

# The drowner



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

Language in literary texts often plays an integral role in shaping meaning. *The Drowned* (1996) is a contemporary Australian novel. Set in the late 19th century and early 20th century the romance and historical epic follows the life of protagonist, William Dance, his relationship with Angelica Lloyd, and his Journey from England through, Africa, to Western Australia. Poetic Language, in particular symbolism, imagery and metaphors, are extensively used to construct and juxtapose settings, characters and their relationships.

The title of the novel can be interpreted both on a literal and metaphorical level, which clearly establishes water as a motif and metaphor throughout the novel. 'Drowning' refers to the act of controlling the flow of water, and is done by a 'Drowned' who is a rural water engineer who is responsible for keeping the fields fertile. In the first section of the novel, 'The Art of Floating Land', readers are introduced to the character of 'Alphabetical' Dance and his occupation as a drowned, sustaining life through the act of drowning, and hence water is established as a life-giving force.

On a more metaphorical level, the word "drowning" has connotations of death. Thus, the title juxtaposes the idea of water as a life-giving force, and introduces it as a life-taking force, constructing the duality of water which is a central theme throughout the novel. Language, particularly imagery, plays an integral role in the construction of Will and Angelica's relationship throughout the novel. At their first encounter in the section 'Spa Water,' the atmosphere is portrayed, through the use of vivid sensual imagery, appealing to the reader's sense of aesthetic judgment.

Olfactory imagery is used describing "lavender... Rapped in the activated stream." This pleasant dour is complimented with auditory imagery, "Handel trickles" into the baths. This imagery evokes kinesthesia for readers and clearly constructs Will and Angelica's relationship as blossoming and passionate, with an air of optimism for the progression of their relationship throughout the novel. However, later in the novel, the smell of lavender which was symbolic of their fresh and pleasant relationship evolves into the stench of "rotting shark," as the dynamic of their relationship changes on their Journey to Africa.

Sensual images are once again evoked as Angelica is descriptively "riding him as if she could wrench both his character and the spirit of Africa from him." This vivid imagery gives readers a sense of violence and desperation, which juxtaposes the earlier sense of optimism for the relationship.

Language therefore plays a pivotal role in constructing William and Angelica's relationship, and foreshadowing the eventual entropic demise of their relationship. Language also plays an important role in presenting the disintegration of Will and Angelica's relationship.

The isolation of Western Australia negatively impacts their relationship as Angelica becomes withdrawn and Will becomes desperate. Will's sexual desire is as strong as ever as he "peels her dress... And enters her in the snowplows AT ten water." I nee Cleanliest Imagery AT ten cola water, ten auditory images of "Will's sobs" and the vivid visual imagery of their bodies entwined in the water once again evokes kinesthesia in the reader. However, this kinesthesia does not appeal to readers aesthetically, and can even be described as UN-aesthetic as

Will is seemingly taking advantage of Angelica in her current fragile state due to her Blackener fever. This creates Juxtaposition in the novel between Will and Angelica's first sensual encounter - which appeals to readers, and their final sensual encounter which is almost repellent to readers. Due to the poetic language used, readers are able to clearly see the disintegration of the pair's relationship. Language is once again significant in constructing and Juxtaposing the antipodean landscape of the Western Australian desert.

The landscape is described as " arid plains," with " isolated hills. " The visual imagery depicts a setting which is a harshly masculine, monotonous and isolated. These characteristics can also be found in the 'goldfields,' who are the occupants of the town. This landscape is said to have " obliterated individuality. " The sound of the town is described to be a blend of " braying camels" and a " malign roar of drinking men. " This auditory imagery further emphasizes the harshness of the setting as it bring out the annalistic nature of the goldfields.

The leitmotif and metaphor of water as a life-giving force and life-taking force reoccurs, as the lack of water is responsible for the " baked and Guileless bodies" found in the desert. This almost gory imagery is pivotal in Juxtaposing the harsh Western Australian climate with the appealing setting of England. Symbolism plays a vital role in the construction of Angelica Lloyd. The section 'Spa Water,' will notices a black swan, " charcoal black back and red beak. " Angelica however, points out that the swan should be white and plumper. This is symbolic of

Angelica because the black swan foreshadows her travel to Australia, as the black swan is iconic to Western Australia, and hence is symbolic of change. Secondly, the idea of beauty that a swan symbolizes plays an important part in forming the character of Angelica. This is because Angelica focuses on what the swan "should be" rather than what it is which is symbolic of the actress in her, building beautiful facades. As Angelica travels through Africa, Angelica has a dream where her white horse gets destroyed by the smell of rotting shark.

The majestic and powerful horse Ewing destroyed by the overbearing smell is symbolic of Angelica's dreams and aspirations being diminished as she travels to pursue Williams' dreams and not hers. Thus, symbolism is important in constructing the character of Angelica. In conclusion, poetic language is particularly important for readers to shape meaning in the novel, *The Drowned*. Symbolism, metaphor and imagery play vital roles in constructing and juxtaposing settings, characters and their relationships, as well as showing the progression of events in the novel and foreshadowing future events in the novel.