

Tracks: Classwork & Homework : Chapter 7 Questions

PART II: Shedding Burdens - continued

READ: Key Point: From her authorial perspective looking back, Davidson says that at this time she began viewing the trip as a narrative and thinking about the article she had committed to write: **"she was beginning to see it as a story for other people"** p.136. This reminds us that while the book aims to tell a 'true' story, it is also consciously constructed and shaped, not unfiltered.

Extension: Look for examples and ways you can give evidence of how parts of the book from this point onwards may have a changed authorial style or be consciously crafted in terms of plot and suspense, themes and ideas. *This is high-end analysis of textual features.*

7.1 p125, after the initial excitement of the journey, and the beauty of the landscape, how does the land start affecting her? (theme = the natural world *this is good as it gives a bit more depth into discussing the effects of the Natural World other than in just a positive way, e.g. 'the land restored their spirits'...*)

the repetitive nature of the landscape becomes monotony – the stillness "stifled" and "suffocated" her.

7.2 page 127 middle paragraph beginning "Those two weeks..."

What does this reveal about one of her (potentially unacknowledged) motivations for her trip – what does this tell us about her? What exactly was she expecting (in your words)? Was she naïve to expect this?

"where was the great thunderclap of awareness that, as everyone knows, knocks people sideways in deserts?"

"I was exactly the same person that I was when I began" = Naïve! Of course she has, and is changing (hard to see these things while 'in them'...)

ALSO – tells us she did want to change, to become stronger/more "aware"... (motivation...).

7.3 "I was exactly the same person that I was when I began". How does the following paragraph/s show this to be an unreliable comment? Include the quote "before the trip I had been..." in your response.

see above

7.4 at the top of page 128 – how does Robyn's attempt at listening to music affect her? Why might this be? (relate to the theme/idea of the human/artificial world vs the natural world)

After being alone and detached from society for awhile now, she has become more attuned to her environment – and the sudden intrusion of materialism such as music – (pre-recorded) took her out of this reality, and seemed 'incongruous' with it (doesn't fit in).

Question: would live music – a guitar and a sing-along, have been different? Why?

Note: Even though Robyn feels Rick's images are beautiful, she believes they tell "lies" and do not necessarily convey 'truth' *"never let it be said that the camera does not lie. It lies like a pig in mud."* 131

Theme: Truth. **Do you agree?**

7.5 What effect does Ayer's Rock (Uluru) have on Robyn? (examples on pages 130 and 131).

Theme: natural world (vs human).

"the indecipherable power had her heart racing" – failure of words to convey the truth of its power

Did not disappoint "it was too immense, too forceful, too ancient to be corrupted [by tourists]"

7.6 On page 136, the paragraph beginning "I did not perceive at that time..." What is the significance of this? How does Davidson (the writer) help to remind us that this is a constructed text and not direct-capturing of truth told in the present? Refer to the "Key Point" for more.

"It did not dawn on me that I was beginning to see it as a story for other people, with a beginning, a middle and an ending" shows that even though not conscious of it at the time, she was beginning to narrativise her journey into a story

= This is an example of 3 year older Davidson commenting on the narrative and bringing the power of hindsight (as a textual feature – is a good one to mention under "narration");

7.7 on page 137, how is Robyn revealed to be contradictory and hypocritical in her dealings with Rick? (there are a few examples, one involves her calling Rick a "terminal sulker" on p.134.)

1) She accuses Rick of being a sulker, and then the next paragraph, after Rick told her he would see her soon "I grunted something monosyllabic and continued on my way"

2) Tries to defend getting angry with Rick because he took photos and watched and didn't help while she

unloaded all the stuff from the camels, cooked for two and then cleaned up for two without him helping – her journey was meant to be one of independence (although, if she did cook for him and clean up after him, then fair enough...) 3) **Note: she calls him “Richard” during all this = language feature.**

7.8 Comparison: What impact/change/effect does the element of romance/sex add to Robyn and Rick’s relationship (examples on page 139).

It deepened her connection and commitment to him “in some ancient and subtle way”

She could no longer discount his feelings so easily.

They started becoming kinder to one another afterwards... (or her to him?)

Compare: How does de Heer deal with the theme of romantic relationships? Does it affect the narrative? Does it complicate Charlie’s life? Why might this be? How important is it?

*Not explicit **ask students: why do you think they didn’t make this explicit?***

(would have seemed gratuitous and not in keeping with the style of the film);

THEFORE: *we are not actually aware that they are in a romantic relationship at all – until Pete and Lulu confront Charlie about it (we learn through other characters = feature); **it’s an interesting addition to the film – and can be interpreted as being present because it reflects Gulpilil’s own experience:***

NOTE: *de Heer does not ascribe any ‘value or concern’ to this – but shows it, as part of the reality of modern, and perhaps even ancient, indigenous issues...*
although PROBABLY more pronounced in modern times, with the modern world forcing different tribes together...

Note: Robyn is rather surprised when the indigenous dancing women ask her for money, as she must have been feeling some sense of kinship, or deeper understanding, and would have felt this as a deep mark of respect (to be taught how to dance), but when asked for money, it must have devalued the whole experience and the sense of acceptance she had felt, and made her feel like just a tourist. This is compounded when she is unable to convince any of the indigenous men to accompany her via the bush to avoid travelling on the road for the next leg of her journey. **Idea:** it is hard/impossible to be wholly ‘accepted’ as a non-Indigenous? *Or is there more to it?*

Key Point extension literary technique ponderance: might this construction of Robyn as being ‘the tourist’ at the end of the chapter that begins by complaining about tourists, be a deliberate plot-device (construction)? A ‘shaping’ of the narrative for literary effect?

7.9 COMPARISON: Write a paragraph comparing: Why do you think Robyn considers giving up at this point? Think of the events since arriving in Docker, and her internal state – examples from pages 141, and then the last 2-3 pages of the chapter. Why/how does she decide to continue?

Giving up:

- *beginning of a kind of “mental collapse” – although she admits she couldn’t see it then (power of hindsight/narration)*
- *She felt that her NG article would not help the locals at all, but just reinforce “quaint primitive” stereotypes;*
- *While they were nice to her, there was “a wall” that had been put up – because, she believes, of her association as being ‘with Rick’ – (especially because they hated having their photographs taken, and that he photographed one of the ceremonies/sacred business)*
- *She “desperately wanted to get away from the tracks” by cutting through their land for the next 100 odd miles, but realised there were many **sacred sites** there (where women couldn’t go) and so it would be the worst form of trespassing= shows her continued attempt to respect the peoples and cultures of the lands she travels.*
- *‘Taking photos of secret business was far worse than desecrating a Church to a Christian’... hmmm*
- *Ultimately, through all this, she would then have to travel 160 miles on a dirt TRACK (a human track) – rather than 100 miles through proper outback land, with no tracks, and have an indigenous experience – left her feeling “it was all rather pointless” (hmm, another exaggeration – what about the isolation and some of the other “points” for her trip...)*
- ***“I had sold the trip, misunderstood and mismanaged everything” = LOW POINT.***

Compare: What decisions or crisis points in Charlie's journey can you identify? Similarities? Differences?

- After his spear is taken and his identity as 'hunter' is destroyed
- The **decision** to 'go bush' follows this low point
- Crisis point: lying dying in the rain
- Another low-point is with Albert in hospital – which leads to the **decision** to leave the hospital and wander aimlessly around Darwin, and then live aimlessly with the long-grassers
- The 'decision' (drunken decision) to not run from the police but smash their car...
- Hair-shaved;

Similarities: not Charlie's fault – the spear; not Charlie's fault – lying dying in the rain – the 'fault'/reality of colonised life for modern Ind Aus.

= Not Robyn's fault – being associated with Rick (although Robyn takes ownership by saying SHE had sold her trip to NG and in that way it is her fault)

Differences:

For Robyn, this low point is primarily concerned with an inability to relate to/connect with indigenous people as she'd hoped and so not get as much out of her trip as she'd hoped; and that her trip had lost some of its meaning

For **Charlie** – his low-points are ones that either threaten his life (survival); his identity; or his whole reason for being/existing... and representationally, as a reaction to the fate of his whole race/people (when he loses it and smashes the police car...)

= First world problems

vs

Third-world problems... fair call? (not entirely, there's a bit more to it than that for Robyn – as a failed trip would (potentially) lead to some pretty catastrophic life-changes... maybe)