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[Literature](#), [Novel](#)



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Relationships in Love Medicine Love Medicine is a series of short stories that was written by Louise Erdrich in 1984 and covers a time span of 60 years.

Love Medicine is set in North Dakota on an Indian reservation known as Turtle Mountain. Although the novel is fiction, the cultural, social, and economical aspects depicted are very realistic. Hertha Sweet Wong

describes Love Medicine as “ Metafiction, ironically self-conscious in its mode of telling, concerned as much with exploiting the process of storytelling as with the story itself. ” (35) Erdrich’s Love Medicine is not so much based on

plot as on several key relationships. These relationships include; the love triangle between Marie, Nector, and Lulu; June and how her death made an impact on other characters and Lipsha a key figure to understanding the

novel. June is introduced at the beginning of the novel by telling the story of her death. Although June is dead through the entire novel her memory lives on as her family and friends recall memories they shared with June and even some of their own memories throughout the novel. “ June will figure

throughout the novel as a touchstone for the other characters" (Sweet Wong 57) June’s death affected all of the characters in the novel. June is “...the erratic and once vivacious beauty of the family...” as described by Sweet Wong. (38) June left behind her husband Gordie and her son King, along with

her lover Gerry whom she also had a son with named Lipsha. Every character in the book is impacted by June’s death. June is said to be “ the catalyst for the narrations that follow, stories that trace the intricate and often antagonistic relationships in the two families from which she came" (Sweet Wong 38). Junes son, King, buys a car with the money he receives from his

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mother's death. The car is a shiny new sports car, which the others do not go near to because they are afraid that it is a ghost. June's death also affected her niece Albertine's relationship with her family. Albertine's mother did not invite Albertine to the wedding but instead sent her a letter explaining to her that her Aunt June was dead and already buried. Albertine was very upset with her mother and refused to speak with her because of the way she handled the situation. Lipsha Morrissey is June's abandoned son and is arguably the key figure to understanding the whole novel. Lipsha is the one who makes the love medicine, from which the title of the novel comes from. Lipsha's first attempt at using the love medicine was for his grandparents who were on the verge of splitting because his grandfather, Nector, does not love his grandmother, Marie, anymore. Lipsha fails in getting a blessing from the priest and a nun and therefore makes the medicine incorrectly. He then tries to give it to his grandfather but he refuses to take it suspecting foul play. Lipsha knows that the medicine will not work unless both his grandmother and grandfather take the medicine so his grandmother, who also wanted to resolve the relationship, forces her husband to eat the heart. She forces it down his throat and Lipsha's grandfather ends up choking and dying from it. This causes Lipsha to realize that his meddling with the love medicine was very dangerous and not something to take lightly. Lipsha is a key figure to the novel because he shows how the love medicine is very dangerous. Lipsha learned a lesson through his actions of meddling with the love medicine. Lipsha shows us what happens when the love medicine is misused. " I could tell him it was all my fault for playing with power I did not understand. Maybe he'd forgive me and rest in peace" (212-13). Lipsha acts

based upon how he feels rather than what is logical. He really understands the meaning and purpose of life. Lipsha sees how his grandmother, Marie, is hurting and helps her out. Nector has a confusing and complex relationship with two women, Lulu and Marie that unfolds throughout the novel.

According to Hertha Sweet Wong, “ Nector also articulates the strategy he will follow throughout the course of his life: he goes consistently with the current never fighting very strongly if at all” (62). Although Nector married Marie he loves Lulu and cannot get pass these feeling for her. Nector’s marriage with Marie is pretty happy until he realizes he is still in love with Lulu. Nector begins having an affair with Lulu that lasts for five years.

Although the affair is intended for Nector to finally get what he has yearned for his whole life it suddenly turns into a complicated mess. What started as a carefree affair with the love of his life turned into a strict scheduling of when he as to see Lulu and get time away from Marie. The relationship became serious and turned into something that Nector needed. He made Lulu into what seemed like a second wife and turned this care free love into a chore. Nector became controlling over Lulu and wanted her to only be his. Everything increased in complexity when Lulu had Nectors child. Nector gets fed up with the double relationships tries to leave Lulu. Once he realizes he cannot bear to be without her he decides to tell Marie he is leaving her for Lulu. To add to the complexity of the situation, Nector accidentally burns down Lulu’s house in the middle of all of this. With the mess of events Nector caused he ends up staying with Marie until he is out in a retirement home at an old age. At this retirement home Nector has very poor memory. Lipsha tells us of how Nector begins an affair with Lulu once again at the retirement

home. Marie is desperate for Nector to remain faithful to her and searches for a way for him to be forced to. Her solution is to ask for help from Lipsha to make love medicine that will keep Nector faithful. Lipsha messes up in the process of making the medicine and Nector ends up dying from it. This seemed to be the only way to ultimately resolve the conflict between the women. “ Love Medicine is a powerful novel. It develops hard, clear pictures of Indian people struggling to hold their lives together, hanging on to the edge of the reservation or fighting to make a place for themselves in bleak mid-western cities or devising ingenious ways to make more break for freedom, but its most remarkable quality is how it manages to give new form to oral tradition” (Sweet Wong 42). The characters in Love Medicine intermingled and interacted with each other in a way that takes priority over the plot of the novel. June was not alive throughout the novel but her death and figure played a very significant role in the novel. “ June’s loss will underscore each character’s sense of identity when the tribal community and, concomitantly, each character’s potential for survival” (Sweet Wong 57) Lipsha is a very important, if not the most important, character in the novel. Lipsha was the one who made the love medicine and intermingled in the other people’s love lives. Nector’s love triangle with Lulu and Marie is a complicating mess that is a key part to the novel. Nector was never satisfied with what he got and always wanted more. In the end he could not have what he wanted and ended up with neither of the women. All Marie wanted was for Nector to stay faithful to her but Nector’s heart belonged to Lulu.