

Literary Elements

Analysis of Literary Elements in “Eleven” by Sandra Cisneros

Cisneros Style Techniques

- Repetition (North)
- Similes (South)
- Point of View (East)
- Syntax (West)

Repetition

- The frequent use of words or phrases in a story for emphasis.
- A writer may use repetition to emphasize an idea or feeling.

Repetition in “Eleven”

- Northerners: Small-Group Activity (7 minutes)
- Identify examples of repetition in “Eleven,” and discuss the following questions with your group members:
 - Why do you think the author repeated these words and phrases?
 - When you read them does it make you think of anything? Does it remind you of anything?
 - What is the impact of using repetition in writing?

Figurative Language

- Focus: Similes
- A simile is a comparison of two unlike things using the words *like* or *as*.
 - (Ex: *My little brother laughs like a hyena.*)

Similes in “Eleven”

- Small-Group Activity: Southerners
- Identify examples of similes in “Eleven.”
 - For each example you find in the text, underline the two things being compared, and underline the words *like* or *as*.
 - Explain what the simile means in the story.
 - What is the impact of using the simile

Point of view

- In literature, the **narrator** is the voice that tells the story. A writer's choice of narrator is known as **point of view**.
- **Point of view** (P.O.V.) is the perspective from which a story is told.

Point of View

Point of View: Who Is Telling the Story?

First Person

The main character is telling the story.

*Keywords: I, me, we, my, our, ours.

Second Person

The author or narrator is telling the story to YOU, the reader.

*Keywords: You, your, yours.

Third Person

The author or narrator is telling the story, but is NOT part of it. Can be omniscient or limited view.

*Keywords: He, she, it, they, them.

First-Person Point of View

The narrator

- is a character in the story
- uses the pronouns I, me, and my to refer to himself or herself
- tells his or her feelings in his or her own voice
- does not know what other characters are thinking and feeling

Third-Person Point of View

The narrator

- is not a character in the story
- uses the pronouns he, she, and they to refer to the characters
- can reveal the thoughts, opinions, and feelings of one or more characters

Omniscient Third

- Sees all
- Is in the thoughts of all characters

Limited Omniscient-Third

- Reports only some of the thoughts of the characters

Point of View “Eleven”

- Small-Group Activity: Easterners
- Pay close attention to the impact of 1st person P.O.V.
 - Find a few examples where 1st person feels significant.
 - What is the impact of using 1st person?
 - How would the story be different if it was in 3rd person?
 - What is the impact when Cisneros uses “you” or 2nd person?

Syntax in “Eleven”

- Syntax in literature refers to the way in which words and sentences are placed together. Usually in the English language the syntax should follow a pattern of subject-verb-object agreement but sometimes authors play around with this to achieve a lyrical, rhythmic, rhetoric or questioning effect. It is not related to the act of choosing specific words or even the meaning of each word or the over all meanings conveyed by the sentences.
- EXAMPLE FROM *The Joy Luck Club*
- “That night I sat on Tyan-yu’s bed and waited for him to touch me. But he didn’t. I was relieved.”

Syntax in “Eleven”

- Small-Group Activity: Westerners
- Pay close attention to the impact of syntax
 - Find a few examples where Cisneros uses interesting syntax.
 - What is the impact of the different type of punctuation and sentence structure?
 - How would it be different if she used more traditional methods?

End









Examples of repetition in “eleven”

- “Not mine, not mine, not mine.”
 - Why do you think the author repeated these words?
 - To emphasize Rachel’s frustration and struggle to hold back her younger ages.
 - When you read them does it remind you of anything?
 - The repetition of these words remind me of a three-year-old or young child.

Repetition examples

- “...today I am eleven, eleven.”
 - Emphasizes Rachel’s attempt to hold back her younger ages by reminding herself that she’s eleven.
- “...everybody will sing Happy birthday, happy birthday to you.”
 - Emphasizes Rachel’s attempt to overcome the situation at school by reminding herself that it’s her birthday...a day that is supposed to be happy.

Repetition examples

- “...ten, nine, eight, seven, six, five, four, three, two, and one...”
 - This repetition reemphasizes the ages to show Rachel’s attempt to hold back all her younger years.
 - The repetition of the ages foreshadows the climax of the story, when Rachel finally lets go and cries in front of everyone...counting down.
 - “...all the years inside of me—ten, nine, eight, seven, six, five, four, three, two, and one—are pushing at the back of my eyes...”

Similes in “Eleven”

- “...the way you grow old is kind of like an onion or like the rings inside a tree trunk or like my little wooden dolls that fit one inside the other, each year inside the next one.”
- What two things are being compared?
 - The way you grow old is being compared to an onion, the rings inside a tree trunk, and wooden dolls that fit one inside the other.
- Why did the author use these comparisons?
 - To help the reader understand what the narrator is expressing about growing older; each new year is layered on top of the younger years...but your younger ages are still inside; shows how we mature, so slowly, one ring at a time.

Similes in “Eleven”

- “Only today I wish I didn’t have just eleven years rattling inside me like pennies in a tin Band-Aid box.”
- What does the narrator mean by this comparison?
 - She wishes she had more years/“pennies” inside her/“tin Band-Aid box” because she wouldn’t be as empty as she is with only eleven inside; with more years, she would be filled with more wisdom and experience.

Similes in “eleven”

- “...collar and sleeve all stretched out like you could use it for a jump rope.”
- “...the red sweater’s still sitting there like a big red mountain.”
- “...red sweater...hanging all over the edge like a waterfall...”
- “...sweater that smells like cottage cheese...”
- “...my body shaking like when you have the hiccups...”
- “...my whole head hurt like when you drink milk too fast.”
- “I want today to be far away...like a runaway balloon, like a tiny dot in the sky...”

Point of View in “eleven”

- From what point of view is the story told in “Eleven”?
 - The story is told in first-person point of view, from the perspective of Rachel
- How does the author emphasize point of view in “Eleven”?
 - The author emphasizes point of view in the story by writing it from Rachel’s perspective, and using child-like diction (choice of words) that relate to that of an eleven-year-old; she uses an eleven-year-old voice throughout the story.