The Legend of Sugar Girl: A Short Story

**Background**: [Joseph Boyden](https://www.theglobeandmail.com/arts/books-and-media/joseph-boyden/article35881215/), was born in Willowdale, Ontario, Boyden was the third youngest of eleven children grew up in a strict Catholic household with a doctor father and a school teacher mother. Amid questions of his native identity, he states ‘I will always write about First Nations of Canada and I will always celebrate First Nations of Canada. And I will always push the message that needs to be heard’.

The Legend of Sugar Girl is not a ‘legend’ in the traditional meaning, but a retelling of historical events to help explore the negative after effects of the residential schools in Canada and the effects of colonialization on the First Nations cultural identity.

## Definition of legend

1a **:** a story coming down from the past especially **:** one popularly regarded as historical although not verifiable the legend of a lost continent Arthurian legends

b **:** a body of such stories a place in the legend of the frontier

c **:** a popular myth of recent origin the legend of the Loch Ness monster

1. Allegory: NOUN
   1. a story, poem, or picture that can be interpreted to reveal a hidden meaning, typically a moral or political one.

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| --- | --- | --- |
| **Term** | **Answer** | **Significance/Explanation** |
| **Initiating incident** |  |  |
| **point of view** |  |  |
| central **conflict** of the story |  |  |
| Is the protagonist a ***dynamic*** or ***static*** character? |  |  |
| What does the sugar symbolize? |  |  |
| What is ironic about this line:  “The same sugar that had befriended her and comforted her as a child and helped her live as the nuns demanded, was her enemy, had been her enemy from the beginning, eating away at her from the inside out.” | (Type of irony) |  |
| Allegory |  |  |

**Questions on meaning:**

1. What overall impression does Boyden create of life at the residential schools? Identify specific examples in the text that contribute to this impression (quote).
2. Notice that Boyden repeats the ‘gifts’ that the white men gave the Indians at the beginning and end of story, but only mentions the ‘gifts’ the Indians gave the while men, once at the end. What was his purpose in doing this?

3. The cutting of the children’s hair as soon as they arrived at the residential school was a symbolic act. Explain.

**Writing Analysis:**

4. The third person style of narrative adds to the overall theme of the story, can you come up with a theme statement for this story? Hint-refer to the list of themes given out at the beginning of the unit.

5. “The nights were the worst; nuns creeping like ghosts between the beds, hushing children with their bony fingers to their lips.” (p. 165)

This is an example of what type of figurative device? What type of mood is created and what does that add to the overall meaning of the story?

6. At several points in the essay, Boyden uses **compare and contrast**. Locate two examples and explain what each contributes to the story.

7. On June 11th, 2008 Stephen Harper, prime minister #22, came out to the Canadian Public to apologize to all First Nations for the residential school system as an initial step toward reconciliation. What Aboriginal Way of Knowing and Being can you connect to this act, explain.

8. “But legends are not meant to be sad stories only. They are told to express a people’s magic, to make victors out of weaklings.” This could be said to be the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ of the story. What principle of learning can you apply to this part? Explain.