**Purpose: understand the idea and symbolic of blindness to show character development**

Through the plot, setting and choice of characters,

‘The cay’ takes place during WWII on the Island of Curacao where each individual had its place and roles in a time where black people didn’t have the same rights as white people. The idea of discrimination was engrained into Phillip’s mind as it is the only thing he has known and been taught “………”Even after Phillips gets stranded on the island, he still strongly believes that Timothy was to be treated differently and he was inferior “they had their place and we had ours”. However, when Phillip becomes blind, he is able to ‘see’ his new environment and understand that Timothy showed incredible kindness and that without him he wouldn’t be able to survive on the cay.

The author use conflict between characters and their environment to convey the idea of racism and discrimination through Phillip’s blindness

Characters compare and contrast before and after:

How does Phillips see Timothy at the beginning of the book – describe (quotes, evidence) “they had their place and we had ours”

“ I was thinking that it was very strange for me, a boy from Virginia, to be lying beside this giant Negro out on the ocean”, p.40

“Because it had been on my mind I told him that my mother didn’t like black people and asked him why”p.75

Angry, racist, discrimate, not trusting, reliant **he is ‘blind’, he allows his views to be influenced by society, his mother, historical context, etc.**

**After he becomes physically blind and after the slap, the author uses irony to show that his own views on race have opened**

“I had begun to change”, “I want to be your friend” p.60

“He felt neither black nor white” p.63

“Timothy was extremely old yet he seemed powerful”

“With his great back to the storm taking its full punishment he had made it possible for me to live.”p.97 – idea of sacrifice

“Why b’feesh different colour, or flower b’different color? I true don’ know Phill-eep, but I true tink beneath d’skin is all d’same”

“I also think that had I been able to see, I might not have been able to accept it all. But strangely the darkness separated me from everything”

I’d graduated from the survival course”, I had now been with him every moment of the day and night for 2 months, but I had not seem him…it didn’t seem ugly at all. It seemed only kind and strong. P.84-85

Plot and setting:

The setting and plot are both symbolic too in Phillip’s development. He is stranded in a place that doesn’t care for social and racial discrimination. By having their ship destroyed and by being stranded in the middle of nowhere, the author has placed Phillip out of his comfort zone and usual social status. He becomes totally reliant on Timothy to survive. But survival is not possible if both characters do not work as a team. “slap quote”. Therefore the setting and plot represent the ideal common ground for enabling Phillip to learn that Timothy is a kind and selfless human being and that the colour of one’s skin is of no meaning here. “He felt neither black nor white”

The plot uses Phillip’s blindness as a blessing in disguise since Phillip must learn to survive and become independent and not rely on things he has always taken for granted. “My blinds were protecting me from fear”p.98. Slowly I was beginning to know the island…”p.79

After the powerful storm followed by Timothy’s imminent death, Phillip finds himself alone “ aside from him, I was blind and alone on a forgotten cay” but not blind anymore. He is able to navigate through the island and feed himself thanks to Timothy’s

Phillip becomes Timothy (outrageous quote).

The cay is has provided the reader with a great survival story and that out of a negative event within an unlikely setting, Phillip the story’s protagonist has learnt a great life lesson and understood the meaning of friendship and survival thanks to Timothy’s selfless attitude and actions. Phillip was blind but at the end of the story he could ‘see’ again.