

# Research essay

[Countries](#), [Canada](#)



“ Reading is neither neutral, nor natural. ” How does your context as a reader influence your reading of *The Dreamers*? Reading is neither neutral, nor natural. Readers are constantly positioned to make their own ideas and opinions of different texts based on their own understand and connecting of their personal context. In Jack Davis’ *The Dreamers* the descriptions of the tribal family in the first scene provide a strong, central reading that while I would accept, the earlier generations from those times would challenge the mutual reading of the harmonious tribal family.

The different generations of past and present times would also have many contrasting views on particular characters such as Worru. Additionally, the study of past texts, such as *The Glass Menagerie* by Tennessee Williams and *Coonardoo* by Katherine Suzanne Prichard, allows me to comprehend the meaning behind the symbol of alcohol in *The Dreamers* and how it is a representation of escapism for people in degrading ways of society.

In the beginning of *The Dreamers* by Jack Davis, we are described a scene of a tribal family walking, relaxed, across an escarpment with children happily singing songs of cultural meaning, relaying their innocence and happy family-based futures: “ Dawn. We hear the distant echoing of children singing a tribal song. A tribal family walks slowly across the escarpment silhouetted against the first light of dawn. The central, prominent reading brought forward by Davis’ descriptions and symbolism of the melodious, peaceful tribal family is one I accept because of Davis’ way of showing the harmonious nature of the aboriginal culture and way in their environment, in the world they know. However, the white generations of the 1980s would

contrast and challenge this communal reading because of their own racial attitudes and beliefs of Aboriginals.

To the whites of the 1980s, Aboriginals were filthy and worthless individuals and therefore the white society audiences were unable to cope with and respect the cultural identity and way of life of Aboriginals. These confrontational views of *The Dreamers* show how reading is not neutral. Every generation is different, therefore they all respond to particular readings inversely due to their own personal context. This reinforces that reading is not neutral.

Worru is a character in *The Dreamers* who is exceedingly diverse from the members of his family. Worru is the representation of Davis' views of his own complicated culture and aboriginal context. Worru is desperately trying to hold onto his Nyoongah (aboriginal) culture that within him has 'survived civilisation' through reminiscing about life before white settlement and his language: "I walked down the track to where the camp place used to be and voices, laughing, singing, came surging back to me. In Act One Scene One, Worru sings of his past, something that is all but real now that he is going through a loss as a result of living in a suburbia-dominated world. Through the study of *Coonardoo* by Katherine Suzanne Prichard, I am able to see that the aboriginal generational views would be ones of sympathy and empathetic understanding, as aboriginals would be able to relate heavily with Worru, knowing just how much they lost because of the dramatic change in the way they wanted to live.

On the contrary, a white audience of the same era wouldn't be able to understand how aboriginals couldn't adapt to such a "easy" lifestyle, and be

unable to connect to the Aboriginal background and estrangement of their race. Readers who have read more texts than most are able to see and understand how changed contexts but parallel themes are cooperative in identifying symbols. Through my reading *The Glass Menagerie* by Tennessee Williams and *The Dreamers* has allowed me to understand the symbol of alcohol and its meaning of escapism in both plays respectively.

Tom Wingfield from *The Glass Menagerie* drinks constantly, trying to escape the horrors of the Great Depression in America. He drinks to forget his issues and withdraw from a pitiful reality. This reading allows me to understand the reasoning behind why, in *The Dreamers*, Worru, Peter, Eli and Roy all drink constantly – using money needed for food and other essentials: “ The full bottle is now nearly empty. The heat and the alcohol are taking their toll. ” The characters drink alcohol to also escape from the cultural oppression of white society and the failing ways of aboriginal life.

They see alcohol as the only way to forget what has been done to them, as it is an influential depressant, and using it to disengage from a reality that would see the complete deprivation of the aboriginal way – a way they cherish. An informed reading is not something that just comes naturally, it must be taught and learnt over the reading of numerous texts, therefore reading is not natural. In Conclusion, readings are mostly advanced through a reader's own individual context and experiences.

My interpretations on a tribal aboriginal family were analogized by the white generations of the 1980s view on aboriginals, establishing that reading is not neutral. The diverse generational views formed unlike perspectives on who would sympathise with the hostility of the aboriginal race, my own

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background through the study of the other texts Coonardoo, The Dreamers and The Glass Menagerie has given me a purer understanding of how alcohol embodies escapism for people in contemporary society. All these factors have established my view that reading is neither neutral, nor natural.