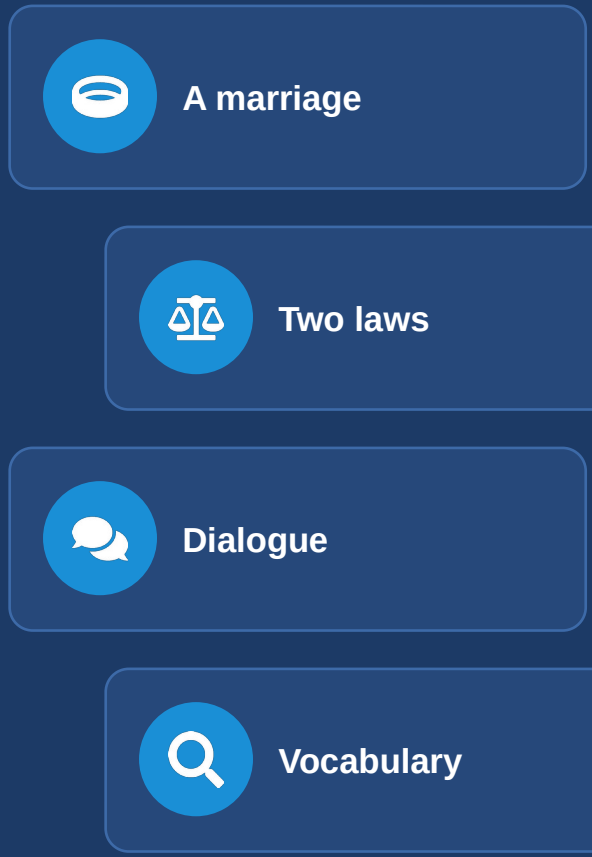
NBE3U Writing Back, Lesson 4

Christie's Argument

Dialogue and power in “A Red Girl's Reasoning”



Today's goals

We are learning…

- To identify the key ideas and supporting details in a story.
- To analyse perspective and power in dialogue.

I can…

- Use context to work out unfamiliar or old-fashioned words.
- Map the story's key ideas and details.
- Analyse who holds power in a conversation.
- Explain the bias in Charlie's perspective.

Today's plan

Time	What we're doing	You will…
0–8 min	**Hook**	Discuss
8–18 min	**Decode**	Practise
18–45 min	**Read**	Read and map
45–65 min	**The argument**	Analyse
65–75 min	**Charlie's lens**	Discuss

Warm-up



What makes a marriage, or any promise, “real”? A ceremony? A document? The people involved? Who gets to decide?

Sentence starters

“A promise is real when…”

“A document matters because…”

“It depends on whose…”

How it works

- Pairs: 3 minutes.



Big idea

In Johnson's 1893 story, a dinner-party remark about a marriage “performed by Indian rites” becomes a contest over whose law counts. Christie wins the argument and loses the marriage. Reading the dialogue closely shows who controls the conversation, and how a husband who “studied” her people for years never learned to respect them.

Reading old words

Strategy	Example
Context clues	“consummated his predilections for Indianology”: what did he finally do?
Word parts	pre- (before) + dilection (liking): a liking held in advance
Period slang	“deuced” (very), “kickshaws” (trinkets or gadgets)
Check and confirm	Guess first, then confirm with a dictionary

The expert

As a boy he had had the Indian relic-hunting craze, as a youth he had studied Indian archaeology and folk-lore, as a man he consummated his predilections for Indianology, by loving, winning and marrying the quiet little daughter of the English trader, who himself had married a native woman twenty years ago. […]

E. Pauline Johnson (Tekahionwake), “A Red Girl's Reasoning” (1893), The Moccasin Maker (1913). Public domain.

Think about it

What did Charlie collect and study?

What does “Indianology” suggest?

What word describes how he sees his wife?

At the dance

“Well—er, my dear, it seems peculiar—if there was no priest, and no magistrate, why—a—” Mrs. Stuart paused awkwardly.

“The marriage was performed by Indian rites,” said Christie.

E. Pauline Johnson (Tekahionwake), “A Red Girl's Reasoning” (1893), The Moccasin Maker (1913). Public domain.

Think about it

What is Mrs. Stuart implying?

How plain is Christie's answer?

Who is uncomfortable, and why?

“Shame?”

“Shame? Why should I be ashamed of the rites of my people any more than you should be ashamed of the customs of yours—of a marriage more sacred and holy than half of your white man’s mockeries.”

E. Pauline Johnson (Tekahionwake), “A Red Girl's Reasoning” (1893), The Moccasin Maker (1913). Public domain.

Think about it

What does Christie compare?

What is a “mockery”?

Who is now on the defensive?

Her law

“Law? My people have no priest, and my nation cringes not to law. Our priest is purity, and our law is honor. Priest? Was there a priest at the most holy marriage know to humanity—that stainless marriage whose offspring is the God you white men told my pagan mother of?”

E. Pauline Johnson (Tekahionwake), “A Red Girl's Reasoning” (1893), The Moccasin Maker (1913). Public domain.

Think about it

What does she call her people's law?

What example does she use against him?

Why is this argument hard for Charlie to answer?

Her reasoning

“There was no such time as that before our marriage, for we are not married now. Stop,” she said, outstretching her palms against him as he sprang to his feet, “I tell you we are not married. Why should I recognize the rites of your nation when you do not acknowledge the rites of mine? According to your own words, my parents should have gone through your church ceremony as well as through an Indian contract; according to my words, we should go through an Indian contract as well as through a church marriage. If their union is illegal, so is ours. […]

E. Pauline Johnson (Tekahionwake), “A Red Girl's Reasoning” (1893), The Moccasin Maker (1913). Public domain.

Think about it

Put her logic in one sentence.

Why is it called “reasoning”?

What does she risk by saying it?

Who controls the talk?

On page 2, in pairs:

1. For each moment, who speaks most?
2. Who asks and who answers?
3. Who holds power? How do you know?
4. Mark the moment power changes hands.

Expert or tourist?

Charlie has studied Indigenous peoples since he was a boy. What did he learn, and what didn't he learn?

Sentence starters

“He learned facts but not…”

“A collector sees… but a partner sees…”

“Today, this would look like…”

How it works

- Groups: 5 minutes.
- Connect to how people “study” cultures today.

Exit ticket

1. One word you decoded, and how.

2. The moment power changes hands.

3. What Charlie never learned.

Next class: The Last Word.

Teacher reveal

Christie's argument: key points

Key idea: A marriage “performed by Indian rites” is mocked by settler society; Christie refuses to accept that her parents were not married.

Detail: Charlie had studied “Indianology” since boyhood, yet sees her people's law as no law.

Power shift 1: At the dance, Mrs. Stuart and Captain Logan question; Christie answers plainly and they lose their footing.

Power shift 2: At home, Charlie accuses (“disgraced”); Christie reverses his logic: if her parents are not married, neither are they.

Christie's reasoning: Equal standing for two nations' rites: “Why should I recognize the rites of your nation when you do not acknowledge the rites of mine?”

Charlie's bias: He admires Indigenous culture as a collector, not as an equal; his “study” never became respect.