

Explain how  
symbolism in the  
shawl by Cynthia  
Ozick leads to a  
specific theme

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Symbolism in "The Shawl" by Cynthia Ozick Cynthia Ozick has used symbolism extensively and further used details descriptively to engage the reader. By using symbolism abundantly, Ozick develops themes in her work and helps reader envision the setting. Throughout the story, survival is a theme that is evident and developed by use of symbolism since the entire story. The magic shawl surrounds the entire story becoming the major issue of complication, climax, and resolution of Ozick's story. In the story, Ozick refers to the shawl as the "milk of linen" (Ozick 5). This shows that it is the only hope for their survival. The magic shawl binds the three starving women and remains the only thing they have keeping them alive and ultimately leads to their demise. Stella, being a flat character helps the author to get to the climax, this happens when she becomes cold taking the shawl for warmth.

Through symbolism, Stella is seen to be cold and cruel. Magda, being most dynamic is presented to the reader as a quiet baby, hungry though does not cry despite the fact that she does not understand what is happening. She sucks on the shawl for survival. The author symbolically refers to her as an angel, which to the reader is very important since Rosa opts for the survival of her niece by deciding not to pass her to an onlooker (17). In the process of searching for the survival of the young niece and herself, Stella wishes to be Magda, the angel, a baby protected and resting in the arms. The manner in which the starving Stella gazes at the young baby to Rosa seems as if she wishes to eat her. Her death finds her when the shawl is taken away from her, cries and decides to walk wobbly into the yard. After the death of her niece, Rosa drinks the shawl unconsciously imitating the dead child. This

shows how the shawl symbolically serves as a reminder of the death of Magda. According to the author, tasting the same “cinnamon and almond depth of Magda’s saliva” is all that remained of the murdered child (36).

#### Work Cited

Ozick, Cynthia. *Shawl*. Washington: Phoenix, 2007. Print.