

She stares out the plate glass windows.

Pinpoints of light

from the next town are blinking on.

He'll look at her and then,

but not all of her,

a sleeve, a breast,

a glimpse of hair,

long like the longest night.

Glossary

brittle: hard but liable to break easily.

rattling: making a series of knocking sounds.

Comprehension Questions

1. Who are the main characters in the poem? From whose point of view is the poem written?
2. Explain the importance of the setting of the poem.
3. Explain the significance of the title.
4. How do the various images of nature interact with the characters in the poem?
5. "A good rain is worth a hundred years". Elucidate.

About the Poet

Silvia Curbelo (1955-present) immigrated to the United States from Cuba with her family when she was 12. Among her numerous awards are poetry fellowships from the National Endowment for the Arts, the Cintas foundation, and the Jessica Nobel- Maxwell Memorial Prize from the American Poetry Review. Her poetry collection *The Geography of Leaving* (1990) won the Gerald Cable Chapbook Competition, sponsored by Silverfish Review Press, and in 1992 she won the James Wright Poetry Prize, sponsored by the journal Mid American Review. She has also published *The Secret History of Water* (1997), which was the inaugural volume in the Anhinga Press' Florida Poetry Series, and *Ambush* (2004). Curbelo is managing editor of *Organica Quarterly*. Her subtle images evoke a fictional space, an imaginary homeland that contains the past and the present, memory, and hope.

Introduction to the poem

Summer Storm (1995) couples the personal with the elemental, overlaying collective and individual paths. Silvia Curbelo's poetry is accomplished, daring, full of energy and intelligence; it is the generous manifestation of an authentic and original gift. Her poems embody imaginative honesty and a free-ranging and fresh sensibility.

Themes for Discussion

1. Nature versus human beings
2. Importance of spaces (physical and mental)
3. Imagination and reality
4. Love and hope

Black Woman

Nancy Morejón

I can still smell the spray of the sea they made me cross.
That night, I can not remember it.
Not even the ocean itself could remember.
But I do not forget the first seagull I saw.
The clouds above, like innocent witnesses.
I have not forgotten my lost coast, nor my ancestral language
They brought me here and here I have lived.
And because I worked like a beast, here I was born again.
Many a Mandingo legend have I used
I rebelled.

The Master bought me in the square.
I embroidered the Master's coat and I gave birth to his son.
My son did not have a name.
And the Master died by the hand of an impeccable English lord.
I wandered.

This is the land where I suffered the whippings and degradation.
I traveled the length of its rivers
Under its sun I planted and gathered harvests I did not eat.
My home was a barracoon/hut
I myself carried the stones to build it.
Yet I sang the song of the native birds.
I rebelled.

In this land I touched the damp blood and the rotting bones of many others,
Some brought to this place like me, others not.
And I never again thought of the road to Guinea.
Was it to Guinea? Or Benin? Was it to Madagascar? Or Cape Verde?
I worked harder.

Here I built my world.
I established my ancient song and my hope

Glossary:

Mandingo: A member of a people of western Africa in or near the upper Niger valley (or) the language of the Mandingo.

Barracoon: An enclosure or barracks formerly used for temporary confinement of slaves or convicts.

Comprehension Questions

1. Describe how the speaker's voyage to oppression is both literal and metaphorical.
2. How do subjectivities of race, class and sex define the Black Woman's plight?
3. Oppression on several levels is expressed through the poem Black Woman. Discuss.
4. Why does the Black Woman find it difficult to remember whether she was in Guiana, Madagascar or Cape Verde?
5. What is the significance of the Black Woman's "ancient song"?

About the Poet

Nancy Morejón was born in Havana on Cuba in 1944, where she was the first Afro-Cuban woman to gain a BA. Her Afro-Cuban background and the history of her country are important factors to her work. The struggle against slavery, the rebellion against the Spanish regime, the riots during American occupation, and the victory over the Batista dictatorship are some of the topics of her exceptional poetry, that shows art and revolutionary struggle as two sides of the same story. The historical materials she interprets artistically, like the revolts and revolutions of the past, the present and the future – for her is to be seen in the spirit of Marx and Lenin as inevitable stages in the progress of humanity. She developed in her poetry a unique kind of poetic eroticism, differing from the macho image of a heterosexual pillar of family and state, and from the fetishized African woman as an obscure object of male desire. Her most famous poem,

'Mujer negra' (1975), presents in a compact and partly hermetic form the history of Afro-Americans from the era of slavery up to the present. Today, she embodies the poetry of Havana and the revolution - the poetry of the people living by the sea, the poetry of the island, of the Caribbean, a poetry to be fuelled by two powerful sources, her African and Spanish heritage, two sources that have blended into a specific Cuban mixture, as Kathleen Weaver wrote about Nancy Morejón.

Introduction to the poem

Morejón's poem could come from the experience of an enslaved African woman from any country whether the enslavers were British, Danes, French, Portuguese or Spanish. Usually the images of the population of Spanish speaking countries like Cuba, the Dominican Republic, Puerto Rico and the countries of Central and South America do not contain much if any representations of Africans. Even in Brazil (former Portuguese colony) with its large population of Africans there is not much representation in that country's popular culture (including soap operas) of an African presence.

Themes for Discussion

1. Oppression
2. Slavery.
3. Plight of the African Woman.
4. Trope of Voyage.

To Roosevelt

Ruben Dario

It is with the voice of the Bible, or verse of Walt Whitman,
that we should reach you, Hunter!
Primitive and modern, simple and complicated,
with a bit of Washington and a bit of Nimrod.
You are the United States,
You are the future invader
the naive America who has Indian blood,
that still prays to Jesus Christ and still speaks Spanish.

About the Poet

Born in 1943 in Sâri, Mâzandarân province, Iran, Mina Assadi began her career as a journalist at several well-known Iranian publications. Her political views and her opposition to the monarchical regime led her to leave Iran in 1976 for Sweden, where she continues to live and work. She is still forbidden from entering Iran. In 1996, she won the *Hellman/Hammett Grant* from the Human Rights Watch, New York. She is the author of several books of poetry and essays, including *Eve and I*; *The Sea Is Behind Your Doubts*; *Without Love, Without Eyes*; and a collection of love poems called *I Want to Return to Your Shoulders*, most of which have been only published outside of Iran. She has also published various studies on Iranian children living in Sweden, and on immigrants and racism.

Introduction to the poem

“A Ring to Me is Bondage” is a poem where the poet introduces herself. It is very evident that the speaker in the poem is a very determined self. The poet’s attitude towards religion and relationships is openly stated in the poem. The poet looks at the lives of women through a different perspective.

Themes for Discussion

1. Religion
2. Family
3. Freedom and confinement
4. Spirituality
5. Resistance

Mother Tongue

Amy Tan

I am not a scholar of English or literature. I cannot give you much more than personal opinions on the English language and its variations in this country or others.

I am a writer. And by that definition, I am someone who has always loved language. I am fascinated by language in daily life. I spend a great deal of my time thinking about the power of language —the way it can evoke an emotion, a visual image, a complex idea, or a simple truth. Language is the tool of my trade. And I use them all—all the Englishes I grew up with.

Recently, I was made keenly aware of the different Englishes I do use. I was giving a talk to a large group of people, the same talk I had already given to half a dozen other groups. The nature of the talk was about my writing, my life, and my book, *The Joy Luck Club*. The talk was going along well enough, until I remembered one major difference that made the whole talk sound wrong. My mother was in the room. And it was perhaps the first time she had heard me give a lengthy speech, using the kind of English I have never used with her. I was saying things like,

About the Author

Amy Tan is a Chinese-American novelist who wrote the New York Times-bestselling novel *The Joy Luck Club*. Amy Tan was born on February 19, 1952 in Oakland, California. In 1985, she wrote the story "Rules of the Game," which was the foundation for her first novel *The Joy Luck Club*. The book explored the relationship between Chinese women and their Chinese-American daughters. It received the *Los Angeles Times* Book Award and was translated into 25 languages. Tan lives in San Francisco and New York.

Introduction to the Text

Amy Tan's short story, "Mother Tongue," is a wonderful tale that addresses the substance of languages and how language is not only a tool of communication, but a sociological tool of measuring individual worth. Amy Tan says that she has come to realize that something unusual goes on with language—at least her own, based upon the Chinese her mother grew up speaking, the English her mother uses as her "second language," Amy's use of this special version of her mother's English, and her own perception that her mother's English was somehow "broken"—at least this is how Ms. Tan *used* to feel. The author notes that the language her mother speaks is very different than "American English," but that it is deceiving in that her mother understands more than one might think when listening to her speak.

Waking up the Rake

Linda Hogan

In the ~~quiet~~ ^{sunrise is just coming} still dark mornings, my grandmother would rise up from her bed and put wood in the stove. When the fire began to burn, she would sit in front of its warmth and let down her hair. It had never been cut and it knotted down in two long braids. When I was fortunate enough to be there, in those red Oklahoma mornings, I would wake up with her, stand behind her chair, and pull the brush through the long strands of her hair. It cascaded down her back, down over the chair, and touched the floor.

We were the old and the new, bound together in front of the snapping fire, woven like a lifetime's tangled growth of hair. I saw my ^{and is Linda Hogan's future figure} future in her body and face, and her past alive in me. We were morning people, and in all of earth's morning, the new intertwines with the old. Even ^{new, a day itself is ancient, old with earth's habit of turning over and over again} new, a day itself is ancient, old with earth's habit of turning over and over again.

Years later, I was sick, and I went to a traditional healer. The healer was dark and thin and radiant. The first night I was there, she also lit a fire. We sat before it, smelling the ^{an} juniper smoke. She asked me to tell her everything, my life spoken in words, a case history of living, with its dreams and losses, the scars and wounds we all bear from being in the world. She smoked me with cedar smoke, wrapped a sheet around me, and put me to bed, gently, like a mother caring for her child.

every year
shrub
which bears
berry-like
comer.

language, in the humblest of labour. The rake wakes up and the healing is in it. The shadows of leaves that once fell beneath the tree the handle came from are in that labour, and the rabbits that passed this way, on the altar of our work. And when the rake wakes up, all Earth's gods are reborn and they dance and sing in the dusty air around us.

Glossary

Carcasses: the dead body of an animal, especially of a large one or of one that is ready for cutting up as meat

Shank: the part of an animal's or a person's leg between the knee and ankle

Embodiment: a person or thing that represents or is a typical example of an idea or a quality; epitome

Paradox: a person, thing or situation that has two opposite features and therefore seems strange

About the Author: Linda Hogan (1947) (Chickasaw) is a Native American poet, storyteller, academic, playwright, novelist, environmentalist and writer of short stories. She is the Former Writer in Residence for The Chickasaw Nation and Professor Emerita from University of Colorado is an internationally recognized public speaker and writer of poetry, fiction, and essays. Her father is a Chickasaw from a recognized historical family and Linda's uncle, Wesley Henderson, helped form the White Buffalo Council in Denver during the 1950s. It was to help other Indian people coming to the city because of The Relocation Act, which encouraged migration for work and other opportunities. He had a strong influence on her and she grew up relating strongly to both her Chickasaw family in Indian Territory (Oklahoma) and to a mixed Indian community in the Denver area.

Essayist, novelist, and poet, Hogan has published works in many different backgrounds and forms. Her concentration is on environmental themes. She has acted as a consultant in bringing together Native tribal representatives and feminist themes, particularly allying them to her Native ancestry. Her work, whether fiction or non-fiction, expresses an indigenous understanding of the world.

She has written essays and poems on a variety of subjects, both fictional and nonfictional, biographical and from research. Hogan has also written historical novels. Her work studies the historical wrongs done to Native Americans and the American environment since the European colonization of North America. (Source: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Linda_Hogan)

Linda Hogan was born in 1947, in Denver, Colorado and grew up in Oklahoma. She obtained a M.A. degree from University of Colorado at Boulder in 1978. Hogan has played a prominent rôle in the development of contemporary Native American poetry, particularly in its relationship to environmental and anti-nuclear issues. She often incorporates a feminist perspective in her verse through description of women's lives and feelings.

(Source: <http://www.ipl.org/div/natam/bin/browse.pl/A40>)

About the Text: This text is taken from the Hogan's book *Dwellings: A Spiritual History of the Living World* (1995). Points to be discussed include ecocriticism and ecofeminism. How Hogan's Native American ancestry helps her be intrinsically linked to nature. The ideas of interlinkages between humans and the natural world she advocates; the paradox in her revelling in sweeping the carcasses of rodents and such fed upon by the birds of prey and her distaste of human violations. Also refer to questions.

If the main agenda of Chickasaw writer Linda Hogan is to "cross the border" of species, she performs it here through a bold inversion of the usual hierarchy of anthropocentrism. Here, in the Birds of Prey Rehabilitation Foundation (in Colorado), the birds are the superior species, "teachers" of greater intelligence who require much preparation and learning from their human students before the latter can really "know" them. There is a haunting undertone to these various images of avian eyes and inhuman feet, in this sudden apprehension of the presence of an alien intelligence. Most haunting is the sad realization that "they know" that "we have somehow fallen" from the community of being. (Source: <http://cdrli.unl.edu/quills/doc/qls.0058.xml>)

Possible Questions

1. What is the significance of the title "Waking up the Rake"? Discuss.
2. How does the old and new come together as a seamless whole according to Linda Hogan? Explain.
3. "Doing work that has to be done over and over again helps us to recognize the natural cycles of growth and decay, of birth and death, and thus become aware of the dynamic order of the universe." Discuss.
4. "Yes, worship God, go to church, sing praises, but first tie your camel to the post." Discuss this Sufi saying in the light of this essay and the work Linda Hogan does.
5. What has Hogan's work with animals and birds taught her? Explain.
6. Man and nature (animals, birds and trees) are intrinsically interlinked. How does Hogan bring out this thesis.
7. "We are the wouders and we are the healers." Discuss this paradox in the light of the essay.
8. How does intuition work in the job that Hogan does? Explain.
9. Explain "work is our worship".
10. How does the rake wake up? Discuss.

guerilla leader whom she knows only as Beto. Valenzuela left Argentina after the death of dictator Juan Peron in 1974 to escape the military dictatorship that ruled until 1983. Before she fled, she wrote, "Buenos Aires belonged then to violence and to state terrorism, and I could only sit in cafes and brood. Till I decided a book of short stories could be written in a month at those same café tables, overhearing scraps of scared conversations, seeping in the general paranoia. *Strange Things Happen Here* (1979) was born, and with it a new political awareness. And action."

Introduction of the Text

The story presents a complex narrative that blurs the line between reality and imagination, fact and fiction. Behind the disguise of a love story, the narrative highlights the political tension in Argentina with a parallel focus on gender issues of the society.

Themes for Discussion *Their poems couple the personal with the elemental, overlaying collective and individual paths.*

1. Politics and Oppressive Power Structures
2. Violence and Despotism
3. Gender Issues (male-female dichotomy)
4. Identity
5. History and Fiction

*Narrative poetry -
Free verse - telling a
Story*

The waitress props open her book
against the sugar bowl
but doesn't read it

She hums along with the hard rock station,

a song about a brittle love *fragile.*

and a piece of someone's heart. *In the music itself.*

The man - the woman - The narrator.

Summer Storm

Silvia Curbelo

A Lover's Discourse

Roland Barthes

Like a face behind a drawn shade the narrator observes everything - is observational
it has nothing to do with him the face is just a face - the Buddhist monk -
She pours his coffee, Rain - Some people feel; Some just get drenched
she will do that much. wet - Censoring one's desire.

He stares at his hands,
the coffee cup, the door,
saying nothing. She is beautiful.

He thinks? or She wants him to think?

When she shakes out her hair
he thinks of water spilling out
or the last moonlight shaking itself
out of the trees.

Who thinks? The man or the narrator.

Could that be thunder
in the distance
or just the music rattling
in his ears? Anyway

he's stopped listening,
even to the radio.

He is in his elsewhere. Oblivion.
WAITING.

Difference of the narrator.

Even the weather station

means nothing to him now.

He knows to sit still:

and wait for thunder.

He's got time on his hands.

A good rain is worth a hundred years.

No prediction

the transitoriness of human existence -

I have turned my watch inward; I have turned
my time inward.
Ambiguity

think that there are other Asian-American students whose English spoken in the home might also be described as "broken" or "limited." And perhaps they also have teachers who are steering them away from writing and into math and science, which is what happened to me.

Fortunately, I happen to be rebellious in nature and enjoy the challenge of disproving assumptions made about me. I became an English major my first year in college, after being enrolled as pre-med. I started writing nonfiction as a freelancer the week after I was told by my former boss that writing was my worst skill and I should hone my talents toward account management.

But it wasn't until 1985 that I finally began to write fiction. And at first I wrote using what I thought to be wittily ~~containing~~ ^{containing} ~~sentences~~ ^{sentences} that would finally prove I had mastery over the English language. Here's an example from the first draft of a story that later made its way into *The Joy Luck Club*, but without this line: "That was my mental quandary in its nascent state." A terrible line, which I can barely pronounce. *a state of perplexity / uncertainty / dilemma*

Fortunately, for reasons I won't get into today, I lately decided I should envision a reader for the stories I would write. And the reader I decided upon was my mother, because these were stories about mothers. So with this reader in mind — and in fact she did read my early drafts —

I began to write stories using all the Englishes I grew up with: the English I spoke to my mother, which for lack of a better term might be described as "simple"; the English she used with me, which for lack of a better term might be described as "broken"; my translation of her Chinese, which could certainly be described as "watered down"; and what I imagined to be her translation of her Chinese if she could speak in perfect English, her internal language, and for that I sought to preserve the essence, but neither an English nor a Chinese structure. I wanted to capture what language ability tests can never reveal: her intent, her passion, her imagery, the rhythms of her speech and the nature of her thoughts.

Apart from what any critic had to say about my writing, I knew I had succeeded where it counted when my mother finished reading my book and gave me her verdict: "So easy to read."

Comprehension Questions

1. What major difference did the author find in herself while talking about her writing to people in the presence of her mother? Why?
2. Why does she consider her mother's English as her mother tongue?
3. What are the features of her mother's English identified by the author that cannot be analyzed using language tests?
4. "English tests were always a judgement call." Explain.
5. What were the limitations of the mother's language?
6. With examples from the text try to substantiate that language politics is also a medium used by one class to ensure its superiority over another.

"It's not the sort of thing anybody wants to do. But it's been decided. You can't change things."

He stared at her with tears in his eyes.

"Take your hands off me, Okyo."

-Translated by Robert Lyons Dally

Glossary

1. **kimono:** Japanese traditional dress
2. **pugnacious:** eager or quick to argue, quarrel, or fight
3. **spindly:** thin
4. **persimmon juice:** persimmons are a common fruit in Japan, sometimes used for fermented drinks
5. **bamboo pole:** a game played at carnivals that involved trying to hit a target
6. **charm:** In Japanese culture, children were given paper charms with their names on them to carry for safety and good luck
7. **snivelling:** unpleasant
8. **abstinences:** the practice of restraining oneself from indulging in something
9. **rambunctious:** uncontrollably exuberant; boisterous.
10. **Choémon:** reference to a puppet play by the late-18th century playwright Suga Sensuke; *The River Katsura and the Floodgate of Eternal Love* (1976), a story of two lovers, a middle-aged man named Choeman and a teenaged girl named Ohan. In one scene, Choeman carries Ohan across the Katsura River.
11. **Runt:** a person who is small and contemptible
12. **Sash:** a long strip or loop of cloth worn over one shoulder or round the waist
13. **Impertinence:** lack of respect, rudeness
14. **Invigorated:** energize
15. **Rub-down:** To clean, polish, or manipulate by the application of pressure and friction..

Comprehension Questions

1. Describe the relationship between Okyo and Kichizo.
2. What does Okyo's statement signify : 'He who wears another's clothes, will never get anywhere in life.' Also, discuss Kichizo's response to this.
3. What is the significance of the title "Separate Ways."

4. What are Kichizo's fears in life and how do they impact his personality.
5. Why does Kichizo get upset with Okyo's decision at the end of the story?
6. Discuss Okyo's statement : "It's not the sort of thing anybody wants to do. But it's been decided. You can't change things."
7. How do Kichizo and Okyo struggle with their marginalized social status in the contemporary society of Japan. Do they respond differently towards life-situation(s)? if yes, how?

About the Author

Higuchi Ichiyo (1872-1896), pseudonym of Higuchi Natsu, also called Higuchi Natsuko, is one of most influential Japanese writers of the Meiji era (1868-1912). Her father's death in 1889 forced her to earn the family's living. In 1891, she became a pupil of Tosui Nakarai and began writing stories. "Umoregi" (Undiscovered Wood), published in 1892, became a breakthrough hit and won her contacts with people in the "Bungakkai" (the literary world). Higuchi left not only novels such as "Otsugomori" (The Last Day of the Year) (1894), "Nigorie" (Muddy Bay) (1895), and "Takekurabe" (Growing Up) (1895), but also her diaries. In her fiction she examined themes of poverty, social class, women's roles, and societal expectations. She died in poverty of lung tuberculosis at the young age of 24.

Introduction to the text

This story deals with personal conflicts and fears related to a lack of socio-economic empowerment in 19th century Japanese society. The Umbrella factory emerges as a symbol of Western Industrialization in the story, and through the characters of Kichizo and Okyo, the author bring out the themes of social identity and cultural crisis.

Themes for Discussion

1. Fear of Abandonment
2. Cultural crisis—Western modernization vs. Japanese traditional life
3. Poverty and suffering
4. Umbrella factory as a representative of Western Industrialization
5. Friendship
6. Social identity

For an instant, Rosaura thought that she'd give her two presents: the bracelet and the yo-yo. Senora Ines bent down as if about to look for something. Rosaura also leaned forward, stretching out her arm, but she never completed the movement.

Senora Ines didn't look in the pink bag. Nor did she look in the blue bag. Instead she rummaged in her purse. In her hand appeared two bills.

"You really and truly earned this," she said handing them over. "Thank you for all your help, my pet."

Rosaura felt her arms stiffen, stick close to her body, and then she noticed her mother's hand on her shoulder. Instinctively, she pressed herself against her mother's body. That was all. Except her eyes. Rosaura's eyes had a cold, clear look that fixed itself on Senora Ines's face.

Senora Ines, motionless, stood there with her hand outstretched. As if she didn't dare draw it back. As if the slightest change might shatter an infinitely delicate balance.

Glossary

1. **Sneer:** smile or speak in a contemptuous or mocking manner.
2. **Cross:** annoyed
3. **Grumble:** complain about something in a bad-tempered way.
4. **Boisterous:** noisy, energetic, and cheerful
5. **Buttersingers:** a person who frequently drops things; clumsy person.
6. **Shin:** the front of the leg below the knee.
7. **Sissy:** feeble and cowardly
8. **Yo-Yo:** a toy consisting of a pair of joined discs with a deep groove between them in which string is attached and wound, which can be spun alternately downward and upward by its weight and momentum as the string unwinds and rewinds.
9. **Rummage:** search unsystematically and untidily through something.

Comprehension Questions

1. What is the central conflict between the mother and Rosaura?
2. What fantasies Rosaura invent about herself and about her life in the beginning of the story?
3. How does Heker weave a subtle pattern of servitude into Rosaura's participation in the party?

4. Why does Senora Ines offer Rosaura money? What does Rosaura's "cold, clear look" suggest?
5. What is meant by "infinitely delicate balance" at the end of the story?
6. How is the party "Stolen"? Discuss the significance of the title.
7. Two pairs of mothers and daughters appear in the story. What do you learn about the social status and world views of these characters?

About the Author

Born in Argentina, Liliana Heker (1943 -) is the author of five volumes of short stories and two novels and the founding editor of two literary magazines widely read in Latin America. She published her first volume of short stories, *Those Who Behold the Burning Bush*, when she was still a teenager. Later she served as the editor of the literary journal *The Platypus* during the years of Argentina's dictatorship, when many writers "disappeared" and many who objected to oppression were tortured and killed by death squads. She presently lives in Buenos Aires, Argentina.

Introduction of the Text

The story primarily focusses on social gap that exists in the society due to economic status of individuals. By choosing a child protagonist, Heker highlights the innocence and purity of children for whom these socio-economic barriers are invisible and difficult to comprehend.

Themes for discussion

1. Social class hierarchy/distinction
2. Social gap between rich and poor
3. Social identity
4. Discrimination