

The use of Biblical allusion and Personification in the book The Secret Life of Bees:

Biblical Allusion of Black Mary

“Hail Mary, full of grace, the lord is with thee Blessed art thou among women.” (page 90)

Explanation behind Biblical Allusion:

This quote illustrates the significance of Black Mary, and how she impacted all the character’s lives and the decisions that they made. Black Mary symbolizes strength, bravery, and what it means as a “force to be reckoned with.”



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Biblical Allusion of the bees

“I had imagined they were sent as a special plague for T. Ray. God saying, Let my daughter go, and maybe that’s exactly what they’d been, a plague that released me.” (page 151)

Explanation behind Biblical Allusion:

The bees represent a sense of comfort for Lily, and a family that she never had. Lily sees the bees as a message or a sign from God that she is meant to do more in life than be stuck at home with her dad who holds her back from her true potential. Having the bees as a symbol of hope provides a sense of “safety” and helps Lily step out of her comfort zone, encouraging her to reach new goals, and find new ones along the way to complete. The bees also represent a plague like the swarm of locusts in the Bible. Letting the swarm go is a representation of Lily leaving her house that “traps” her from life, and stepping outside her set boundaries to see what her future may hold. This leads to Lily going to find out more about her mom, and the life that she lived. Along the journey Lily meets August, June and May, becoming closer to Rosaleen and learning the truth about her parents as well.



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Personification in The Secret Life of Bees:

“Finally, I walked to the window and gazed out at the peach trees stretching halfway to North Carolina, the way they held up their leafy arms in gestures of pure beseeching.” (page 40)

I found this quote did a very good job at highlighting the use of not only personification, but also imagery. In the book we get to hear and see everything that Lily does and experience her life as if the readers are in her shoes. It’s almost as if we are getting to see through her eyes when we get very descriptive images from her outlook on life. Lily is simple yet so confusing, she has not yet found herself but is able to understand the whole rest of the world so easily.



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“Stories have been told or they die, and when they die we can’t remember who we are or why we’re here.” (page 133)

This quote relates to all the characters in the book, but most closely it is related to Lily. Lily has been living a life full of stories, some she knows are true but also some that she has yet to discover. The biggest story that Lily knows is of her mom. T. Ray depicts Lilly's mom as a terrible woman that left Lily and doesn't love her. This not only hurts Lily, but urges her to find out even more about her mom to prove T. Ray wrong. What challenges Lily is the ability to accept what weakens the vision of her mom. These terrible stories not only set a foundation in Lily, to feel she can't trust the other characters, but a trait of stubbornness that proves to help Lily through all the challenges thrown at her.

In *The Secret Life of Bees*, the author Sue Monk Kidd uses dramatic irony, or passages that mean one thing to the character but a different thing to the reader, to give us insight into Lily's personality. On page 66, Lily says, "Sometimes you want to fall on your knees and thank God in heaven for all the poor news reporting that goes on in this world." This passage is referring to how Rosaleen breaking out of jail with Lily's help was not reported in the papers. To Lily, she is thankful that their escape went unnoticed by the media, but to the reader, we see that Lily has the same trait as any other teenager: self-involvement. Kidd uses this quote to show us that Lily does not always take into account everything happening outside her world. For example, the Civil right Act was passed shortly before Lily said this, and she thinks that her and Rosaleen's escape was more important to report on than this major piece of legislation.



An image of Lily and Rosaleen from the Secret Life of Bees Movie. Borrowed from HotFlick.net Beta



This is an image of Lily and August at the bee yard, which lines up with the quote from page 92. Borrowed from Richard Crouse, movie critic.

Another device used by Kidd in *The Secret Life of Bees* is symbolism. Bees are used as one of the main symbols in the book. In the quote on page 92 below this paragraph, Kidd uses symbolism to relate the world of bees to the world of people.

August tells Lily about how female bees are the workers in the hives, just as the women in the pink house do all the work to make the house and the honey business function, just like a bee hive. Bees can also be a symbol relating to the religion of the Calendar sisters. The queen bee gives birth to every bee in the hive, just as the Daughters of Mary believe they are each born from the Virgin Mary (Plugged In). Another symbol is when Lily captures bees in her jar at home. When she opens the jar, the bees do not leave because they have become desensitized to being in captivity. This symbolizes Lily's abusive home and how she is desensitized because she thinks that T. Ray's treatment of her is normal. Symbolism is used in the English language to provide meaning to otherwise meaningless statements. It gives the reader a connection to the book and insight into what is happening but is not said. In conclusion, Monk Kidd uses symbols to provide a deeper meaning to her writing. Each symbol provides us with an idea of what is going on behind the surface level meaning of the words, and creates connections and empathy in the reader's mind.

"On our first Friday evening there, after prayers were finished and pink swirls still hung in the sky from the sunset, I went with August to the bee yard. I hadn't been out to the hives before, so to start off she gave me a lesson in what she called 'bee yard etiquette'. She reminded me that the world was really one big bee yard, and the same rules work fine in both places." (Monk Kidd 92)



Borrowed from *The Secret Life of Bees* movie.

In *The Secret Life of Bees* by Sue Monk Kidd, Kidd intertwines similes to establish underlining meanings. Lily, the main character says, “I love the idea of the bees having a secret life, just like the one I was living.” (Kidd 148). The bees are living a secret life in the walls and air conditioners of her home and she is living a secret life away from her father. Lily feels a special connection to the bees because they are hiding in the walls of her house with her father and she felt as if she is hiding in the house with her father and staying away from him. In the Pink House. The bees are seen to have more freedom, and in the Pink House, Lily is not hiding anymore and she feels comfortable with her surroundings.

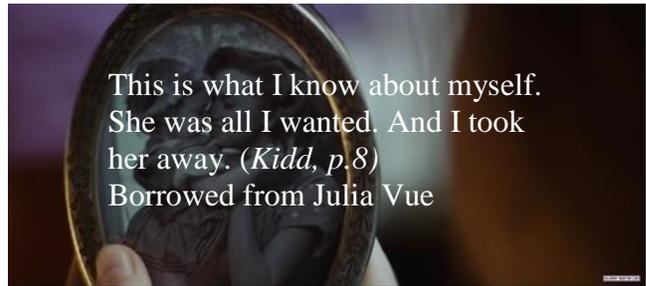


Borrowed from *The Secret Life of Bees* movie

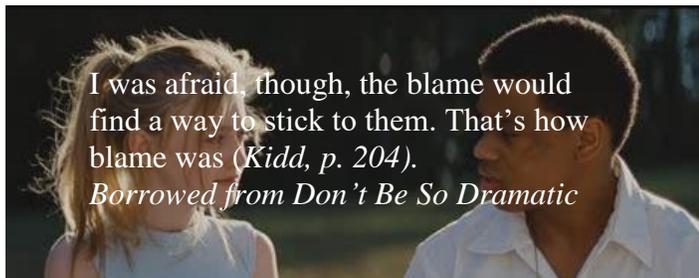
“Let’s imagine for a moment that we are tiny enough to follow a bee into a hive. Usually the first thing we would have to get used to is the darkness...”

-Exploring the World of Social Insects

A common theme throughout *The Secret Life of Bees* is guilt and blame. Lily has carried with her the guilt from killing her mother since she was just four years old. All her life she has craved that mother figure and has faced many instances growing up where she needed her mother. The blame she carries has become more prominent throughout the years as she watches how the death of her mother affected her father and her life as a teenage girl. As she looks back on that day she resents herself for taking away her mother and wishes she could take it back.



Sue Monk Kidd uses this guilt and blame as a driving theme throughout the novel. As the guilt grows stronger, we see how it affects Lily's decisions in life and Kidd uses it to tie together the rest of the story. Lily travels to Tiburon, South Carolina to answer the questions she has about her mother. Had it not been for her immense guilt, she never would have met the Boatwright sisters or had the experience of beekeeping.



Zach knows May killed herself after hearing how he'd been arrested. He feels responsible for her death and extremely guilty thinking he could've prevented it. Kidd uses parallelism as a stylistic element to create a connection between Zach's guilt and Lily's guilt.

Kidd uses Zach's guilt as an opportunity to again emphasize Lily's guilt. By hearing how Lily can connect to Zach over this blame we again see how prominent her guilt has been in her life. This also gives Kidd a chance to create a deeper connection and attraction between Lily and Zach since they can both relate to one another's guilt.

Kidd addresses the common theme of racism through several of the characters. We can see through Lily how racism was evident in the south during this time. Lily grew up with certain assumptions about race and was raised to view her race as superior to others around her. We see this through her interactions with Zach when Kidd shows Lily's doubts about being attracted to a black boy. "It was foolish to think some things were beyond happening, even being attracted to Negroes. I'd honestly thought such a thing couldn't happen," (*Kidd, p. 125*). Kidd uses Lily's character to development to show how someone can overcome racism and begin to ignore color.



Kidd shows a contrast to Lily who was raised to view races differently with the men who attack Rosaleen just because of her race. Despite Lily having racist views, she would never act on them and does not view other races with hatred. Kidd then shows the men who judge Rosaleen and mistreat her solely because of her race. We can see that Kidd uses different diction in these interactions to show the different sides.