|  |
| --- |
| (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 | 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 |