

# Thoughts and feelings about narwhal hunting essay



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In the extract, Herbert, who has lived with the Inghuit as a child, is fully involved in the emotions of the locals. She conveys that narwhal hunting is a highly significant event in the Inghuit year. The words 'rarely' and 'fortunate' convey that the arrival of the narwhal is a special occasion and that only a few are successful in the pursuit of the creature. This is further emphasised by the description of the behaviour of the women who are observing the hunt.

They are 'clustered on the knoll', meaning that each individual is eager to observe events from the single raised vantage point; their shared excitement, sensed by Herbert, is demonstrated when they 'gasp or jump'. By citing a specific time period of 'within an hour', a certain urgency is conveyed. Optimism is implied in the description of the 'butter-gold' light: 'butter' carries connotations of food and richness, perhaps foreshadowing the feast of narwhal after a successful catch, while 'gold' hints at the promise of wealth and plenty.

As the description proceeds however, it becomes evident that the purpose of the piece is not simply to convey Herbert's emotional response to the exotic beauty of the setting and the event. Herbert prepares the reader for the kill. She pre-empts any criticism of whaling by including facts about the use of narwhal materials in everyday Inghuit life, subtly persuading the reader that the hunt is a time-honoured, accepted local tradition. The use of the impersonal tone 'was used for...' and the use of Inghuit terms such as 'tupilak' and 'mattak' strengthen her case that the hunt is an indispensable, authentic aspect of their tribal culture. Moreover Herbert's description of the hunt is designed not only to convey Herbert's tense anticipation but also to

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illustrate her view that the hunting of the ' intelligent' and ' huge' narwhal by the ' brave' but ' foolhardy' hunter in a ' flimsy kayak' is actually a highly risky and admirable feat. As the passage progresses, tension is built up by the use of multi-clausal sentences: ' One hunter was almost on... When the men commence their attempt to kill the narwhal, Herbert seems less assured about her feelings. Her apparent equivocation is conveyed by the use of dashes: '-in that split second... ' Her ' dilemma', whether to hope that the narwhal avoids the harpoon, or whether to applaud a successful catch, is conveyed by the statement that her ' heart leapt for both man and narwhal'. In the last paragraph, Herbert points out that food cannot be supplied regularly to the Inghuit before she finally makes clear her view on the hunt in a short, forthright assertion: ' Hunting is still an absolute necessity in Thule. '