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Assignment

English 10, Assessment #1: Close Reading Paragraph Topic: You will be writing on one of the short stories from our packet: “The I is Never Alone” or “The Bird-Dreaming Baobab.” (For extra challenge, you may choose from the Elizabeth Bishop “challenge poems” at the end of the packet). Choose an aspect of the short story or poem that will enable close reading: a word pattern, a significant image, a literary device, a repeated detail, etc. In your topic sentence and paragraph, answer the following question: What does this aspect of the text reveal about the story/poem’s broader themes? This is a broad prompt, and I am available to help you narrow it as you begin pre-writing. This paragraph assesses the following template items:

- Understanding Literature: Form and Function
- Close Reading and Argumentation
- Structure and Mechanics
- The Writer’s Voice

Important reminders:

- Length: One paragraph, so 250-350 words
- Paragraph format: MLA style, double-spaced, 12-point font
- In this paragraph, one of your primary goals is to demonstrate your close reading skills. Close reading means unpacking the meaning of individual words and phrases.
- If you write about a pattern/image/etc. that we discussed in class, you need to go above and beyond class discussion so that I can see your own thinking.
- Include page numbers for citations.

Planning

Text

I wanted to use the pronouns based on narrator vs settlers for the bird seller in bird dreaming baobab, but I’m not sure what that “reveals about the story/poem’s broader themes”. So, I will write about the specificity of numbers in the I is never alone instead.

Markup

I realized that I didn’t really want to write about the specificity of numbers, because that felt too obvious after talking about it in class. I noticed that the word “Siriak” appears in differing intensities throughout the text, and decided to visualize it with a rolling average: <https://github.com/Exr0nRandomProjects/exr0n20eng201retA1analysis>

Thesis

The frequency of self reference is directly correlated with idleness, suggesting that identity and reflection are in opposition.

Evidence

~~Trough at beginning of paragraph 5 is when lands on the island, shipwrecked. Peak halfway through paragraph 6 is when he catches and teaches the parrots. Trough at paragraph 8 is when “he struggled~~

to remember that he also existed outside himself” < That was the old graph, with stats before instead of around.

Half way through paragraph 2: Siriak realizes his companions are dead and takes over the ship Spike at 6: Siriak captures parrots Dip at end of 7: parrots call for Siriak (although he does nothing himself) Spike at beginning of 9: “and so the weeks and months flew by”

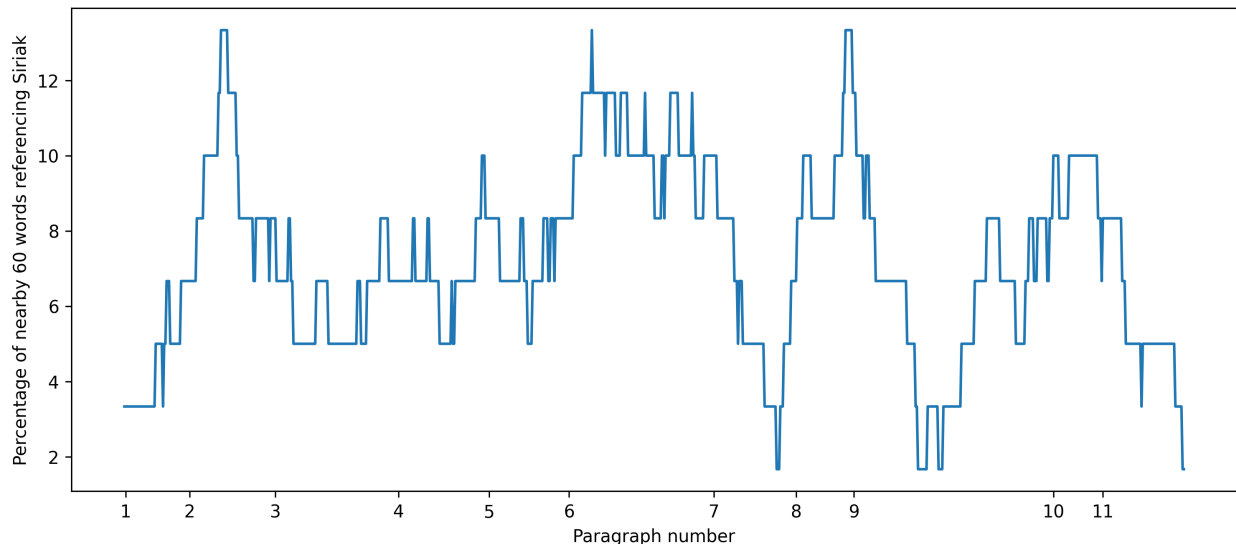
Outline

Thesis

In Marcel Marien’s *The I Is Never Alone*, local frequency of references to Siriak are directly correlated with idleness and reflection; this reveals the interdependency between internal reflection and external perception.

Intro

References to Siriak can be quantitatively analyzed by counting the number of references in the surrounding words up to a radius away for each word in the text. Using a radius of 30 words would result in a graph as fol-



lows:

Body Points

This chart visually spotlights the change in self-reference (TODO WC) as the text progresses. The spikes and troughs in the chart align with moments of reflection and action in the story. For instance, the chart shows a spike at the beginning of paragraph six—the first time “he truly understood the depth of his solitude to which he was condemned”. Although Siriak is reflecting upon his own situation where there should be no need to distinguish between himself and others, over twelve percent of the nearby words refer to Siriak in second or third person—from distinctly outside Siriak’s inner mind and first person solitude.

The antithesis further reinforces the entanglement of outer pronouns and inner reflection: in the final third of paragraph seven, the parrots of the isle begin to repeat Siriak’s name. “As one might guess, the outcome was everything Siriak might have hoped for, if not foreseen.” Although the Siriak’s scheming cognition shows through, the author deliberately minimizes the use of pronouns: Marien picks up the pace of description—fewer words per action means pronouns can be carried further and still flow—and uses complex, multi-phrase sentences—the short, tacked on clauses removes the need for more Siriak-referential pronouns.

Conclusion

Similarly, a spike in pronouns is observed at the end of paragraph eight, where Siriak has an explicit identity crisis; and a dip in the middle of paragraph nine, where Siriak turns to the physical outer world and scatters mirrors about the island. This parity between external pronouns and internal reflection shows that Siriak's identity is primarily perceived through the lens of external pronouns, highlighting the coupled nature of reflection and perception.

Compiled Draft
