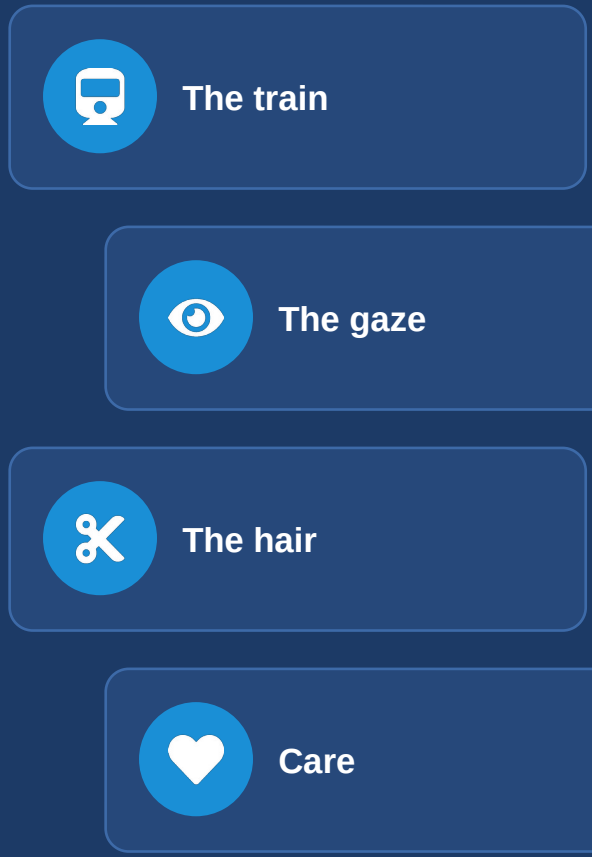
NBE3U Writing Back, Lesson 7

The Land of Red Apples

Being looked at, and the cutting of hair



Today's goals

We are learning…

- To analyse how sensory detail communicates experience.
- To make careful connections between texts and history.

I can…

- Explain who is watching whom in the passages.
- Analyse sensory imagery and its effect.
- Infer the attitudes behind the school's actions.
- Connect the text to other texts and to history, with care.

Today's plan

Time	What we're doing	You will…
0–8 min	**Care**	Listen
8–25 min	**The train**	Read and analyse
25–45 min	**The school**	Chart
45–60 min	**The hair**	Infer
60–75 min	**Connections**	Connect

Before we read

Content

A child separated from her family; her hair cut against her will.

Your choice

You may step out, pass, or read a summary.

Support

Hope for Wellness: 1-855-242-3310. Kids Help Phone: 1-800-668-6868.

Respect

This is one person's testimony. We read to understand.

Big idea

On the train east, Zitkála-Šá is stared at; at the school, she is handled like a toy and her braids are cut. She writes for the same kind of readers who stared, and turns their gaze back on them. Sensory detail lets readers feel what attitudes and rules did to one child.

Being watched

I sank deep into the corner of my seat, for I resented being watched. Directly in front of me, children who were no larger than I hung themselves upon the backs of their seats, with their bold white faces toward me. Sometimes they took their forefingers out of their mouths and pointed at my moccasined feet. Their mothers, instead of reproving such rude curiosity, looked closely at me, and attracted their children's further notice to my blanket. This embarrassed me, and kept me constantly on the verge of tears.

Zitkála-Šá (Gertrude Simmons Bonnin), "The School Days of an Indian Girl" (Atlantic Monthly, 1900), American Indian Stories (1921). Public domain.

Think about it

Who is doing the watching?

How does she describe the watchers?

Who is "rude" in this passage?

Turn the gaze

On page 1:

1. For each moment, note who watches whom.
2. Note what it shows about attitudes.
3. Find words that judge the watchers.
4. Who were Atlantic Monthly readers more like: the child or the watchers?

The whitewashed room

Entering the house, I stood close against the wall. The strong glaring light in the large whitewashed room dazzled my eyes. The noisy hurrying of hard shoes upon a bare wooden floor increased the whirring in my ears. My only safety seemed to be in keeping next to the wall. […]

Zitkála-Šá (Gertrude Simmons Bonnin), “The School Days of an Indian Girl” (Atlantic Monthly, 1900), American Indian Stories (1921). Public domain.

Think about it

Which senses does she use?

What do “glaring,” “hard” and “bare” have in common?

Why keep “next to the wall”?

Sensory imagery

Imagery lets readers feel an experience they never had.

sight	Light, colour, faces. *“strong glaring light”*
sound	Noise, voices, silence. *“noisy hurrying of hard shoes”*
touch	Temperature, texture, handling. *“tossed high in midair”*

Chart the senses

On page 1:

1. Find one example for each sense.
2. Explain its effect on a reader.
3. Which sense dominates? Why?
4. Share one example with a partner.

What hair meant

But this eating by formula was not the hardest trial in that first day. Late in the morning, my friend Judewin gave me a terrible warning. Judewin knew a few words of English; and she had overheard the paleface woman talk about cutting our long, heavy hair. Our mothers had taught us that only unskilled warriors who were captured had their hair shingled by the enemy. Among our people, short hair was worn by mourners, and shingled hair by cowards!

Zitkála-Šá (Gertrude Simmons Bonnin), “The School Days of an Indian Girl” (Atlantic Monthly, 1900), American Indian Stories (1921). Public domain.

Think about it

What did short hair mean among her people?

What did shingled hair mean?

What does the school not know, or not care about?

“Then I lost my spirit”

I cried aloud, shaking my head all the while until I felt the cold blades of the scissors against my neck, and heard them gnaw off one of my thick braids. Then I lost my spirit. Since the day I was taken from my mother I had suffered extreme indignities. People had stared at me. I had been tossed about in the air like a wooden puppet. And now my long hair was shingled like a coward’s! In my anguish I moaned for my mother, but no one came to comfort me. Not a soul reasoned quietly with me, as my own mother used to do; for now I was only one of many little animals driven by a herder.

Zitkála-Šá (Gertrude Simmons Bonnin), “The School Days of an Indian Girl” (Atlantic Monthly, 1900), American Indian Stories (1921). Public domain.

Think about it

What does she list as “indignities”?

What image ends the passage?

What attitude does that image reveal?

In Canada, too



Zitkála-Šá wrote about a U.S. boarding school. Survivors of Canada's residential schools have described the same practice of cutting children's hair on arrival.

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission (2008–2015) recorded survivors' testimony. Different systems, the same goal: to remove children from their languages and nations.

Connection web

On page 2:

1. Connect to another text in this unit.
2. Connect to Canada's residential schools.
3. Connect to the world today.
4. Write one question the passage raises for you.

Exit ticket

1. Who watches whom on the train?

2. One sensory image and its effect.

3. One careful connection you made.

Next class: The Civilizing Machine.

Teacher reveal

The land of red apples: key points

Being watched: On the train, white passengers stare and point; she reports their “rude curiosity” and turns the gaze back on them.

Sensory imagery: Glaring light, hard shoes on bare floors, whirring ears: the school as an assault on the senses.

Being handled: Tossed in the air “like a wooden puppet”: kindness that treats her as a toy, not a person.

The hair: Among her people, shingled hair meant a captured coward; cutting it was a deep humiliation.

Attitude inferred: The school saw Dakota culture as something to remove, and the children as many “little animals driven by a herder.”

Connection: Survivors of Canadian residential schools describe the same practice; the TRC recorded such testimony.