

Chapters 44-46 (4/20 Class)

In-Class Discussion: Images and Motifs in *A Thousand Splendid Suns*

1. Identify traditional associations with the image or motif. What ideas does the image conjure up? What typical associations does the image have in literature? What associations does it have in a context outside of literature? Record them in the “Traditional Associations” column.
2. Review the occurrences of the image/motif in the text. Go back to the passage for context if necessary.
3. Think about the associations and textual occurrences in conversation with one another. Analyze the occurrence in the text through this new lens. How does the image add meaning to the work? How does it function within the context of the novel?

Image/Motif	Traditional Associations	Occurrences in the Text	Analysis
<p><u>Example</u>: The Kitchen</p>	<p>Domesticity, Home, Gendered roles in the home</p>	<p>“She looked through the ill-fitting drawers... these would be the instruments of her new daily life” (63).</p> <hr/> <p>“Laila felt like she was no better than those pots and pans, something that could go neglected, then laid claim to, at will, whenever the mood struck” (164).</p> <hr/> <p>“You are the queen, and this house is your palace” (223).</p> <hr/>	<p>Mariam and Laila both recognize their expected role in the house: to cook, to clean, and to take care of their families. However, Rasheed sees their value in their utility, rather than as people. He says “the house is [Laila’s] palace,” but is it really a palace if they are trapped there? When Mariam hits Rasheed with the shovel, the noises from the kitchen go silent, suggesting that Mariam acts outside of her role as a domestic servant when</p>

		<p>“The slap made a loud smacking sound... It silenced the noises from the kitchen” (299).</p>	<p>killing Rasheed. She is no longer a “good” wife.</p>
<p>Locks (Carina, Rachel)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of freedom • Enclosed • No control/Powerless • Separation • Hidden • Secretive 	<p>“Mariam heard the rattling of a key as it turned the lock” (50).</p> <hr/> <p>“[Laila] howled with pain as [Rasheed] slammed the door shut. A key rattled in the lock” (268).</p> <hr/> <p>“If she let him walk now, how long before he fetched the key from his pocket and went for that gun of his upstairs in the room where he’d locked Zalmai?” (349).</p>	<p>The motif of locks and keys throughout <i>A Thousand Splendid Suns</i> is frequently present during times when Mariam and Laila feel powerless. The sound of locks turning represent Rasheed’s ability to take away their freedom and limit their overall power.</p> <p>While locks and keys are usually associated with one another, in Mariam and Laila’s case, they constantly are searching for keys, whether in the physical or metaphorical sense. These keys represent their freedom, and are a way out of their situations.</p>
<p>Windows /Views (Allie, Gwen)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Separation - Looking out at something a character desires - Can’t get to what is on the other side of the window 	<p>“There was a lookout...” (28).</p> <hr/> <p>“She sensed the weight of eyes on her, looking down from the windows upstairs” (39).</p> <hr/> <p>“She did not turn to look when Jalil’s palms pressed on the glass” (55).</p> <hr/> <p>“The burqa [...] was also comforting. It was like a one-way window” (73).</p>	<p>Throughout the book, there is an idea of separation. For example, as Mariam looks through the window to Jalil’s garden, she wonders what it would be like if she had grown up there, which makes her realize her separation from Jalil’s personal and private life. Mariam also looks through the bus window as she is first taken to Kabul, as the glass</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Coldness - Idealism - Reveal truths - If a window is covered up it obstructs view <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Hiding - Secrecy - 	<hr/> <p>“Rasheed began nailing boards across the window” (269).</p> <hr/> <p>“Laila was given a bed at the far end, beneath a window that someone had painted black...” (288). (309). (321).</p>	<p>separates her and Jalil. Mariam also discusses how the burqa can be a one way window, where she can be observant to the world around her, but no one can see in. This idea of a one way window is expressed throughout the book as a restriction on women. Another example of this is in the hospital when the windows are painted black so no one can see in or out. These various examples of windows in the book show how they can be symbolic of different things. Overall, windows represent how what some characters see can be restricted in comparison to what other characters see. Windows are a way that characters can see the world and each other, but they can be covered, restricting what the characters on both sides of the glass see.</p>
<p>Mirrors (Erin, Julia, Kayleigh)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Beauty • Truth • Desires 	<p>“In [the mirror], Mariam saw her own face first.... In the mirror, Mariam had her first glance of Rasheed...” (53).</p> <hr/> <p>“[Mariam] put the [cigarette] between her lips and stood before the small oval mirror on the wall... She could never manage the seamless grace with</p>	<p>Mariam seeing Rasheed for the first time through the mirror represents Mariam’s truth and reality because she finally is able to see what her future is going to look like. Looking at Rasheed, Mariam analyzes the appearance of Rasheed and accepts that her</p>

		<p>which Kabuli women smoked” (82).</p> <hr/> <p>“She remembered a dream she’d had... [Tariq’s] face and hers, together in a mirror, beneath a soft, green veil” (167).</p> <hr/> <p>“They laughed like this, at each other’s reflection in the mirror, their eyes tearing, and the moment was so natural, so effortless...” (255).</p> <hr/> <p>“Mariam remembered the first time she had seen his eyes, under the wedding veil, in the mirror... how their gazes had slid across the glass and met, his indifferent, hers docile, conceding, almost apologetic” (346).</p>	<p>new life with him is now her future even though she does not want it to be.</p> <p>The second quote is an example of Mariam’s desires as well as a reflection of her beauty. Mariam compares herself to the other women of Kabul and shows how she sees herself and her own beauty. The third quote shows the aspects of truth, desire and foreshadowing that is often associated with mirrors. For instance, the fact that Laila had this dream reflects her desire to marry Tariq and it is a hint at what is to come later in the novel and the life she will have.</p> <p>When Rasheed is abusing Laila and Mariam, Mariam thinks back to their wedding day and what she saw in the mirror. This quote shows the reality of her situation. The emotions that she saw in the mirror foreshadowed the relationship that Mariam and Rasheed would have. This contrasts with the desires that are seen in the second and third quotes. This contrast between</p>
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			Laila and Mariam's reality and desires are held throughout the book.
Guns (Grace G., Plum)	-Male dominance, violence in the home, complete control -Death, tool that asserts power,	<p>“And really, what could be said, what needed saying, when you'd shoved the barrel of your gun into your wife's mouth?” (300).</p> <hr/> <p>“If she let him walk now, how long before he fetched the key from his pocket and went for that gun of his upstairs in the room where he'd locked Zalmi?” (349).</p>	<p>In the first quote, it is important because this is the first time Laila physically and verbally stands up to Rasheed; she punches him. The gun represents complete control over Mariam. If he can't control her with his body strength he will turn to something as powerful and deadly as a gun, in order to show her that she must abide by his rules and live under his standards.</p> <p>In this second quote, Mariam takes the perspective. Rasheed is getting the satisfaction of physically abusing Laila; near death. However, Mariam believes that he will finally kill Laila this time. From living with Rasheed and his dominance issues she knows that he will not hesitate to grab the gun and kill Laila in an instant. This knowledge convinces Mariam to grab the shovel from the toolshed and kill Rasheed before he can kill Laila. The gun is representative of</p>

			<p>tentative lethal actions that Rasheed could take to kill Laila. The gun also represents Rasheed's obsession with having complete power over the lives of the women in the house. Laila's life is in his hands legitimately.</p>
<p>Shovels/Burying (Maura, Grace F.)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Represents leaving behind or in the past (burying the past) - Digging a hole/ hiding something - Traditionally, burying a body - Shovel represents hard work/ manual labor - Unearthing / digging up the past 	<p>"They lowered the TV into the hole..." (301).</p> <hr/> <p>"This time, it's Aziza they're lowering into the ground" (301).</p> <hr/> <p>"And so Mariam raised the shovel high... it occurred to her that this was the first time that <i>she</i> was deciding the course of her own life" (349).</p>	<p>In the first quote, Mariam and Laila are essentially burying a part of their past by burying and "doing away with" their television, which has been banned by the Taliban. Laila and Mariam are hiding the TV, which represents their sins, only to unearth the TV in a few months. In the second quote, in a dream that Laila had, Aziza is the one being buried in the plastic sheet behind the toolshed. Once again, Aziza represents Laila's past sins, and her having to conceal her actions. Laila is often forced to hide away the things that bring her joy and by seeing Aziza buried in her dream she is once again burying a part of herself that is sinful.</p> <p>In the third quote, Mariam murders Rasheed with the shovel, and in doing so, rids her life of her traumatic past.</p>

<p>Teeth (Katherine, Yasmeena)</p>	<p>Appearance/beauty, social class, symbol of what one has been through in life</p>	<p>“... [Jalil’s] teeth, the whitest in a town of rotting molars” (21-22).</p> <hr/> <p>[Mariam had] lost two front teeth. One fell out, the other Rasheed knocked out when she'd accidentally dropped Zalmi” (294).</p> <hr/> <p>“She was ashamed of her yellowing teeth, the missing incisor. Ashamed of her withered looks and swollen lip” (331).</p>	<p>In these quotes, teeth are used to symbolize beauty and social class. Jalil’s teeth, being “the whitest in a town of rotting molars” expresses that he is richer than the other people around him (21-22).</p> <p>Teeth also symbolize a sense of power and confidence, as seen in Rasheed knocking out one of Mariam’s teeth and when he forced her to chew on pebbles. Rasheed demonstrates dominance over Mariam, and overpowers her by ruining her teeth.</p> <p>Laila is also embarrassed of her teeth in front of Tariq, making her ashamed and insecure. However, her teeth symbolize what she has gone through/experienced. Tariq, whose teeth are also not perfect, makes her feel less insecure.</p>
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