

Understanding The Cay

Theme – Adulthood

The dangerous journey that Phillip takes is symbolic of his journey from boyhood to manhood, with all of its fears, traps, challenges, and surprises. Like Phillip's journey, the adventure of becoming an adult is not taken by choice, and often we are dragged unwillingly into manhood or womanhood against our will. Phillip is thrust into independence and responsibility, robbed of his parents and the protection of home, robbed of his mentor, Timothy, and robbed even of his sight to aid him in his effort to survive. Still, Phillip works through his grief and anger, and he emerges from his ordeal as a young man able to take care for himself, even able to hunt underwater with a sharpened stick – blind. This proves that he has finally decided to take on the responsibility of adulthood, caring for himself despite disadvantages and obstacles.

Find five quotes that show Phillip's process of becoming a man. Write the quotes with the page numbers on the left. On the right, explain how the quote shows his new adult qualities.

Quotes	Thoughts
1)	1)
2)	2)
3)	3)
4)	4)
5)	5)

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Theme – Blindness

The irony of The Cay is that the worst thing to happen to Phillip is the very thing he needs to overcome his racism. Because of his blindness, he is forced to “see” Timothy for what he really is, instead of the stereotypes he has learned from the adults in his society. In addition, because he is forced to rely on Timothy so heavily, he grows to understand his real value and depth. Throughout the book, there is a great deal said about “seeing” and “not seeing.” That is, when Phillip was able to see with his eyes, there were many things he was unable to “see” with his heart and mind, and only when he is unable to see with his eyes does he begin to “see” the truth.

Find five quotes that deal with seeing or not seeing. Write the quotes with the page numbers on the left. On the right, explain how vision or seeing is used as a symbol for something else.

Quotes	Thoughts
1)	1)
2)	2)
3)	3)
4)	4)
5)	5)

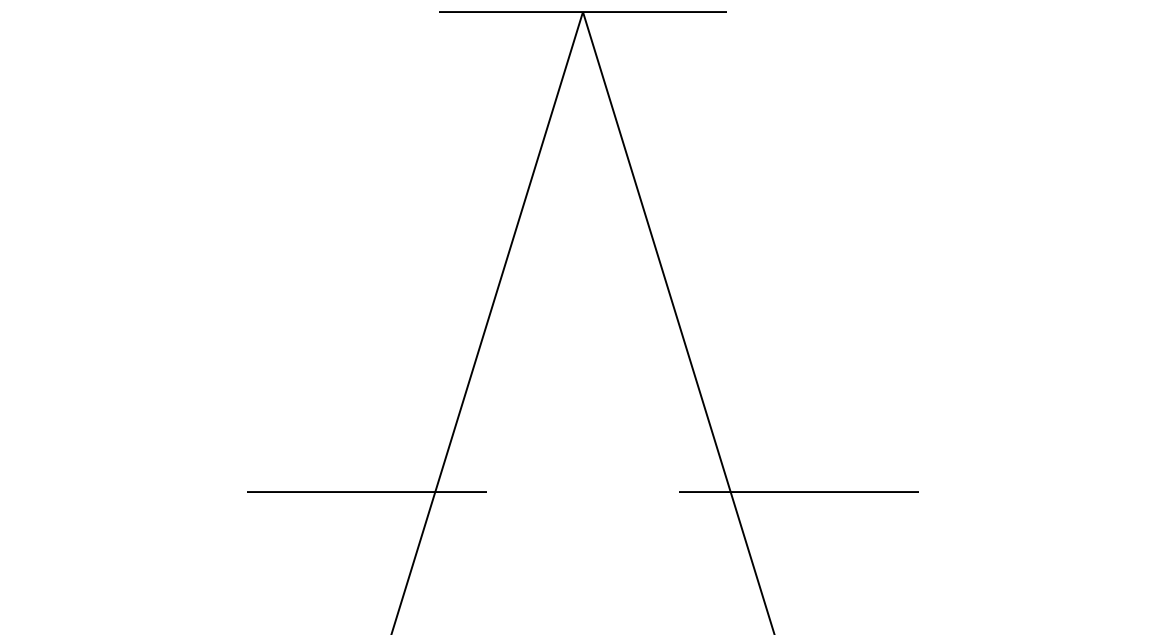
Understanding The Cay Structure – Conflict

The Cay is a novel with many layers of conflict. The struggle for Phillip, the protagonist, comes from many different directions and happens on several levels – physically, emotional, socially, and mentally. All three types of conflict (Human vs. Human, Human vs. Nature, and Human vs. Self) work together to push the characters towards the resolution. Your job is to figure out how the conflict in The Cay works. First, show how each type of conflict is represented in the novel. Then identify what the main or central conflict is – Human vs. Human, Human vs. Nature, or Human vs. Self. Be sure to explain your choice, citing examples from the story. Finally, determine how this main conflict is developed in terms of Freytag's Pyramid by placing quotes and page numbers on the model below.

Central Conflict - _____
Explain Your Choice _____

Minor Conflict - _____
Explain Your Choice _____

Minor Conflict - _____
Explain Your Choice _____



Understanding The Cay Character – Dynamic Character

Characters in a work of fiction are called dynamic if they undergo some kind of fundamental change. This means that the character's beliefs, attitudes, desires, or personality changes as a result of the conflict in the story. Even physical changes often represent more emotional, mental, or spiritual changes. A simple haircut would probably be meaningless, but a drastic change in weight, a scar or disfigurement, or maybe a change in attire can be very symbolic. The opposite of a dynamic character is a static character, one who does not change. The static character's lack of change can be good or bad. If the character refuses to change, sticking to some sense of morality or justice, then the lack of change is considered brave and right. On the other hand, if a character stubbornly refuses to change a belief that is wrong or flawed, or refuses to quit some harmful behavior, then the lack of change is often considered bad. However, even though there is nothing inherently better about dynamic characters, readers seem to prefer them, probably because they are more interesting to read about and more like real people who change as they learn and grow.

Find five quotes that show that Phillip is a dynamic character. Each quote should show some basic change in his personality. Write the quotes with the page numbers on the left. On the right, explain how Phillip is changing in the quote.

Quotes	Thoughts
1)	1)
2)	2)
3)	3)
4)	4)
5)	5)

