

# A white heron: short story



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

**\*\*still in progress\*\*** Sir Francis Bacon said “ We cannot command nature except by obeying her. ” This is apparent in Sarah Orne Jewett’s short story, ‘ A White Heron’ thorough the battle between Sylvia and the boy.

‘ A White Heron’ is characterized with both masculine and feminine world views. Jewett shows this diversity via the use of symbols, the use of values, and by describing nature through the eyes of both a female and male character. Nature is shown as a feminine symbol in the story. It is shown as accepting, nurturing, and loving.

Sylvia nurtures this relationship, “ There ain’t a foot o’ ground she don’t know her way over, and the wild creatures counts her one o’ themselves. ” Sylvia is very invested in this relationship because she came from a “ crowded manufacturing town” and went to live with her grandmother, Mrs. Tilley, in “ this New England wilderness. ” Sylvia feels “ as if she never had been alive at all before she came to live at the farm.

” This creates a special bond between Sylvia and nature, one that cannot be broken. The boy seems to threaten the beauty of nature, described as a “ tall young man, who carried a gun over his shoulder. ” The gun shows his feelings of dominance, power, and violence, all which could possibly threaten nature and in turn, threaten females. The boy wants to dominate nature; the gun kills the bird which is a symbol for nature; nature is shown as feminine in the story; so in a way, he is dominating women.

The pine tree that Sylvia climbs is also a phallic symbol. It shows a relationship between Sylvia and nature and how they are interdependent on each other. There are also different masculine and feminine values in the

story. One difference is in the value how a person uses nature. Sylvia loves nature, knows everything about the land around her home, and is trusted by the animals, “ Squer’ls she’ll tame to come an’ feed right out o’ her hands, and all sorts of birds. ” The boy doesn’t respect nature, mainly birds, but instead wants to possess them, “ Oh, no, they’re stuffed and preserved, dozens and dozens of them...” The boy has turned birds into objects that he is able to possess instead of respect and learn to love like Sylvia has.

Love is also shown as having a difference between the masculine and feminine side. Love for the boy, is possession of the birds “ I am making a collection of birds myself. I have been at it ever since I was a boy. ” For Sylvia, love is a true love, for the boy and for nature, “ Sylvia still watched the young man with loving admiration. She had never seen anybody so charming and delightful; the woman’s heart, asleep in the child, was vaguely thrilled by a dream of love. but decides she loves nature, her world, more and when asked if she knew where the heron was, “ No, she must keep silence! What is it that suddenly forbids her and makes her dumb...the murmur of the pine’s green branches is in her ears, she remembers how the white heron came flying through the golden air and how they watched the sea and the morning together, and Sylvia cannot speak; she cannot tell the heron’s secret and give its life away.

” Sylvia also “ could not understand why he killed the birds he seemed to like so much. ”