

The role of nature in "ceremony"



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

In Silko's *Ceremony*, Tayo's healing process is very extensive, and he faces many crucial challenges in order to let go of traumatic past events. While on this journey, Tayo encounters many symbols that aid him in developing a sense of appreciation and freedom. As a Native American with a growing sense of tradition, Tayo finds that nature is a fundamental part of healing and simply of life in general. With the presence and importance of nature in her narrative, Silko communicates such empowerment and emotion to the reader, who is following Tayo through his long but necessary journey

Throughout this journey, the reader is meant to witness Tayo's connection with different aspects of the natural world. Starting from the beginning of the novel, the reader sees how the significance of the jungle rain is tied together with not only Tayo, but also Rocky as well. The narrator states, "It was that rain which filled the tire ruts and made the mud so deep that the corporal began to slip and fall with his end of the muddy blanket that held Rocky. Tayo hated this unending rain as if it were the jungle green rain and not the miles of marching or the Japanese grenade that was killing Rocky" (Silko 11). Tayo's relationship with nature at this point is extremely inadequate. He sees nature as the reason that Rocky was dying, and this perspective casts a negative light over the natural world. Tayo feels aggravation and distrust towards the Earth and compares natural forces to the Japanese, who are the real reason that Rocky is hurt in the first place. The rain in this flashback is very much associated with the suffering that Tayo and Rocky go through during their time in the war.

Tayo's relationship with the people he loves back in America also ties into the idea that he must become one with the natural world. Josiah's impact on

Tayo, for instance, is a significant piece of this journey. Josiah teaches Tayo about life and, even though he is dead, assists Tayo in his healing journey through memories. Josiah is the moral authority which Tayo obeys the most: “‘ You see,’ Josiah had said, with the sound of the water trickling out of the hose into the empty wooden barrel, ‘ there are some things worth more than money.’ He pointed his chin at the springs and around at the narrow canyon. ‘ This is where we come from, see. This sand, this stone, these trees, the vines, all the wildflowers. This earth keeps us going’” (Silko 45). This recollection shows how Tayo learned much about the natural world from Josiah. He learns to respect and cherish the Earth; even though it may be something dull, it is comparable to a beautiful piece of art. Josiah teaches Tayo that there is so much more to life than material things. As Tayo realizes through remembering Josiah, the most important things in life are the Earth that he walks on and how he can connect with it in a deeper sense.

Towards the end of the novel, Tayo begins to regain his trust in the natural world. As Tayo begins to trust nature again, he learns that in order to properly heal he must become one with nature. The narrator states, “ But lying above the benter that pulled him down closer felt more familiar to him than any embrace he could remember; he was sinking into the elemental arms of mountain silence. Only his skull resisted; and the resistance increased the pain to a shrill whine. ... He could secure the thresholds with molten pain and remain; or he could let go and flow back. It was up to him” (Silko 201-202). During this time, Tayo is regaining his spiritual center through nature. He has become one with nature and is healing in a way he never thought imaginable. However, he does feel a resistance within himself,

since his mind is attempting to ruin the progress he has made during his journey. This inner resistance and stubbornness tie back into his signs of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder that the reader sees early on. The effort to achieve this healing is very personal and he cannot be impatient. Just like healing anything, healing wounds takes time.

The natural world was the most important help in Tayo's healing process. After his long distrust of nature, with the help of his moral authority and experiences, Tayo was able to regain his center. The journey was long, but Tayo realizes that he was always strong enough to complete his healing; he just needed a bigger push. In Silko's novel, the symbol of nature not only gives Tayo a sense of direction, but also makes him understand how he can heal from his past troubles.