

Lynda Barry's "San Francisco"

Presented by: name of presenter

Date of presentation:

Ms. _ discusses the idea of the San Francisco that Barry discusses being a state-of-mind, rather than the physical setting of the piece. N'ako is imagining life outside her small town and outside of what she knows. She fantasizes about how she images San Francisco, "there would be a guy. A cute guy, possible a hippie, possibly he'd have a guitar and he'd freak out when he saw me because our love would be so real" (98). San Francisco is not only a physical place that she yearns for, but also a state of mind that, as a 12 or 13 year old, she idealizes. Yet, when she happens upon the half-way house, which she sees as some kind of hippie-haven, the illusion was broken. "I noticed a pee smell. I noticed their freaked-out dog eyes. One guy made some weird finger gestures and started vomiting" (101).

Mr. _ also mentioned that the protagonist appears to be gender-neutral (as in, the reader cannot tell if she is actually a boy or a girl). In Barry's "100 Demons," it is discussed that the main character is gender neutral as well, and that as a child she felt self-conscious and felt as though she didn't fit in. Barry's work is all semi-autobiographical, so the two are definitely connected.

Grace Paley's "A Conversation with My Father"

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Grace Paley's "A Conversation with My Father" was described by Mr. _ as "easy to read, but hard to follow." Such is a perfect way to describe the story, because of the intricacies of the format- the 2 stories within the central story. Mr. _ used sand to explain the relationship between the narrator and her father- while her father could only see the big picture, the narrator looked at the more specific details. While I do not wholly agree with this outlook, it creates an interesting perspective. The finality of life is explored throughout the story as well as the story within the story. "'Tragedy! You too. When will you look it in the face?'" (1099). The narrator's father realizes the finality of life, especially in his pending death. Similarly, within the narrator's story understands the finality of her situation, "she would cry out, My baby! My baby! and burst into terrible, face-scarring, time-consuming tears. The End." (1098). The parallels between the narrator's relationship with her father and the relationship between the characters within her story are distinct. The overarching themes are related to a generational conflict. The mother within the narrator's story "became a junkie because she felt "it was part of youth culture, with which she felt very much at home" (1096). She attempts to relate to a far-off generation, which exposes the differences between generations.

"This is What it Means to Say Phoenix,
Arizona" by Sherman Alexie

Presented by _____ and _____

The presenters really made me think differently about Thomas when they discussed the quote in which Thomas says, "I have only my stories, which came to me before I even had the words to speak" (281). I initially thought this to be very sad, and I thought it made him constrained because Thomas would have no one to help him in the world, and isolation doesn't feel like freedom to me. After discussing the airplane scene, I realized that it is Thomas's stories that allow him to operate in the world outside the reservation, as evidenced by the Olympian taking a liking to Thomas almost immediately (277). This presentation helped me realize Thomas's ~~story give~~ stories give him the ability to leave the reservation if he wants to, but he freely chooses not to.