

analysis of "the  
century quilt" by  
marilyn waniek essay  
sample



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## **Analysis of “ The Century Quilt” by Marilyn Waniek Essay Sample**

Written by Marilyn Waniek, “ The Century Quilt” describes the importance of heritage in the narrator’s life. Using imagery, tone, and structure, Waniek effectively illustrates the importance of her quilt. The quilt represents not only her family’s heritage but also her future heritage. Waniek’s diction creates a nostalgic tone: “ I remembered how I’d planned to inherit that blanket” (Lines 9-10) and “ my sister and I were in love with Meema’s Indian blanket” (lines 1-2). Her word choices “ remembered” and “ were in love,” Waniek emphasizes a sentimental memory. Waniek’s diction allows the reader to relive the memory through the speaker’s perspective. The speaker describes how she remembered “ play[ing] in its folds and be chieftains and princesses” (11-12). She uses these lines to demonstrate how the quilt represented her youthful and energetic days with her sister.

Through the descriptive use of colors, Waniek creates a vivid picture of the quilt: “ Six Van Dyke brown, squares, two white, and one square yellow of Meema’s cheek” (lines 15-17). The colors “ brown, white, and yellow brown” not only describes the appearance of the quilt but also have a deeper meaning. The colors describe the color of her ancestor’s skin, not just the actual quilt. These repeating patterns of squares most likely pay homage to the speaker’s mixed heritage, with her family being of both Native American and Caucasian descent. The speaker’s heritage is supported by her visions of her grandmother’s childhood back in Kentucky “ among her yellow sisters; their grandfather’s white family” (Lines 25-26). While one could argue that the speaker is simply reciting the life of her grandmother, it can also be said

that the speaker is optimistic about her own future, and that she herself would relive her memories whilst under the quilt, such as meeting her unconceived son.

The speaker's desire to share the same emotional response to her quilt as her grandmother to her blanket signifies the importance Waniek places on symbolism. Not only does Waniek use imagery to emphasize the nostalgic tone, but she also effectively does so by using a chronological structure. Waniek chronologically begins with the life of the speaker's grandmother, following the speaker's present to eventually ending with speaker's possible future. Through the usage of time, Waniek creatively structures her poem "The Century Quilt." She has found her own blanket and it will now become her own memories of not only her past family but the memories that her future children will cherish for the rest of their lives.