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|  |
| --- |
| (Not) such a familiar place  Read chapter 1. In what country is the scene set? Pick out elements to justify your answer. |
| **1.** circle **2.** strong, powerful **3.** wearing skirts made from felt (a thick material) **4.** a sad cry. **5.** strong desire **6.** aiguillons **7.** straps **8.** barbelés  1  2  3  4  5  6  7  8  9  10  11  12  13  14  15  16  17  18  19  20  21  22  23  24  25  26  27  28  29  30  31  32  33  34  35  36  37  38  39  40  41  **We slept in what had once been ~~in~~ the gymnasium. The floor was of varnished wood, with stripes and circles painted on it, for the games that were formerly played there; the hoops1 for the basketball nets were still in place, though the nets were gone. A balcony ran around the room, for the spectators, and** **I thought I could smell, faintly like an afterimage, the pungent2 scent of sweat, shot through with the sweet taint of chewing gum and perfume from the watching girls, felt-skirted3 as I knew from pictures, later in miniskirts, then pants, then in one earring, spiky green-streaked hair. Dances would have been held there; the music lingered,** **a palimpsest of unheard sound, style upon style, an undercurrent of drums, a forlorn wail4 , garlands made of tissue paper flowers, cardboard devils, a revolving ball of mirrors, powdering the dancers with a snow of light.**  **There was old sex in the room and loneliness, and expectation, of something without a shape or name. I remember that yearning5, for something that was always about to happen and was never the same as the hands that were on us there and then, in the small of the back, or out back, in the parking lot, or in the television room with the sound turned down and only the pictures flickering over lifting flesh.**  **We yearned for the future. How did we learn it, that talent for insatiability? It was in the air; and it was still in the air, an afterthought, as we tried to sleep, in the army cots that had been set up in rows, with spaces between so we could not talk. We had flannelette sheets, like children’s, and army-issue blankets, old ones that still said U.S. We folded our clothes neatly and laid them on the stools at the end of the beds. The lights were turned down but not out. Aunt Sara and Aunt Elizabeth patrolled; they had electric cattle prods6 slung on thongs7 from their leather belts.**  **No guns though, even they could not be trusted with guns. Guns were for the guards, specially picked from the Angels. The guards weren’t allowed inside the building except when called, and we weren’t allowed out, except for our walks, twice daily, two by two around the football field, which was enclosed now by a chain-link fence topped with barbed wire8. The Angels stood outside it with their backs to us. They were objects of fear to us, but of something else as well. If only they would look. If only we could talk to them. Something could be exchanged, we thought, some deal made, some trade-off, we still had our bodies. That was our fantasy.**  **We learned to whisper almost without sound. In the semidarkness we could stretch out our arms, when the Aunts weren’t looking, and touch each other’s hands across space. We learned to lip-read, our heads flat on the beds, turned sideways, watching each other’s mouths. In this way we exchanged names from bed to bed:**  **Alma. Janine. Dolores. Moira. June.** |

Read chapter 1. In what country is the scene set? Pick out elements to justify your answer.

The scene is set in the U.S. “We had army-issue blankets, old ones that still said U.S”.

# Part 1:

## The place.

### Focus on the description of the setting and its atmosphere. Complete the grid

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | Before | Now |
| Setting | It is was a sports gymnasium | now it is a prison with no personal freedom |
| Atmosphere | lively, Joyful, youths would be playing sports, laughing, …  Dances held in the room, a sense of festivity and also that of potential sexual relationships. | The atmosphere is heavy, danger is in the air with the threat of cattle sticks, the are patrolled by the “angels”, the inhabitants are prisoners with no chance of escape. |

### How would you define this place, then and now?

The place at the time was a happy place, full of life and potential. Now it is sinister, crippled with fear. They are unified by their loneliness and sadness.

## The people.

### Find their names, occupations/roles, feelings, and description and highlight them in the text. Choose one colour for “now” and another for “once”.

### Compare them in the 2 periods: how would you define each set of characters?

The first set of characters are free to do as they please, they are from the olden times, from the “once”. They feel a whole range of emotions including joy, loneliness, sexual desire and hope. There are no names given.

The other characters from the “now” have different roles:

Aunt Sara and Aunt Elizabeth are the guards that patrol in the gymnasium and to ensure security with they use electric cattle prods. It is twisted to call them Aunt which is normally associated with family and therefore kindness.

Externally the armed guards, who are not allowed in the building, maintain security to prevent the prisoners escaping from the football field or the gymnasium.

These guards are chosen from the Angels. The Angels stand outside the football field with their backs to the prisoners, so they are deprived of any human contact. This is also enforced between the prisoners. The first set of characters take human contact for granted whereas the second set are deprived from it and cleverly find ways round.

## 3)

### a. The 5 senses: which ones are referred to? Give details.

Touch, “hands that were on us”, “stretch out our arms”.

Vision, the pictures flickering on the screen, lip reading

The hearing, the sound turned down, the music lingered, to whisper.

The olfactory, sent of sweat, chewing gum and perfume.

### b. How are they appealed to?

Sense of smell: a lingering smell in the gymnasium.

Touch: we tried to touch hands in bed at night.

Vision: what the main character saw in pictures.

Hearing: “whisper almost without a sound”

### What is the effect on the readers?

The effect is of horror, a dystopian place where you would not want to live. Total deprivation of liberty. Slightly perverse.

## 4) “Alma. Janine. Dolores. Moira. June.”

### a. Pay attention to the punctuation and rhythm of this passage. What does that make you think of?

The fact that each name is followed by a full stop, punctuates each name, it is like a roll call. It also feels like each name was gather with great difficulty.

### b. Look up the traditional meaning of each name. Site

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Name | Site |
| Moira  Origin: English, Irish, Gaelic and Latin  Meaning: "star of the sea" | <https://cutt.ly/EgGsZ6b> |
| Janine  Origin: Hebrew, American  Meaning: Gift from God | <https://cutt.ly/igGdv6m> |
| Dolores  Origin: Spain  Meaning: "lady of sorrows". | <https://cutt.ly/4gGdW53> |
| Alma  Origin: Latin, Italian, Hebrew and Arabic  Meaning: "nourishing, kind; soul; young woman; learned" | <https://cutt.ly/7gGzYJV> |
| June  Origin: Latin  Meaning: Born In June | <https://cutt.ly/3gGzAqL> |

### c. What may this type of name suggest about the whole novel?

It would mean that hope is not in this novel and that, if given from god, is a miracle. They are all female names.

### d. What elements help you define the narrator?

The narrator is a victim of her society, she is there as a prisoner, she has no rights or freedom. She knows that it could be different, and she is aware of the past. She is scared and anxious.

# Focus On… Palimpsest

A palimpsest used to be a parchment or other writing-material written upon twice, the original writing was erased or rubbed out to make place for the second. It’s also used to refer to super-imposed layers or remnants indicating the presence of a former text, painting or other.

**● What traces of “palimpsest” can you find in the passage?**

l.1: “We slept in what had once been

the gymnasium.”

l.4: “I thought I could smell […]”

l.8-9: “a palimpsest of unheard sound”

l.13: “There was old sex in the room and loneliness, and expectation, [...]”

**Grammar Lab**

**Would**

**a.** Dances **would** have been held there.

**b.** If only they **would** look.

**● The modal “would” is used differently here. Which one indicates repetition/ habit? Which one indicates condition? Explain your choice.**

The first sentence indicates a repetition that several dances occurred. Whereas the second sentence indicate that it is a condition, they would have to look at her first so that something else could happen.

## Check your understanding

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Tick true or false | T | F |
| The scene takes place outside. |  | X |
| This place used to be a lively one. | X |  |
| The characters in the gym work for the U.S. army. |  | X |
| Aunt Sara and Aunt Elizabeth carry guns. |  | X |

|  |
| --- |
| (Not) such a familiar place  Read chapter 1. In what country is the scene set? Pick out elements to justify your answer. |
| 1. /riːθ/ round-shaped (funeral) garland of flowers 2. cord 3. vieux chiffons tressés en tapis  1  2  3  4  5  6  7  8  9  10  11  12  13  14  15  16  17  18  **A chair, a table, a lamp. Above, on the white ceiling, a relief ornament in the shape of a wreath1, and in the centre of it a blank space, plastered over, like the place in a face where the eye has been taken out. There must’ve been a chandelier, once. They’ve removed anything you could tie a rope2 to.**  **A window, two white curtains.** **Under the window, a window seat with a little cushion. When the window is partly open – it only opens partly – the air can come in and make the curtains move. I can sit in the chair, or on the window seat, hands folded, and watch this. Sunlight comes** **in through the window too, and falls on the floor, which is made of wood, in narrow strips, highly polished. I can smell the polish. There’s a rug on the floor, oval, of braided rags3. This is the kind of touch they like: folk art, archaic, made by women, in their spare time, from things that have no further use. A return to traditional values. Waste not want not. I am not being wasted. Why do I want?**  **On the wall above the chair, a picture, framed but with no glass: a print of flowers, blue irises, watercolor. Flowers are still allowed. Does each of us have the same print, the same chair, the same white curtains, I wonder? Government issue?** |

# Part 2:

## 1)

### a. Give details about the furniture and style of decoration.

There is little furniture in the room, there is a bed, table, a lamp. The style is quite neutral in colour and the choice of white often represents purity. The style is traditional and harks back to the olden times when things were hand-made and the women’s place was in the home.

### b. What is the prevailing colour?

The prevailing colour is white because it the only colour mentioned three times in this passage. “white curtains”, “white ceiling”, “same white curtains”.

### c. What type of place does this room make you think of?

This room makes me think of a psychiatric hospital or a prison cell. As white is the dominant colour of the room plus the curtains are white and the supposed chandelier is missing to prevent hangings. Furthermore, the only bright colours are trapped in the sole picture in the room and the rag rug on the floor.

## 2)

### What natural elements are present in the scene? How? What may that imply?

The naturals elements present in the scene are:

1 the wreath on the ceiling, the mouldings imply that the building is old,

2 the print of blue irises framed without glass on the wall, the choice of flowers is generally symbolic and blue irises represent faith and hope.

3 finally the wooden floor planks, which are highly polished, indicate the feeling of cleanliness of a hospital and again an old building.

The general atmosphere is that of calm and neutrality.

## 3) *“They’ve removed anything you could tie a rope to. Does each of us have the same print, the same chair, the same white curtains, I wonder? Government issue?”*

### a. Who is “they”? “us”? b. What is implied?

“They” would be for the people that furnished the room as in the authority/captors and “us” would be for the people who are held captive in the rooms, therefore they are the victims. The “us” are considered as slave and have to obey the “they”.

## 4) Compare the narrator’s situation in the first chapter and at the beginning of this second chapter (places, feelings...)

The difference between the first and the second chapter is that in the first she seem scared, oppressed, the Aunts are a weapon of fear to them. Whereas in the second extract, she seems calmer but more isolated then when she was in the gymnasium with other women.

**Style Lab: Hypotyposis**

Hypotyposis is a life-like description of a scene or a thing. It’s often achieved through verbless sentences. They give the readers the impression they are watching a painting, that their eyes are led from one element to the next.

**● Can you find traces of hypotyposis here? Underline them in the text. What words help the scene come to life?**

l.1: “Above, on the white ceiling, a relief Ornament […]”

l. 6: “Under the window, a window seat”

l.16: “On the wall above the chair, a picture […]”

**Focus on: The language of flowers and colours**

Very often, flowers and colours have a meaning and are a way to say something indirectly. For instance, it’s commonly accepted idea that red roses stand for passionate love. In this passage, blue irises stand for “faith and hope” whereas white irises would have meant innocence and purity.

**● As you read, pay particular attention to the flowers and their colours. They have a real meaning and are important for understanding some passages.**

The blue Irises are the symbol of hope whereas the white ones are the symbol of innocence

## 6) Check your understanding All the sentences are false. Underline the wrong elements and correct them.

### a. The scene takes place at night.

The scene takes place during the day because: “Sunlight comes in through the window too […]” l.9 .

### b. The main colour is blue.

The main colour is white because it is mentioned three times in the room. “[…] the white ceiling […]” l.1

### c. There are flowers in a pot, next to the window.

The flowers are in a picture above a chair. “On the wall above the chair, a picture, framed but with no glass: a print of flowers […]” l.16

### d. The window is wide open to let some fresh air in.

“[…] it only opens partly […]” l.7

### e. The narrator made the rug herself during her free time.

The rug is not made by the narrator but by it is assumed that it was made by women in their free time. “made by women, in their spare time […]” l.12

|  |
| --- |
| (Not) such a familiar place  Read chapter 1. In what country is the scene set? Pick out elements to justify your answer. |
| **1.** (U.S.) trottoirs **2.** laverie automatique  1  2  3  4  5  6  7  8  9  10  11  12  13  14  15  16  17  18  19  **The sidewalks1 here are cement. Like a child, I avoid stepping on the cracks. I’m remembering my feet on these sidewalks, in the time before, and what I used to wear on them. Sometimes it was shoes for running, with cushioned soles and breathing holes, and stars of fluorescent fabric that reflected light in the darkness. Though I never ran at night; and in the daytime, only beside well-frequented roads.**  **Women were not protected then.**  **I remember the rules, rules that were never spelled out but that every woman knew: don’t open your door to a stranger, even if he says he is the police. Make him slide his ID under the door. Don’t stop on the road to help a motorist pretending to be in trouble. Keep the locks on and keep going. If anyone whistles, don’t turn to look. Don’t go into the laundromat2, by yourself, at night.**  **I think about laundromats. What I wore to them: shorts, jeans, jogging pants. What I put into them: my own clothes, my own soap, my own money, money I had earned myself. I think about having such control.**  **Now we walk along the same street, in red pairs, and no man shouts obscenities at us, speaks to us, touches us. No one whistles.**  **There is more than one kind of freedom, said Aunt Lydia. Freedom to and freedom from. In the days of anarchy, it was freedom to. Now you’re being given freedom from. Don’t underrate it.** |

## Read the extract and identify the period it focused on

The extract focuses on the period before the current regime and how the narrator used to live in it. The extract also describes the current time in which the narrator is in. The aim is to show the difference in lifestyles between the two freedoms.

## 1)

### a. Underline the time references.

### b. What element connects them?

The element that connects them is time, the ‘once’ and ‘now’, the ‘before’ and ‘after’: the actions, habits, fears, rules.

## 2)

### a. Find elements to complete the grid about women “once” and “now”.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | Before | Now |
| Women’s clothes | l.12 “shorts, jeans, jogging pants”  l.3 “shoes for running” | l.15 “[…], in red pairs […]” |
| Men and women | l.7-11: “[…] don’t open your door to a stranger, even if he says he is the police.[…] Don’t stop on the road to help a motorist pretending to be in trouble.[…] If anyone whistles, don’t turn to look. Don’t go into the laundromat, by yourself, at night.” | l.15 “Now we walk along the same street […] and no man shouts obscenities at us, speaks to us, touches us. No one whistles.” |

### b. “Women were not protected then. Rules that were never spelled out but that every woman knew.” What do these sentences suggest about “before” and about “now”?

Before women were not safe but they were free to go where they pleased, whereas after they have freedom from men’s advances.

## 3) The laundromat. What does the narrator insist on? Why?

The narrator insists on the word own: “my own clothes, my own soap, my own money, money I had earned myself” l.13-14 it is all about possession and having earned her own money, it is also about control.

## 4)

### a. Comment on her thoughts on freedom.

‘Freedom to’ is the possibility to go where one wants and to do what you want when you want. Whereas ‘freedom from’ is about being free from what people could do to you.

### b. What about the use of the term “anarchy” to refer to “freedom to”?

**Focus on: Dystopias**

A dystopia is an **anti-utopia**, an imagined world where life is dark for the dehumanised majority suffering from oppression, often under a totalitarian regime or following a cataclysmic event. It is a means for the writer to criticise and denounce topical issues, like in 1984 (George Orwell, 1949) or Brave New World (Aldous Huxley, 1932).

**● What traces of dystopia can you find here?**

The traces that can be found in the text are ‘the before’ when the narrator remembers the past when she was free but had to be careful of her surroundings whereas now, she is totally controlled but doesn’t need to be as careful in the same way.

**Grammar Lab**

**Verbs of the mind**

**a.** “I’m **remembering** my feet on the sidewalks.”

b. “I **remember** the rules.”

**● Verbs like think, remember, believe are not very often used in the continuous form. What difference can you make between the use of remember in these two sentences?**

The difference between the two is that when one is remembering one’s feet there is a feeling/memory linked to it, whereas in the other one, one is simply recalling given information such as rules, it is a statement.

# 5) Check your understanding

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **True or False** | **T** | **F** |
| a. The narrator used to live in the same city. | X |  |
| b. She was used to doing her own laundry | X |  |
| c. She felt protected in the past. |  | X |
| d. She now lives in a state of anarchy. |  | X |