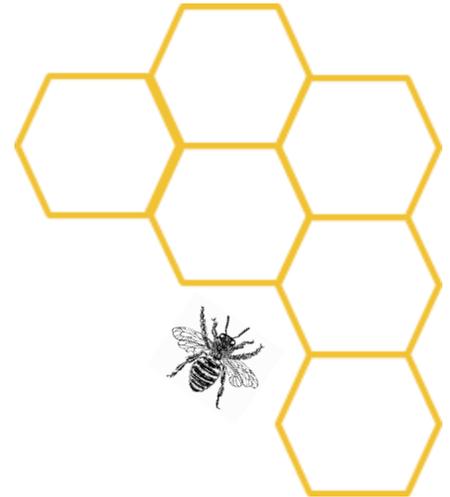


The Secret Life of Bees

A novel by Sue Monk Kidd

The Secret Life of Bees by Sue Monk Kidd contextualizes southern culture by pollinating the story with literary devices that work together to form unity, allowing it to blossom into a coming of age narrative.



Polysyndeton- Hannah Woody

Polysyndeton is sprinkled throughout the novel to slow down the

reader and truly sets the southern scene in the reader's head. The polysyndeton throughout the novel slows the reader down, which matches with the slow simple southern life the characters have in the novel. During the time that the novel took place, things in the South were not all that peaceful -race issues, child abuse, and men had all the power, but the polysyndeton grabs the reader's heart making this novel "more honey than vinegar" (Kirkus reviews). It also helps develop the coming of age journey Lily the main character undergoes. The coming of age is a long perplexed journey, so it seems fit to have polysyndeton scattered throughout the novel, since polysyndeton is also a slow process. During her coming of age, Lily experiences a vast number of new experiences, which she expresses through excessive detail using polysyndeton. Kid states



Borrowed from SandraHernandezCostumes

"her hair was black and generous, with thick curls circling her face, a face I could never quite coax into view, despite the sharpness of everything else" (pg 6). This brings readers into the head of Lily while she experiences all of these new revelations. The polysyndeton also makes this novel a simple read because the reader is not having to create their own scene or own characters in there head, but they are given in detail who the characters, what they are doing, and in the manner they are doing it. Kid also uses excessive polysyndeton to truly invent the same scene in each reader's mind. The in depth descriptions one after another paints the perfect picture of the way Kid wanted readers to experience Lily's coming of age.



Borrowed from Pinterest

Diction- Glenna Durbin

One of the more evident literary devices used in *The Secret Life of Bees* is diction. Kidd has written the novel in a very specific dialect, which she expresses through her choice of words and phrases. The diction used greatly contributes to the tone of the novel -- readers get a sense of how relaxed Kidd feels as she's writing, but she is also very successful in creatively articulating her statements. Kidd's manipulation of words in this way is very similar to some of the colloquialisms used in the novel or even in the South in general. Diction also enhances the mood of the novel, making it an easy read with a laid back feeling. Most importantly though, diction helps shed light on the culture and societal structure of the South in the 1960s. One of the best examples that Kidd gives is on page 47 where one of the characters tells Lily "you're in the colored section". Even though this isn't strictly a southern saying, by including dialogue such as this, Kidd gives insight into the attitude of the people of the South and shows how racially charged that area was at this time. Another instance where Kidd uses diction to bring this story to life, is on page 49 where Rosaleen and Lily have to "thumb a ride to Tiburon". Because Kidd chose to use a more creative phrase instead of simply saying that they needed to "get to Tiburon", she allows readers to tap into their imagination and develop the characters based on what she's provided for them through her careful word choice and use of diction.



Borrowed from ThePurposeOfTheBees

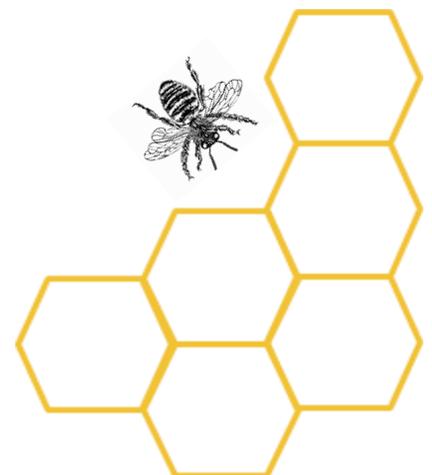


Borrowed from Wordpress

A review from the Raleigh News and Observer speaks to how well the diction in the novel serves as a way of telling a sweet and "smooth-as-honey piece of Southern fiction...whose success lies...in its finely crafted writing...Its lyrical narrative voice and comforting message are a honeyed delight."

Metaphor- Kelsey Holt

Sue Monk Kidd cultivates a laid back Southern style in her novel "The Secret Life of Bees" by adopting metaphors commonly found in Southern vernacular and planting them throughout her book in order to compare the themes of family, love and growing up to the hustle and bustle, yet tight knit community of a bee hive. The extended metaphor of bees and



family permeates the book, sweetening the plot and enhancing the many themes present. As a



Borrowed from New York Times

review by Rachel Simmons from The Telegraph says “they (the bees) symbolize industry, renewal and healing.” The bees present throughout the book help display the beauty of growing up, but also the stingers and chaos that come with it. Kidd also creates a truly southern character in Lily through the use of metaphors. Kidd collects

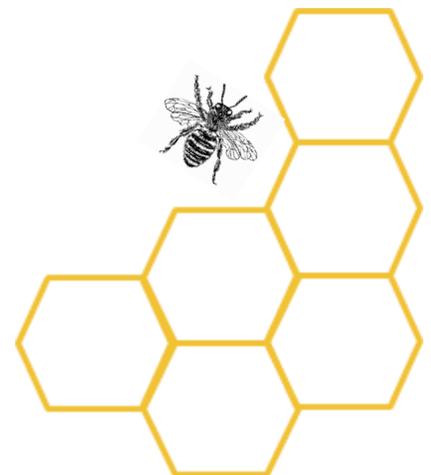
metaphors common within southern vernacular and sprinkles them throughout her novel. The metaphors Lily uses showcase her creativity and help slow down the plot. Instead of simply calling her father creative with punishments, she calls him “Thomas Edison when it came to inventing punishments. This helps slow the pace of the novel, and emphasizes how Lily feels about her father. Lily also compares herself to bees throughout the novel, which lends itself to the idea that growing up is a long complicated process, similar to making honey. In comparing Lily to the bees throughout the book, Sue Monk Kidd truly creates a slow, laid-back, southern atmosphere that replicates all aspects of growing up, displaying it as a messy, but necessary process that is ended with the creation of something beautiful.

Pathos- Abbey Putnam

The addition of pathos stings and sweetens the book to truly contextualize a southern coming of age narrative. The pathos urges the reader to sympathize with Lily, but to also see optimism in her journey ahead. “The Silver Petticoat Review” states how “despite its harsher aspects, [the book is] a warm and hopeful story about a young girl’s journey.” These harsher times and optimistic views are seen to provide insight on southern culture and create the character development of a young girl experiencing life. The reader sees a major shift in character of Lily from the beginning to the end of the novel. At the start of the novel, Kidd wrote to make the reader sympathize over the life Lily was given. Kidd writes, “I’d been kneeling grits since I was six, but still never got used to that powdered-glass feeling beneath my skin” (24). Here, Kidd sheds light on the unhealthy relationship between Lily and her not-so-much dad, T-Ray. This illuminates the bad times, but the placement of this scene at the beginning of Lily’s journey supplies hope that her life will progress to a new stage. The audience sees this



Borrowed from CPE sample writings



shift in Lily's character when she finds the Boatwright sisters in Tiburon. Lily feels "unloved," but August helps to show her that she is loved by all of the African Americans she has met through her journey. This emphasizes the progression of Lily's coming of age story because the reader



Borrowed from Blogspot

sees Lily's transition from feeling love from nobody to everybody. The emotional appeal also discloses the problem of racism African Americans faced in the South at this time. Zach, an African American boy who likes Lily, states how "there are people who would kill boys like [him] for even looking at a girl like [Lily]" (Kidd 135). The pathos found here commands the reader show compassion for people like Zach.

However, it also displays a sense of hope that with time everything will be okay and turn out right. The pathos pollinated within this book reveals hardships of the South and contributes to the coming of age style.

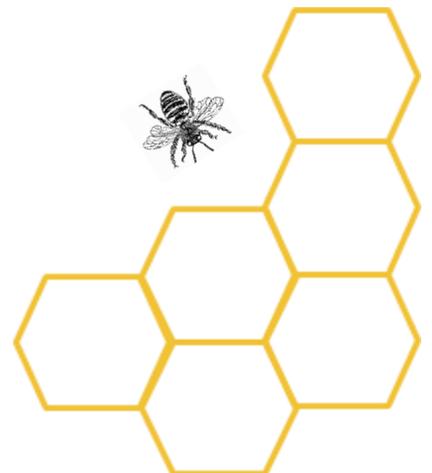
Symbolism- David Arukwe



Borrowed from Pinterest

Sue Monk Kidd embeds symbolism to hide the deeper meanings and themes to make the story feel simple while being complex in *The Secret Life of Bees*. Symbolism is constantly applied throughout the narrative. Virgin Mary at first glance is a religious statue, but she also symbolizes strength and guidance. Lily describing Virgin Mary as her first time seeing the statue "her face a map of all the storms and journeys she'd been through. Her right arm was raised as if she was pointing the way except her fingers were closed in a fist. It gave her a serious look like she could straighten you out if necessary" (Kidd 70). In a coming of age story it's important the main character grows and Virgin Mary symbolizes the strength Lily wants while just seeming like old statue. Bees are a main plot point of the story, but interestingly has several other

symbolic traits in the novel. The bees can represent Lily and the other ladies represent the ups and downs of life, they can represent togetherness like a hive. Lily is observing the actions of a bee, "The bee landed on the state map I kept tacked on the wall. I watched it walk along the coast of South Carolina on scenic Highway 17" (Kidd 10). Bees seem like a fun part of the story, but in reality are deeper meanings

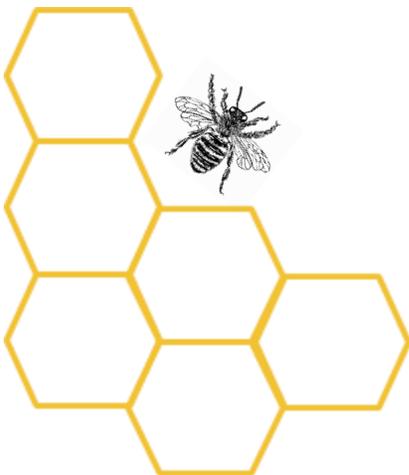


to the lessons of life and the people in it. A review from the New York Times Book Review best captures the power

of symbolism, “Fully imagined... The core of this story is Lily’s search for her, and she finds one in a place she never expected”. Lily’s mother in many ways becomes symbolism in the way she represents a lack of closure for Lily that one place she never expected symbolizes that missing feeling of acceptance for her.



Borrowed from DailyInbox



MLA Works Cited

Cackett, Elinor. "The Secret Life of Bees Review - A Moving Coming of Age Story." *The Silver Petticoat Review*, 16 Feb. 2017,

www.silverpetticoatreview.com/2015/04/24/the-secret-life-of-bees-review-a-moving-coming-of-age-story/.

Kidd, Sue Monk. "THE SECRET LIFE OF BEES by Sue Monk Kidd." *Kirkus Reviews*,

www.kirkusreviews.com/book-reviews/sue-monk-kidd/the-secret-life-of-bees/.

Kidd, Sue Monk. *The Secret Life of Bees*. Tinder Press, 2015.

Mazmanian, Adam. "Books in Brief: Fiction & Poetry." *The New York Times*, *The New York Times*, 30 Mar. 2002,

www.nytimes.com/2002/03/31/books/books-in-brief-fiction-poetry-176362.html.

Simhon, Rachel. "Honey Is the Balm." *The Telegraph*, Telegraph Media Group, 24 Feb. 2002,

www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/books/fictionreviews/3573583/Honey-is-the-balm.html.

