Q2: The Rainbow AP Lit

In D. H. Lawrence’s *The Rainbow*, the narrator explores a woman’s pursuit for knowledge. The women is eager to leave her simple, rural lifestyle for one filled with knowledge and liberation. Her exploration of the unknown challenges the preexisting social structure laid out by myopic men. The women sets out to exemplify strength and adventure in a man’s world, leaving behind the confinements of her family’s farm. Through the use of contrasting imagery and rhetorical questions, Lawrence accurately captures the women’s desire to venture into the unknown and underscores her pursuit of freedom.

Immediately in the first paragraph, the reader is thrust into a peaceful, bucolic setting. “The wind blew to dry the wet wheat, and set the young ears of corn wheeling freshly round about” (2-4). The powerful imagery resonates with the reader, showing that the simple life was indeed “enough for the men” (1). The author’s illustration of the farm is tangible, as exemplified by the distinct, unwavering imagery. Lawrence’s descriptions of the “wind and wet wheat” (2) and “cow in labor” (5) are visceral and real. The paragraph depicts that men are content, with no mention of the women yet. If it was “enough for the men”, then it likely was not enough for the women. The focus on the men and their happiness from the first paragraph implies that women and their happiness are secondary and that women desire to achieve the same satisfaction as men.

The imagery in the second paragraph contrasts with that of the first paragraph with the word “but” signaling a transition. The woman is unsatisfied with her current conditions: “her house faced out from the farm-buildings and fields, looked out to...the world beyond” (16-19). While the men “looked out to the back at sky and harvest and beast and land” (32-33) from the farmlands, the woman gazes outward to society, where intellect and progress are. Lawrence contrasts the images of men and women to express that men were content while the women were not. The imagery shifts to “the faroff world of cities and governments” (20) to which the woman envisions to be “the magic land...where secrets were made known and desires fulfilled” (20). The woman’s images are illusory: they are merely figments of the women’s imagination fueled by her desire to venture out into the world. Lawrence romanticizes the woman’s longingness for exploration and freedom, as her goals do not have the “blood-intimacy” (16) or concrete fruitions that the men’s aspirations have. The dream-like words reveal her deep, innate desire to pursue knowledge. This imagery reveals the women’s dissatisfaction with her lifestyle and her surcharged longing for liberation, but she is unable to make her desires a reality.

The woman though does not simply accept her current conditions. She advocates for equality, asserting that women should be given the same rights as men. She questions her role in society, displaying her utmost determination to gain knowledge. She asks, “What was in the vicar, that raised him above the common men as man is raised above the beast?” (54-56) and “[The vicar’s] soul was master of the other man’s. And why—why?” (63-64). The vicar, the representation of what she desires, further emphasizes the woman’s dissatisfaction with the monotonous farm-life. The woman questions what “makes a man strong even if he be little and frail in body…what was it?” (58-61). She concludes that the the vicar’s strength, or any man’s for that matter, is a direct result of his knowledge. The woman’s urgency and determination to find an answer is shown through her use of rhetorical questions. The nature of rhetorical questions themselves as shows of contemplation underline her longing for knowledge. Her list of well-thought out questions implies that she has wondered why things must be a certain way and she has been entrapped in her position for so long. Her unanswered questions suggests that she is unable to communicate with the men because of her suppressed freedoms.

Lawrence expresses that the woman’s situation revolves around her discontent with her lack of freedom and knowledge. The author’s use of imagery reveals her aspirations as ethereal when compared to the concrete fruitions of the men’s goals, and the rhetorical questions exemplify the woman’s desire for knowledge. These literary devices emphasize the woman’s longing to explore the unknown and leave behind her rural farm life.

Overall Notes

* Transitional words

Paragraph 1

* Powerful imagery
* “It was enough for the men, that the earth heaved and opened its furrow to them, that the wind blew to dry the wheat, and set the young ears of corn wheeling freshly round about” (1-4)
* Peaceful and happy setting
* Paragraphs 1 and 2 contrast men and women

Paragraph 2 (also imagery)

* Starts with “But”; turn/change
* “But the woman wanted another form of life” (15)
* Contrasts from the first paragraph
* Words that evoke imagery of greater, farther things
* Gazes outward to society (intellect + progress)
* “She stood to see the faroff world of cities and governments and the active scope of man, the magic land to her, where secrets were made known and desires fulfilled” (19-22)
* Diction → Entranced/Wistful
* Showing how their aspirations are left unfulfilled

Paragraph 3

* Metaphor
* war/battle for knowledge (struggle)
* Powerful words; comparing the acquisition of knowledge to a battle
* “her deepest desire hung on the battle that she heard, far off” (36-37)

Paragraph 4

* Rhetorical question or metaphor
* Rhetorical pursuit of truth she is seeking for
* Questioning why things have to be a certain way; displays her utmost desire to achieve greater / see things; determination
* “What was in the vicar, that raised him above the common men as man is raised above the beast?”
* Questions why things are like they are (and her role in society)
* She longs for the world of the vicar (symbol)
* Vicar ~ representation of what she desires