging about having sex with white women, such that they prevent themselves from making a connection with Helen Jean, a fellow Native American.

The narrative focuses on Helen Jean. She knows that the New Laguna men won't beat her up the way some other men have, but she still doesn't want to waste her time with them. Helen Jean always plans to go back to her reservation each weekend to bring money, but never manages to do so.

Helen Jean, like Rocky, has left her Native American heritage behind in order to be survive in the white world. Her inability to return to her reservation suggests that it is impossible to live according to white culture's standards and stay true to a Native American identity.

Helen Jean had come to Gallup to get a job at the movie theater, wearing her best clothes and careful makeup when she went in for the interview. She was embarrassed to find out that the job was actually for a janitor and even more ashamed when the manager starts expecting sexual favors from her. Now, Helen Jean tells her roommates she is going to work, but instead goes to bars and targets veterans who have a fat disability check and might give her some money to help pay rent.

Helen Jean is a competent and intelligent woman, but white culture refuses to see her as anything but menial labor because of her race. Helen Jean also faces sexual harassment, as her white manager seems to believe that Native Americans exist to please him. Yet instead of returning to her Native American community on the reservation, which has its own problems of poverty, Helen Jean believes she must look out for herself alone by tricking Native American veterans out of their money. Her roommates also seem to live by the individualistic values of white culture, demanding that each person pay their own way rather than helping each other when money is tight for one of them.

The veterans usually just want to tell Helen Jean about their glory days picking up white women in their US uniforms, though some men get violent as they get drunk. When the men are drunk and pliable, Helen Jean asks them for money to send back to her family on the reservation. If she gets them drunk enough, the men usually fall asleep before they can pressure Helen Jean for sex. Helen Jean doesn't want to end up like the other hopeless women in Gallup, so she leaves the dead-end Indian War Heroes, who she knows have no money, for the Mexican men, and the promise of some money borrowed from their railroad pay checks.

The veterans use Helen Jean as a placeholder for their own desire to fit into white culture, also displaying the violence that the novel sees as inherent to white culture when their attempts do not work. Trying to be white forces both the veterans and Helen Jean to stop seeing each other as people. Helen Jean has also internalized the racism that paints all Native Americans as poor, drunk, lazy, and going nowhere. She has more faith in the Mexican men who she assumes have paying jobs and money to spare.

Tayo dreams of old Betonie's Navajo singing, until he is awakened by someone telling him to leave. Tayo thinks it is Betonie telling him to get on with the journey to find the **cattle**, but it is really the bartender throwing Tayo, Leroy, and Harley out after Harley got in a fight with the Mexican men. Tayo gets Harley and Leroy into the car and drives off into the desert, wondering how long they all will survive in a life of drinking. Tayo stops the car at a rock formation along route 66 called Mesita, then vomits out everything in his **stomach**, trying to vomit out his past.

Whether the fight arises from competition for Helen Jean's attention, or simply Harley's desire to start a fight and distract him from his sadness, the fact that the fight is with Mexican men rather than white patrons is another sign of white cultural dominance. Instead of finding commonalities in the ways that both Mexicans and Native Americans are treated as sub-human in white culture, the two groups fight each other as they each try to gain white acceptance. Tayo's dream reminds him that he should be on a mission of greater importance, and that the cultural hybridity of the cattle is better than petty fights over which race is better.

Betonie had explained that the scalp ceremony meant to put fallen warriors to rest is no longer enough to soothe the Indian veterans who have seen the way that white people live. Betonie compares this longing to a man who stole white shell beads from a grave and then could think of nothing but the beads. The veterans are also trying to distract themselves through liquor and stories about their courage in the war, so that they don't have to remember their lost land. Tayo takes off walking, realizing he is in transition just like the boy called back from living with the bears.

Believing in the myth that white culture is better than Native American culture leaves Native Americans perpetually unsatisfied, chasing a pipe dream. It is not that the novel suggests that Native Americans could not achieve the kind of material success that white people enjoy (though there are certainly difficult obstacles because of racism against people of color) but rather that these things wouldn't actually make them happy if they got them. As in the story about the beads, possessions will never take the place of belonging to the land and their cultural heritage. Tayo is in the midst of realizing that he has to go back to his Native identity instead of chasing after white people.

The novel tells another poem-story about a Ck'o'yo magician called the Gambler. The Gambler tricks everyone who comes to his house into eating cornmeal laced with human blood, giving the Gambler power over them until they gamble away everything they own and even their own life. The Gambler even captures the storm clouds and holds them captive in his house.

The Gambler in this story parallels the role that white people play in the novel, forcing Native Americans to do acts of violence against each other just as the Gambler forces his victims to eat other people. The Gambler also harms the natural environment as white people do in the novel.

The Sun, father of the storm clouds, realizes that the storm clouds are missing and that the land is suffering greatly in their absence. Sun Man visits Spider Woman, who gives him advice on how to avoid being tricked by the Gambler, as well as the answers to all the Gambler's riddles. Sun Man goes to the Gambler, refusing all food, and does everything just as Spider Woman said. The Gambler loses, and Sun Man cuts out the Gamblers eyes to make them the horizon stars of autumn. Sun Man then opens the Gambler's doors and lets the storm clouds out.

In order to trick the Gambler at his own game, Sun Man has to stay true to the native wisdom that Spider Woman teaches, and avoid all the tempting offers that the Gambler makes. Similarly, Native Americans must put their faith in native wisdom and refuse the false goals that white people offer as success. Making the Gambler's eyes into stars is another example of the interconnected nature of the world, as humans and natural objects can be transformed into each other.

Tayo goes home to New Laguna and waits to see one of the things Betonie mentioned would finish the ceremony. In late September, Tayo finally sees the constellation that Betonie drew in the dirt in the northern sky. Tayo takes his truck as far as he can, then comes to a washed out bridge. He then continues on horseback away from the paved road. After an unspecified number of days on horseback, Tayo comes across a woman with her hair tied back in the traditional way. Tayo explains to her that he is looking for his uncle's stolen **cattle** and the woman lets Tayo water his horse. The woman invites Tayo into her house for a meal. The novel turns to the poem-story, where Hummingbird and Fly get tobacco from Caterpillar.

Looking for the constellation echoes back to the Gambler's eyes being used as stars, drawing a connection between the formation of stars that will help Tayo escape from the white cultural power that the Gambler represented in the story. Crucially, modern transportation like the truck is ineffective on this journey and Tayo has to use a natural method of a horse instead. By finding the woman, Tayo has now found two of the four objects that Betonie told him to remember. Like Caterpillar giving Fly and Hummingbird tobacco, the woman gives Tayo valuable help on his journey by giving him a meal and a rest.

The woman undresses first herself and then Tayo. They sleep together and Tayo fully gives in to the pleasure of their bodies. That night, he dreams of the **spotted cattle** and the woman whispering in his ear to make the cattle scatter. Tayo wakes feeling more refreshed than he has in years. He sings the sunrise song he learned as a child to welcome the dawn, knowing that the Dawn people begin and end all their stories with the word "sunrise."

Sleeping with this Native American woman is an act of true love and self-acceptance, rather than the desperate attempts at acceptance hidden in the veterans' stories about having sex with white women. This act brings Tayo closer to finding the cattle, and closer to his Native heritage. By remembering the tradition of starting stories with an offering to the sunrise, Tayo effectively begins a story about himself within the novel that will follow his quest to find the cattle.

SECTION 6

The woman serves Tayo breakfast then busies herself carefully packing specific rocks and plants in muslin packages. Tayo thanks the woman and heads off on the trail. The drought and wind have warped the land so much that only salt bush can grow. Tayo turns his horse towards North Top, a mountain where Josiah always told a story of a hunter who found a mountain lion cub who, so long as the hunter would sing to it, chased butterflies.

The woman's plants are another sort of ceremony that connects the woman to the land. Josiah's story is associated with a place, showing how Native American stories connect them to the land as well. The story also explains how a hunter might escape an animal that might otherwise be dangerous, by treating it with kindness and respect rather than trying to harm it in order to preserve one's own safety.

Most of North Top has been taken over by National Forest and logging companies. The white logging companies over hunt the land to feed their workers, and Tayo is sick at the lack of respect that white people show for this delicate environment. Tayo hopes to find his lost **cattle** as they graze along the southern fence line of the Texan loggers, knowing that these cattle instinctively head south to their first home in Mexico. The white man who built the fence, Floyd Lee, said it was too keep wolves out, but Tayo knows that it is simply an attempt to mark his territory.

The fact that the cattle are in the north proves they were stolen, as the cattle always head south to their homeland if given their own choice. Taking the cattle is another example of how white people in the novel take whatever they want with no regard for how that might affect other people. Likewise, white people like the loggers use up natural resources with no thought for the environment or the well-being of future generations. Instead of acknowledging the ways that a delicate ecosystem depends on everything working together in harmony, white people put up more fences and try to split the entire world into individual possessions.

As Tayo rounds another ridge, he sees his uncle's **cows** in the distance. Tayo knows that the cows will always head south, so he rides to a southern point of the fence and hurriedly gets out pliers to make a hole in the fence for the cattle to escape through. Josiah had given the pliers to Tayo years ago, saying that you never know when a fence will get in your way. Before he can cut a hole, Tayo realizes that anyone might see him cut the fence in daylight and decides to wait for nightfall to herd the cattle.

Tayo symbolically breaks through the barriers that white people put on the world, welcoming many cultures instead of keeping each separate. Josiah gave him the tool to make the hole in the fence, just as Josiah's relationship with Night Swan helped Tayo learn to cross the arbitrary boundaries that society puts between people. Still, Tayo's caution is a reminder that the dominant white culture will react negatively to tearing down these "fences" between cultures.

Tayo rides along the fence until night falls and finds a spot next to a tree struck by lightning to make his hole in the fence. As Tayo cuts the wires, he wonders how his **Uncle's cattle** ended up on Floyd Lee's land. Tayo hesitates to call the cattle stolen, before realizing that he is buying into the lie that only brown people are thieves because white people always have money to buy what they want. Even white people suffer because of this lie, never seeing how they are tools that witchery uses to destroy the land. Tayo finishes cutting the hole in the fence and sets off to locate the cattle once again.

Racism against Native Americans (and all people of color) pervades everyone who lives in America, though Tayo has tried not to be a part of this damaging system. In order to break down a harmful hierarchy that places white people above all other people, it is necessary to recognize both that white people can be thieves and people of color may be honest and wealthy. The novel suggests that white people are so distracted by their own wealth that they do not see how their culture is actually empty in terms of true connection and empathy with other people. White people remain isolated by their fences while Tayo focuses on bringing those fences down.

As Tayo searches for the **cattle**, he realizes that he is completely within the present moment, not obsessing over his past or worrying over his future. This peace floods Tayo and he realizes that all the stories happen at once. As Tayo rides, he gets angry at the horse for stopping to graze, before remembering how Josiah had always taught him and Rocky that anger and violence accomplishes nothing.

Tayo's epiphany about time highlights the way that stories work in the novel. Ceremony *does not move smoothly through time, instead jumping forward and back as certain episodes in Tayo's life or traditional stories comment on each other. The moral of these stories is always a moral that brings people in harmony with nature, rather than the anger that white culture has taught Tayo to feel against natural elements (like the horse) that do not bend to his will. That Tayo can see through his own anger is a sign that he is gradually bringing himself back to the old values.*

Tayo lets the horse stop to drink water and is struck by a sudden bout of self-doubt. Tayo thinks that he should twist back together the wires that he cut and ride into the hills, forgetting about the **cattle** and Betonie's crazy Indian superstition about a ceremony. Tayo thinks of the army doctors telling him that everything was superstition, from seeing Josiah among the Japanese to stopping the rain with a curse. Tayo is paralyzed by these thoughts and collapses into the pine needles under a tree.

In some senses, it is easier for Tayo to give in to white culture and believe the lies about useless Native American culture rather than spend so much energy fighting a powerful evil. White culture wants to convince Tayo that his Native heritage is crazy, because the less Tayo fights against white culture, the more power it will have. Tayo's body gives up at these thoughts, showing that his physical health and mental health have a large effect on one another.

When Tayo wakes up, he sees a mountain lion walk through the clearing in front of him. Tayo calmly stares at the mountain lion, chanting a mountain lion song. The mountain lion gazes into **Tayo's eyes** for an instant then disappears into the forest. Tayo dusts the mountain lion's footprints with pollen, then mounts the horse once more and rides west looking for the cattle.

A mountain lion could have killed Tayo in his vulnerable state, but Tayo remains safe by following the old traditions. The mountain lion also seems to respect Tayo's eyes, implicitly approving of cultural hybridity as a natural phenomenon. Tayo also gives respect to both the mountain lion and Pueblo rituals by marking the footprints with pollen, bringing him back into proper connection with nature.

Tayo finally catches up to the **cattle** again and starts to follow them as they head relentlessly southeast. Tayo stays far back so that the cattle will not spook or scatter, but pushes them gently towards the hole he made in the fence. Tayo slows his horse to give the animal a rest, then sees two armed men patrolling on horses in the distance. His horse takes off too fast and slips on the rough rock, throwing Tayo to the ground.

Tayo herds his cattle calmly, using the cattle's own nature to get them where he wants them to go. This harmonious arrangement is far better for both Tayo and the cattle. However, the white men in the distance disrupt this balance and cause both Tayo and his horse harm. White culture again destroys the natural relationship and understanding between people and animals in the natural world.

Tayo wakes slowly, feeling as though he is waking in the Pacific again to a sun that is too bright. Tayo's ribs hurt and he closes his eyes, ready to give his body more time to rest. A voice with a Texan accent breaks into Tayo's thoughts, demanding to know why Tayo is trespassing. Tayo refuses to answer, hoping the patrolman will be so busy with him that they don't notice the **cattle** slip through the hole in the fence over the next ridge.

Tayo is once again in the hands of violent white culture, as he was when he was a soldier in WWII, the "white man's war." Though Tayo is only retrieving property that belongs to him and his family, the white patrolmen see it as trespassing because they assume they own everything. Tayo hopes that this very arrogance about their natural dominance over the world will keep the patrolmen distracted enough that they lose the cattle, symbolically losing the chance to participate in the life-affirming cultural hybridity that the cattle represent.

A second patrolman rides up and tries to convince the Texan patrolman to go back to the truck so that they can help Tayo with his injuries. The Texan refuses, and forces Tayo to stand up and mount the Texan's horse. Tayo manages to sit up, then **vomits** all over the side of the horse. Tayo hopes that chasing an Indian will prove to be too much trouble for the patrolmen this close to nightfall and they will let him go. The pain in Tayo's head forces him to faint once more.

Now that he is back under the control of a white man, Tayo's stomach is no longer able to function correctly, showing that being forced to follow the white man's orders keeps Tayo from staying true to his Pueblo values and the traditional stories. The white man has all the power in this interaction, and chooses to be unkind to Tayo even though Tayo is clearly hurt, an example of how white culture at large takes advantage of Native Americans even as they have no sympathy for the struggles that Native Americans face.

When Tayo wakes again, he feels comforted by the solid land underneath his body. He feels as though he could sink into the earth and leave all barriers behind. Then he hears a truck door slam and the Texan talk about seeing fresh mountain lion tracks. The patrollers decide to pursue the mountain lion for its pelt instead of worrying about Tayo.

The natural world is still a comfort for Tayo, giving him strength. For the white patrolmen, the natural world is only a resource that they can exploit for profit. The white men do not respect the mountain lion, only wanting to kill it for its skin.

The next time Tayo wakes up, the patrollers are gone and there is a chill night breeze. Tayo can feel it is going to snow and covers himself with leaves to keep warm. Tayo thinks about how much he hates people like the patrollers who care nothing about the earth or its animals. He realizes that the white people only steal everything from the Indians because white people have nothing but emptiness inside them.

The land provides everything Tayo needs to stay safe and healthy, and Tayo is able to read the signs of nature in order to prepare for its cycles. This relationship of mutual care is fundamentally lacking from white culture as portrayed by the novel. White people in Ceremony *subjugate other people because they do not know how to live with nature in this way.*

Tayo gets up and walks southeast through the snow. He happily eats snow and thinks that the flakes will cover the mountain lion tracks and keep the mountain lion safe, but it will also hide the hole in the fence. Tayo eats piñon nuts and tries to find his way back to the woman's house.

The snowstorm seems like nature's response to the threat that the white patrolmen pose to Tayo and the mountain lion. While snow may seem like "bad" weather to the white patrolmen, Tayo sees that snow is necessary and can even be a blessing.

As he searches, he hears a man singing a Laguna hunting chant and sees a hunter across the next clearing. The hunter is dressed in traditional clothing with his hair long, and has a buck slung across his shoulders. Tayo tells the hunter that he is looking for **cattle** and the hunter tells Tayo to follow him to his house. In the hunter's house, Tayo sees the woman he slept with just days before. They eat dinner together without speaking.

The hunter is a vision of Pueblo culture before the interference of white culture. Instead of being suspicious of Tayo as the white patrolmen were, the hunter welcomes Tayo to his house and gives him food. The relationship between the woman and the hunter is obviously close, but otherwise unclear at this point.

Tayo goes outside to help the woman shake snow off her trees so that the branches won't break, and sees his horse in the woman's pasture. Tayo watches the woman brush out her hair and feels oddly intimate with her. The woman laughs and teases Tayo about finding his horse and his **cattle** at her house. The cattle were herded into one of the woman's paddocks after they ran down a steep gorge and were trapped by a cleverly hidden gate that locked like part of the canyon wall.

Tayo again cares for nature, acknowledging the responsibility that humans have to care for the land that in return gives them the resources for life. Tayo believes that the hunter is the woman's husband, and feels that he has trespassed on that relationship by sleeping with the woman. Yet the woman is comfortable and wants to help Tayo, suggesting that the bond between the woman and the hunter is more complicated than Tayo sees. The woman and the hunter arrange their house and paddocks to work with *nature rather than* against *nature the way Floyd Lee's fence does.*

The woman goes into the paddock to pet the **cows**, though Tayo is afraid of the large, half-wild animals. Tayo explains that his uncle wanted cows that would survive drought and the woman comments that these cows are tough indeed. She points out the scars on the cows' legs from Texas roping – an inhumane practice where cowboys run at steers full speed trying to rope them down and call it "sport."

The woman is completely comfortable with nature and treats the hybrid cows with respect, symbolically accepting the cultural hybridity that the cows represent. The white people who stole the cows used them only for their own amusement at great harm to the cows, showing how white culture is not a constructive environment for cultural hybridity or diversity.

Tayo and the woman go back to the house and Tayo readies his horse to leave. The woman assures Tayo that the **cattle** will be safe here until next spring. Tayo wants to tell the woman what he feels for her, but is afraid of both the man he thinks is her husband and the woman herself. Tayo sets off on the trail. When he turns back to wave goodbye, the woman is gone.

Tayo has accomplished his goal of finding the cattle, but he has not yet finished the ceremony that will bring him true healing. The cows still have to be brought back to Tayo's ranch so that Tayo can also return home. Furthermore, Tayo still believes that he has gone against nature by sleeping with another man's wife.

SECTION 7

The next spring, Robert and Tayo return to the woman's house to collect the **cattle**, but the woman and the hunter are no where to be found. When Robert and Tayo get the cows back to their ranch, old Grandma comments that old Betonie did some good after all. Tayo agrees, but he dreams of the woman constantly. Auntie looks at Tayo as if she is waiting for him to relapse at any moment.

Tayo has now finished Betonie's ceremony by returning the cattle home, and even old Grandma (who most firmly believes in not changing the old ways) recognizes the value of Betonie's unorthodox methods. On the other side, Auntie doesn't seem to trust Tayo's return to health because she no longer trusts traditional ceremonies.

Tayo helps Robert and Pinkie care for the sheep, impressed at how well Pinkie seems to be doing with the animals. Yet that night, Pinkie asks Tayo to drop him off on the side of the highway so he can go up the line to visit all the bars.

Pinkie visiting the bar after doing such fine work shows how the pernicious influence of alcohol and white culture more generally always remain a threat for Native Americans.

Tayo dreams of the woman again, overwhelmed by his love for her. Tayo decides to go live at his uncle's old ranch house again that May. Auntie agrees as long as none of the other veterans go there to drink. Old Grandma asks Tayo to gather her more Indian tea leaves and reminds Tayo to go talk to Ku'oosh and the other veterans when he can.

Tayo leaves the community of New Laguna in order to be closer to the natural environment, mimicking Betonie's choice to live in the hills rather than among the Navajo people. Tayo has to remove himself from society to more clearly see the lesson that Betonie wanted him to learn – a lesson that may be able to help Ku'oosh and the other veterans as well.

As he approaches the ranch house, Tayo notes that the surrounding land is lightly green this year, neither the red of drought or the aggressive green of the jungle. Tayo is reminded that the land remains strong even when Tayo feels as though he has lost everything. He enjoys listening to the grasshoppers' hum and gathers pollen as gently as a bee would. He sees a snake wind through the sand on his way back and fills the track with yellow pollen.

True health for the land involves a balance between drought and over-saturation of rain. The land is resilient enough to endure periods of extremes, showing Tayo that he too can return to health after his tumultuous time spent in the violence of the white world. Tayo honors nature with the yellow pollen, a sacred ritual of the Pueblo people.

Tayo sees the woman walking through the field of sunflowers towards him. Tayo believes he is dreaming, but the woman leads him back to her camp by the spring. The woman sits in the shade of a willow tree while Tayo watches beetles and bugs skate over the surface of a pond. Tayo and the woman make love next to the pond and Tayo falls asleep.

The woman appears out of the natural world, making her a cohesive part of Tayo's return to nature rather than a distraction from this harmony. The peace and ease of their interactions is an important contrast to the competition and tension in the sexual relationships between native Americans and white women described earlier in the novel. Yet this ease is not simply because Tayo and the woman are both Native American, but because neither of them are hiding their Native American heritage.

When Tayo wakes, he thinks the woman was another dream. But he then sees her footprints clear in the sand. The woman calls to Tayo and he finds her on the other side of a narrow canyon with her blue shawl full of plants. Tayo finally asks the woman her name, and she tells him to call her Ts'eh, as she is a Montaño and her true name is too long to pronounce. Tayo says he understands about nicknames, thinking about how Rocky's Christian name was Augustine.

Ts'eh's blue shawl echoes Night Swan's blue clothing when Tayo visited her. As blue is a sacred color to the Pueblo people, this clothing marks both women as important carriers of lessons for Tayo. Ts'eh's nickname helps reframe Rocky's character. As much as Rocky rejected Native American culture, his use of a nickname involved a rejection of a white name and therefore indicates some remaining tie to his Pueblo heritage.

Ts'eh shares little more about her family, as if she expects Tayo to have already heard all the gossip about them. Tayo wants to ask about Ts'eh's siblings, realizing that the hunter must have been one of Ts'eh's brothers, but he stops himself. As they walk back from the pond, Tayo asks Ts'eh how she knew he would be at the ranch house. Ts'eh laughs and says she had been there a week before Tayo came, so *he* must have known that *she* would be here.

As with Grandmother's attitude towards gossip in the Pueblo community, Ts'eh's beliefs about gossip show that it is a way that people can stay involved in other people's lives. Now that Tayo knows he is not "stealing" Ts'eh from her rightful husband, they can have a more honest relationship. The way that it seems to both Tayo and Ts'eh that the other one came to them suggests that the world has chosen to bring Ts'eh and Tayo together naturally, rather than through human manipulation.

Ts'eh collects plants and describes them as all different colors of the sky. As Ts'eh gathers seedlings, Tayo considers breeding his **cattle** with a yellow bull owned by Romero, one of Tayo's cousins. The bull is a strong animal with one crooked leg from an old rodeo injury. Tayo brings the bull to visit the cows soon after, and the cows are wary of the bull at first. Yet soon the bull and the cows are cautiously grazing together as the calves play in between them. Tayo's heart is full as he sees Josiah's dream coming to life.

The way Ts'eh connects plants and sky is another example of the many connections between all parts of the natural world. The bull, a sacred yellow color, helps Tayo continue to the tradition of celebrating cultural hybridity that Josiah started. The bull seems to stand for Native American culture, both for its hide color and how it has survived an injury from white culture (the rodeo). The cows accept the bull, showing that peaceful coexistence between many different cultures can be possible.

Ts'eh needs just one more plant, and asks Tayo to gather it for her if she is not here when the time comes. Ts'eh doesn't yet know when she will leave, only that everything is always shifting. Tayo asks what color of sky this plant is, but Ts'eh says that this plant is the light of the stars and the moon. Tayo is awed by the peace of their days together and the love that he and Ts'eh share.

Tayo is again an integral part of a ceremony meant to restore balance to the world, this time ending the drought instead of returning cattle. Ts'eh brings all the elements of nature together in her bundles, with plants, rocks, water, sky, and starlight involved in some way. Tayo and Ts'eh's peaceful life together is a model of how all human lives could be if humanity lived in harmony with nature.

Robert comes to visit Tayo at the end of summer, and finds that Tayo is not planning to come home to the town any time soon. The others want Tayo to see a doctor again and Emo is spreading rumors that Tayo has gone completely crazy. Robert asks Tayo to consider coming home just to assure everyone that he is ok. Tayo agrees, but his mind is already on other things.

Emo has become so consumed by white culture that he sees living in the hills as crazy rather than as a return to nature. Though Tayo is clearly healthy and happy, the others do not trust this natural cure after so many years of white culture marking nature as something to fight against and dominate instead of live with.

Ts'eh and Tayo find a dead calf the next time they walk down the canyon. Ts'eh comments that death is not as bad as the destroyers who prevent living people from ever feeling anything again. Tayo says that old Betonie knew of a way to stop the destruction and Ts'eh says it depends on how far he, Tayo, is willing to go. Tayo watches Ts'eh as she looks toward the mountain Pa'to'ch and feels that he will always know where she is.

Death is a natural part of the cycle of life, rather than the needless destruction and pain that the destroyers (i.e. white culture) cause in the world. While Betonie's ceremony involving stars, the cattle, the woman, and a mountain seemed to be over after Tayo found the cattle, all four of those elements are also involved in Ts'eh's final ceremony.

The novel describes a ceremony in which the Montaño people paint the image of a she-elk on a cliff in order to celebrate the she-elk for her beautiful ability to conceive new life and carry the next generation of elk. Ts'eh and Tayo visit where the elk is painted, though the paint is faded because no one has come to repaint it since the war. Ts'eh reassures Tayo that the paint doesn't matter as long as he remembers the story.

The elk represents the strength of new life and the future. The health of this future depends on how Tayo honors the past stories. As long as he remembers the sentiment of respect for life in the stories, the specific ritual of painting an elk can be changed.

Ts'eh builds a fire and starts to cry. Tayo can do nothing to comfort her, simply asking why she is crying. Ts'eh says she knows how the destroyers want to end the story, by ending all life. Tayo will be persecuted on all sides if he returns to civilization because death is the only ending that witchery can understand. Though the white people might easily get bored and leave Tayo alone, Emo will continue to push until he kills Tayo.

The worst parts of human nature are given free reign in white culture, but the more pressing issue is Emo's belief in the values of white culture. While white people are too self-absorbed to put in the effort of doing Tayo harm, Emo (under the influence of the destroyers) will tirelessly work to force Tayo's story to have a tragic ending. The way that Ts'eh speaks about all this as if Tayo is explicitly a character in a story references the place that Silko intends I Ceremony *to take alongside the ancient stories. Put another way:* Ceremony *is itself a story, itself a ceremony.*

As Tayo and Ts'eh watch the **cows** in the pasture, Ts'eh announces that they are coming to the end. She returns to the house and packs all her things in her blue shawl. Tayo, heart clenching at the thought of Ts'eh leaving, walks Ts'eh out to the road. He thinks back to the year before, when he and Harley rode down this road on a burro and a mule. This time, the surrounding country side is green. Ts'eh tells Tayo to remember everything and then walk down the road.

Though Ts'eh's departure is sad, it is mitigated by the fact that the land is so much healthier than it was just a year ago. Mirroring the return to health in the environment, Tayo is also in a much better place. Betonie's ceremony that blended traditional rituals with modern elements has seemingly been successful, even if Ts'eh's ceremony still needs to be finished.

Tayo wakes up feeling as if he is in the jungle, then realizes he is just in the cave where he and Ts'eh had slept on their last night together. He leaves, avoiding the road to walk over the rocks quietly so that he will not alert anyone who is looking for him. Tayo runs along the Acoma boundary fence and feels the wind blow like it did during the drought years. He decides he has to bring the whole story back to the elders and veterans of the Laguna community to make it right.

Tayo now trusts the natural world far more than he trusts the human world, given the major impact that the destroyers have had on white culture. By bringing the story to the elders, Tayo can hopefully help the rest of his community find healing as well. Tayo may be healed, but he must help the others of his community before he is truly finished with his task.

Tayo goes back to the road, looking for someone who doesn't know about the recent questions about Tayo's sanity to give him a ride so that he won't feed into the gossip that the Laguna community has been spreading about him. The mesa landscape is ageless, making Tayo feel as if his entire life is converging on this point. He walks north as the sun rises, then hears a truck rumble behind him. It is Harley and Leroy in the truck and Tayo is ecstatic to see his friends when he needs them most.

Here, Tayo fears the way that gossip creates divisions between people instead of bringing them together. The timelessness of the desert landscape connects Tayo to everything before and everything after – his own story is one among many, and also an echo of those other stories. As happened earlier in the novel, Harley and Leroy pick Tayo up, repeating another cycle. Yet the first episode in the truck did not end well, foreshadowing that this episode will not benefit Tayo either.

Harley leans out the window, wearing a Hawaiian shirt and dark glasses. He and Leroy are so drunk that Leroy can't even open the truck door without falling out of the car. Tayo helps him get back in and sits in the back seat. Harley and Leroy are celebrating the day they enlisted. They try to open another beer and it sprays all over Tayo. Tayo doesn't want to drink, but he takes the beer that Harley offers.

Harley wears a shirt that is popular in "mainstream" American culture, another attempt to belong to America even though it is destructive to his Native American identity. Being around the other man undoes some of Tayo's efforts to return to his Native heritage, as Harley and Leroy are able to pressure him to drink again.

Harley says that he and Leroy have been driving around all night after starting at a bar in Gallup. Tayo doesn't understand how they ended up going north on the Acoma road after starting in Gallup, but he doesn't question their story. Tayo takes another sip of beer and decides to rest and avoid thinking of the ceremony so that he doesn't become suspicious that his friends are working for the side of "witchery." Tayo becomes just another drunk Indian.

It is painful for Tayo to accept that the people he loves may be working for evil, or have been taken over by the witchery (human greed and selfishness) that infects white culture. Tayo chooses to ignore that using alcohol as a numbing agent. And just as alcohol is a self-destructive "medicine" for all "Indians," it will soon be clear that it is literally destructive for Tayo to indulge in it now.

A while later, Tayo wakes up in the truck, with Harley and Leroy gone. Tayo gets out of the car and sits on a lava rock. He finds it hard to remember how he felt with Ts'eh, or with Betonie, believing in the old stories. Tayo sees Harley and Leroy's footprints going up the hill and follows them, but stops halfway up. Tayo suddenly knows in his **belly** that Harley and Leroy are betraying him. Tayo goes back to the truck and finds a rusty screwdriver. He puts the screwdriver in his pocket and runs off down the road.

Harley and Leroy are unfortunately acting in ways that counter the old values of the Pueblo people. Tayo's stomach, the place where he feels the connection to the stories that explain how Pueblo people should act, warns him that Harley and Leroy are dangerously out of balance with the Pueblo community. Tayo takes the screwdriver as protection if the others try to attack him. Tayo may defend himself with violence, which the novel has established earlier is not in concert with Native philosophy and only brings more evil into the world.

The novel explains that the US Government came into the Cebolleta land grant looking for a specific, mysterious mineral. The drought had already made this land unusable, so the farmers don't care what the government decides to dig for. In 1943, the mine that the government has dug floods, and the government closes the mine but leaves the guards until 1945. By then, they have other sources of uranium, and no longer have to keep the mine a secret. They leave behind only barbed wire fences.

The Cebolleta Land Grant was actually first stolen from the Navajo people, then taken from the Spanish by the American government. This competition over land rights deals only in the power and resources that the land represents, rather than the health of the land itself. White culture as seen in the American government destroys the land first through over-farming, and then by stripping it of minerals for their monetary and military use. The government abandons the land when it is no longer useful, even though they leave guards to ensure that the land is still their possession. The fences remain as unnecessary divides in the land even after the white people have left.

Tayo crawls through the barbed wire and finds a stream. He drinks, but notices that the water is bitter – possibly from the uranium. He remembers old Grandma telling him about a night while he was at war when she saw a huge bright explosion. Tayo did not understand at the time, but he now sees the pattern that witchery is making. **Atomic bombs** have the power to destroy the whole world, and are therefore one of the only things that can unite all of humanity.

The mining efforts are still affecting the land, making the water impure long after mining activity has stopped. The mine is part of the ultimate culmination of all that the novel suggests is bad about white culture, as atomic bombs are a destructive power so vast that they by their very nature constitute a lack of respect for nature or the world. Tayo's reference to a pattern recalls the poem-story about the creation of white people that mentioned a pattern of yellow rocks. That Tayo sees the bomb as having the potential to unite people against it indicates his ability to reach across borders.

Tayo walks into the mineshaft, seeing the witchery's pattern in the yellow striped rock. He realizes that his 'crazy' belief in the old stories was only a view of the world as it truly is, with no boundaries. Tayo looks back to the glimmer of night sky outside the mine and sees Betonie's constellation shining bright and protecting him. The novel turns to a story-poem about Arrowboy, who spied on witches and prevented their magic from working properly.

Seeing the atomic bomb makes it clear that the old stories really are true, because the "ultimate weapon" that Americans used to win WWII was actually foretold by an ancient Native American story. Betonie's constellation reappears, suggesting that Tayo is still in the midst of making his own story about resisting the witchery. Tayo takes inspiration from the poem-story about Arrowboy. By closely watching his own actions, Tayo might be able to prevent himself from joining in any witchery.

Suddenly, headlights shine into the mine shaft and Tayo runs farther into the mine. Emo gets out of the car, and Tayo hears Pinkie and Leroy, but Harley is missing. The men build a bonfire outside the mine shaft and Tayo wonders if they are tracking him like an animal. From the outside, the three men look like a normal group of drunk Indians, but Tayo knows better about the influence of witchery now.

Though drunk Native Americans may seem harmless, Tayo knows that the impulse that drives Native Americans to drink also hides the violent greed that white culture pushes on everything it touches. Though Tayo never explicitly says why Emo might be hunting him, Emo's vendetta against Tayo for being half-white is clearly at play here.

Tayo is cold and hungry hiding in the mineshaft, and he begins to wonder how long he can last in there while Emo, Leroy, and Pinkie drink just outside. Suddenly, Pinkie slams a tire iron on the trunk of Emo's car. From the screaming that results, Tayo realizes that Harley is tied up in the car. Pinkie drags Harley out of the car, strips him and throws the clothes into the fire. Harley's brown skin looks pale in the moonlight.

Emo, Leroy, and Pinkie are all united against Harley even though Harley is a fellow Native American, and a fellow veteran. The true harm of the witchery is how it breaks down these connections and forces every man to act for himself against the entire world. Emo's hatred of white people means that Harley's paled skin turns him into a "white" person on whom Emo can take his revenge.

Tayo creeps closer to the bonfire and holds the screwdriver in his pocket. Tayo realizes that Emo is punishing Harley for failing to deliver Tayo to him. Leroy holds Harley down as Pinkie cuts off bits of Harley's skin. Emo holds a paper bag of Harley's skin up to the sky and shouts for Tayo to come out and see Harley's pain. Emo forces Harley to drink some wine and Tayo grips the screwdriver tighter.

Emo has descended into pure evil that delights in causing pain and taking life, but tries to blame these actions on Tayo – just as white culture destroys Native American communities and then tries to blame the Native Americans for being lazy or alcoholics. Tayo holds a tool, the screwdriver, that puts him in danger of becoming a "tool" for the witchery should he decide to use it.

Tayo begins to plan how he can kill Emo with the screwdriver. Leroy and Pinkie begin to scuffle with each other and Tayo knows he should strike now while Emo's back-up is distracted. Tayo hesitates for a moment, and then realizes that the witchery wants him to kill Emo in order to complete the deadly ritual of the autumn solstice. White people would have taken the murder as proof that Indians do not belong in their modern world and Tayo's fellow Indians would have drowned in their own bitterness at this example of yet another drunk, savage Indian.

By killing Emo, Tayo would have added more evil into the world. By letting Emo live, Tayo proves that there are other responses to death and destruction. White culture does not, and cannot, understand this perspective. White people expect Native Americans to commit violence against each other because it is all they know themselves. While Tayo may not belong to the violent world that white culture has created, his knowledge of the past and faithful adherence to traditional values that respect life , the novel suggests, are actually crucial to humanity's future.

Tayo looks back up to the stars, unchanging no matter the time or place, as Emo, Leroy, and Pinkie drag Harley's body to the car. Tayo decides to gather the plants for Ts'eh, plant them safely, and then return home to New Laguna with Josiah, Rocky, and old Grandma to welcome him back. Tayo runs through the cool forest, watching storm clouds gather in the west and south. He thinks of his love for the land, and Ts'eh's love for him, then crosses the river back to Laguna at sunrise.

The stars, like the desert landscape, remind Tayo that all the stories still apply in his life. He has a responsibility to finish the ceremonies and live according to the lessons that the old stories teach. Tayo finally reconnects with his family, even those who are dead, as the rain comes to end the drought. By refusing to kill Emo, Tayo has brought balance and healed both himself and the land.

SECTION 8

The novel returns to the Corn Mother poem-story, as Hummingbird and Fly bring the tobacco to old Buzzard. Old Buzzard purifies the town in all directions and frees the people from the Ck'o'yo magic. The storm clouds return and the people have food once again. Corn Mother warns the people not to fall for the Ck'o'yo magic again, as fixing things is not easy.

The Corn Mother story ends as Tayo's story ends. Both stories affect and influence each other, as Tayo's story happens chronologically later in time, but appears earlier in the novel. Tayo is living proof that fixing things again will not be easy, but hopefully his ceremony will act as a warning to future generations not to let this happen once again.

Tayo sits in a kiva with Ku'oosh and the other old men of the tribe. Tayo tells his story in full, with the men asking numerous questions. Tayo answers them all, especially the ones about which direction Ts'eh came from and what time of day Tayo met Ts'eh. Tayo sits facing the south wall of the kiva and notices how the late autumn sun comes through the windows. A story-poem explains that Reed Woman (A'moo'ooh) stays in the north with the hunter, who is actually her brother, in the winter, then comes south during the summer and blesses the people.

Tayo brings his wisdom back to the tribe, reconnected with his Laguna Pueblo heritage as he adds another story to the Pueblo legacy. Tayo faces south, the direction that his cattle always want to go, and the direction that traditionally signals home or ending to the Pueblo people. These directions are also important for Ts'eh, who follows the traditional route that the Reed Woman uses to bring the seasons to the Pueblo people. Just as the Reed Woman took the rain away in the story-poem in the beginning of the novel, the novel implies that Ts'eh either is *the Reed Woman or* acts *as the Reed Woman to bring the rain back.*

At noon, the men eat a hearty lunch and Ku'oosh builds up the fire in the kiva. Ku'oosh tells Tayo to stay in the kiva all night fasting. A story-poem describes how the man whom coyote cursed had the coyote skin cut off him and the evil untangled from his spirit and cut to pieces.

Tayo retraces another story to fully cleanse himself of the false identity that white culture put on him. Just as coyote-man sheds his coyote skin, Tayo sheds the evil influence of white culture while sitting in the kiva, a traditional round sacred structure used for Pueblo religious rituals.

Harley and Leroy were found together off the road from Paguate hill, their bodies dismembered enough to warrant sealed coffins. The flags that mark them veterans completely cover the coffins.

Harley and Leroy die without coming back into harmony with nature or their Pueblo identities. As such, the flags that mark them as veterans outshine the actual people that these men were. In death, Harley and Leroy lose everything that tied them to their Pueblo heritage.

Auntie avoids Tayo now that Tayo has visited Ku'oosh, saying that the other women from the church come to her daily wondering how she has managed to stay a strong Christian in the face of such troubles. Auntie simply says, "It has never been easy."

Instead of resenting Tayo for his white blood, Auntie now avoids Tayo because he is too Native American for her Christian friends. Yet for Tayo, this is an important step as he is no longer considered a half-breed, but fully accepted by the Native community. Note that Auntie, who is out of touch with Pueblo culture in favor of Christian righteousness, quotes the Corn Mother story – she seems not to realize how she cannot escape the importance of Native knowledge in her own life.

One day, Auntie comes home from church bursting with the news that Pinkie has been killed. Emo shot Pinkie in the back of the head as Pinkie was washing dishes at the sheep camp. The FBI ruled it an accident, but Emo is still in enough trouble that he skips town to move to California. Old Grandma, half listening to the entire story, remarks that she feels as if she has heard this story before with different names for the characters.

Emo continues to be a tool of the witchery, causing pain, destruction, and death wherever he goes – but rather than give him power the continued destruction he causes leads to his ouster from the tribe, while Tayo's stories have been accepted by the tribe's elders. Old Grandma's observation that stories seem to repeat themselves again implies how new generations come and live out the same plots in the never ending fight between good and evil in human souls, while also tying each of those generations together in a fabric that both remains the same and always changes.

The novel starts a poem-story about the end of witchery, describing how witchery always ends up curling back on itself. The witchery is dead for now. The novel ends with a final poem that reads, "Sunrise, accept this offering, Sunrise."

Though the witchery will return, as evil and good always shift in their balance, Tayo's actions have held it back for now, and his story becomes part of the history and legacy along with the Corn Woman story and so many others. That the novel ends just as it began, with "Sunrise," suggests a number of things. First, it is another example of the novel's structure mirroring its themes, of the cyclic nature of stories, their constant change and sameness. It also suggests that a new story is beginning, one made possible by Tayo's own story. And by leaving that story untold, by leaving the reader only with "Sunrise," the novel implies that this new story could be the readers *story – that influenced by the lessons and power of Tayo's ceremony, it is time for the reader to create a new ceremony. Silko seems to suggest that Ceremony is not just a novel, but that it is itself a ceremony, and now it is has been released into the world, and given to the reader, to perform its healing.*

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