**­­­­­Totem**

**Background:** Thomas King, novelist, short-story writer, essayist, screenwriter, photographer (born 24 April 1943 in Roseville, California). A Member of the Order of Canada and two-time nominee for the Governor General’s Award, King is often described as one of the finest contemporary Aboriginal writers in North America. He is part Cherokee and part Greek.

**Prewriting:**

Read the opening stanza from Rudyard Kipling’s famous colonialism poem “White Man’s Burden”. Do a quick google search on the history of this poem and the meaning. Be ready to discuss your findings.

**“The White Man’s Burden” by Rudyard Kipling**

*Take up the White Man’s burden—*

*Send forth the best ye breed—*

*Go send your sons to exile*

*To serve your captives' need*

*To wait in heavy harness*

*On fluttered folk and wild—*

*Your new-caught, sullen peoples,*

*Half devil and half child*

Now read the following poem by Rita Joe. As with the author above, do a google search on the biography of Rita Joe. What did you learn?

*I am the Indian,*

*And the burden,*

*Lies yet with me.*

By Rita Joe

**Write a short paragraph that explains the meaning of Rita Joe’s poem in light of Rudyard’s poem.**

Rita Joe’s poem shows that she is Indian and that the ways of the past are not correct and that Indians are not terrible people and should not be used as tools.

**Pre-discussion:**

* What kind of art do you think best represents **Canadian identity**? In other words, if you were to enter a “Canadian Art Gallery” what would you expect to see?

Hockey, Residential Schools, First Nations peoples and First Nation Reserves. First Nations Tools and Primitive Technology such as Tipis.

**Questions:**

1. **Text driven questions to help understand the story on a surface level:**
2. Where is the setting of the story? Be detailed (physical and emotional setting)

This story takes place in Alberta Canada

1. What sort of show was on exhibit?

The exhibition was supposed to be about seascapes

1. How did the patrons and the employees feel about the totem poles?

There were complaints from people who worked at the Southwest Alberta Art Gallery, that person complains to Mr. Hooton about the gargling totem pole in the corner of the exhibition, the Totem pole didn’t fit in cause the Exhibition was about seascapes

1. What did they do to get rid of the problem?

They used a chainsaw to cut the totem pole down but the totem pole grew back the following day

1. What was the final solution?

For the people to ignore the problem and let it stay

1. With the people in your group, do the “symbolism” sheet. ***You must hand in the symbolism chart with this assignment to get full marks.***

**Symbolism in the story. Explain the best you can, what each thing symbolizes. Keep in mind the big ideas of this story such as the treatment of Aboriginals in Canada and the reservation system.**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| The Totem Poles | Native/ Aboriginal Culture |
| The storage room and limited space | The land, Canada, representing that there is only so much space in the gallery and there is not enough space / The reserves |
| The seascape artwork  | The “white” taste in art / European influence items/tools Culture/Explorers |
| The totem poles in the museum specifically? | The native culture, representing the people/their tools, their celbrations so dances etc. that disturb the white mans culture |
| Beebe Hill and Walter Hooten | Europeans trying to rid/assimilate the First NationsCaucasians who originally immigrated from Europe to Canada |
| The grunting and giggling of the totems (the noises they make) | The mockery of the first nations which bothered the patrons which could symbolize that the chants/dances of culture that the first nations do bothers the European people |
| The totems continuing to grow despite being cut down | It showed that the government couldn’t get rid of them |

**Can you find any more symbols? (you must do this for full marks)**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Woodchips | The blood that splattered or the impact the first nations have on the culture |
| Jimmy and Larue | The original colonizers (French and English) |
| The white taste in artDollyChainsawTotem poles attached to the groundPatrons that complainDust | European influenced artwork/cultureTransportation to move the native to reserves etc.Trucks/Bulldozers that took away their land (Attempt at destroying)First nations were first, and they are a part of the landModerns typical whining over the land and first nationsThe dust is forgotten |

1. **Deeper questions that extend understanding**:
2. Did the aboriginal people of Alberta carve totem poles? Look it up on your device. Why do you think Thomas King chose to use totem poles in his story and not an indigenous piece of art from Alberta? (discuss with your group- think stereotypes)

The totem poles are what the first nations of the northwest coast indigenous people used as a signboard and memorial etc. I think that Thomas king

1. Is the conflict in the story **character vs character**, *character vs self,* **character vs society**, *character vs supernatural*, **character vs. environment?** Explain your reasoning**.**

Character Vs Society

1. What is the *point of view*? How do you know? Why did the author choose this particular point of view? (**see short story terminology for an explanation**)

The story is told in a third person limited omniscient point of view

1. Is the protagonist a ***dynamic*** or ***static*** character? Explain. (who is the protagonist and antagonist???)

The protagonist is the totem pole and it is a dynamic character since it is always mocking the rest of the staff, the story revolves around the totem and even the title is totem,

The antagonist is the staff members of the art gallery

**Irony Definition (watch the videos that are on my Edublog)**

[*Irony*](http://literarydevices.net/tag/irony/) *is a figure of speech in which words are used in such a way that their intended meaning is different from the actual meaning of the words. It may also be a situation that may end up in quite a different way than what is generally anticipated. In simple words, it is a difference between the appearance and the reality.*

1. Explain why this story is ironic. What kind of irony is it? Explain in full.

This story shows dramatic iron since the speaker doesn’t know much about the history and culture and the audience knows more about the history and we understand what happend to the native people

1. This is story is a satire. Explain why.

This story mocks how the Europeans tried to get rid of the Natives, and how the government couldn’t rid of the natives

1. Theme statement: (Topic + treatment +/- = result)

First Nations + Acceptance = Peace

If you accept first nations, it could lead to a peaceful Canada

Culture + Assimilation = Chaos

When taking ones culture and assimilating it, it may bring chaos but if they rebel or speak up they may survive

1. Change the theme statement into an inquiry question.

Why did the colonizers have to assimilate the first nations

**Bringing it all together. Answer the following question in a short paragraph:**

In your opinion, based on the theme of this story, how has Canadian history and attitudes shaped the First People of Canada’s identity?

Canadian History and attitude made the first nations feel like they were being targeted and attacked before and having their children sent to residential schools and being assimilated was a terrible thing and we realise it now days but back then everybody thought it was not a bad thing and wasn’t a bad idea to have that stuff happen.