Anasazi Study Guide

Anasazi by Gary Snyder

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Introduction

Gary Snyder placed "Anasazi" as the first poem in his 1974 collection *Turtle Island.* Its placement is significant because the first poem often sets the tone for the rest of the book, and this is the case here. *Anasazi* is a Navajo word most often translated as "ancient ones," and it designates a group of Native Americans thought to be the predecessors of the modern Pueblo Indians. From about 200 to 1300 A.D., the Anasazi inhabited the Four Corners region of the United States, encompassing southern Utah, southwestern Colorado, northwestern New Mexico, and northern Arizona. As Snyder's poem indicates, the Anasazi people were very adept at horticulture, pottery making, basket weaving and architecture, and were remembered especially for their villages built into the sides of steep cliffs. Although opinions vary on what eventually scattered these Native Americans throughout the southwestern United States and Mexico, there is widespread agreement that they were a very sophisticated, highly developed people who left behind a wealth of remarkable wares and intriguing structures.

"Anasazi" is a celebration poem, much like a chant or a song of praise. Its creator is both poet and anthropologist, and he combines the two callings to produce works of vivid imagery and in reverence for a humankind that lives simply and in harmony with nature. While the poem may be sparse in language, it is full of meaning, evidenced by strong, descriptive words and effective cadence. It engages both history and myth, presented with striking metaphors and alliteration. And, too, it reflects Gary Snyder's fervor for depicting the strength and beauty of Native American culture and his ability to express great praise in a minimal amount of words. For these reasons, the poem provides a fit beginning for *Turtle Island* whose own title refers to the original name of North America handed down through Indian mythology.

Author Biography

Gary Snyder was born in San Francisco in 1930. His parents separated when he was very young, and he spent most of his early years living with his mother and sister on small farms in Washington and Oregon. Even as a youngster and teenager, Snyder was an avid outdoorsman and developed a strong reverence for all things natural - mammals, insects, trees, mountains, rivers, and anything else that was a part of the earth. He also held ancient North American and Far Eastern cultures in high regard and would eventually make their study and practice a part of his everyday life.

In 1951, he received degrees in both literature and anthropology from Reed College in Portland, Oregon. There, he became a part of the intellectual crowd that was often also the "party" crowd, and he and his friends experimented not only with a variety of hallucinogenic drugs and alcohol, but also with eastern philosophy, Indian mythology, and communal living. He spent most of his college years in one of the "Reed houses," which were typically old houses close to campus that students rented, sharing in the household duties and monthly utility bills. Snyder had a preference for a home life that was village-like, similar to most Native American cultures in which all members were part of an extended family, and group effort and shared responsibilities - as opposed to individual achievement - were major tenets.

Snyder's interest in Zen Buddhism was heightened by three years of graduate study in Asian languages at the University of California-Berkeley during the early 1950s. In 1956, he moved to Japan where he remained for 12 years studying, researching, and practicing Zen philosophy and also traveling throughout Asia. Returning to the United States in 1969, he and his wife (along with a dozen or so friends) erected a Japanese-style house in the foothills of the northern Sierras of California where the poet/anthropologist still lives today.

To date, Gary Snyder has published 16 books of poetry and prose. *Turtle Island,* containing "Anasazi," won a Pulitzer Prize in 1975. The work he has produced over the decades has continued to transcend mere words on paper. Perhaps more than any other writer - and certainly more than most - Snyder lives the life that he advocates in his poems. He has supported the causes of environmentalism, Native American rights, communal living, and spiritual and sexual freedom from the political venue to the streets to his own home. The poignancy of work and community so prevalent in the Anasazi culture has always been a primary component of the poet's own life, and what he writes is essentially what he lives. In his essay, " 'Thirty Miles of Dust: There Is No Other Life,'" Snyder's longtime friend Scott McLean tells us that "one cannot read Gary's poetry without being constantly made aware of how much it is an expression of community life. His work argues that if one wants to touch the deepest levels of our humanity, one must learn within the relationships of responsibility that bind family, community, and place."

Poem Text

Anasazi,

Anasazi,

tucked up in clefts in the cliffs

growing strict fields of corn and beans

sinking deeper and deeper in earth

up to your hips in Gods

your head all turned to eagle-down

& lightning for knees and elbows

your eyes full of pollen

the smell of bats.

the flavor of sandstone

grit on the tongue.

Women

birthing

at the foot of ladders in the dark.

trickling streams in hidden canyons

under the cold rolling desert

corn-basket wide-eyed

red baby

rock lip home.

Anasazi

Plot Summary

Lines 1-2:

A discussion of the *meaning* of "Anasazi" must include mention of its style, as the form of the poem - its rhythms, its sounds, even its look - is intrinsic to what it tells us. The first two lines appear to be only a repetition of the title. In fact, they are. And, yet, these two one-word lines also set the tone for the poem's celebratory effect. Read aloud, they should be read slowly, allowing each syllable equal voice in the incantation: ah-nah-sah-zee, ah-nah-sah-zee. On an obvious level, they simply describe the subject of the poem, but they also imply the author's feelings about that subject. In essence, he prepares us for the "song of praise" that follows.

Lines 3-4:

Line 3 of the poem refers to the cliff dwellings that the Anasazi people constructed on the steep sides of the mountains, particularly in the Mesa Verde, Colorado, region. They eventually built hundred-room villages in the cliffs and caves of this area, and many of these remarkable structures still stand today. The cliff houses were blocks of rectangular living and storage spaces, tucked into rocky walls, providing shelter from inclement weather as well as aggressive enemies. As the people themselves moved into the cliffs, so did their livelihoods, and they used their excellent stone masonry skills to construct cliff side granaries. As line 4 indicates, the Anasazi also planted their crops on the mountains and were able to grow "strict fields of corn and beans" even on such unlikely terrain. The word "strict" here is not used as in "austere" or "harsh," but in the "absolute" or "accurate" sense. Maize horticulture had been the driving force behind turning the ancestors of the Anasazi from a hunting-gathering culture into the more settled crop-growers, and it became a mainstay of their economy. The addition of beans and squash provided a nutritious supplement to their diet, and remaining evidence indicates that they were very precise and skilled farmers.

Line 5:

Line 5 of the poem may be interpreted both literally and figuratively, for the Anasazi sank "deeper and deeper in earth" in more ways than one. In the actual sense, the Anasazi people of 200 to 500 A.D. stored their goods (as well as their dead) in deep pits in the ground. Over the centuries, the Anasazi increased the size of partly underground spaces until they became their actual living quarters, now known as pithouses, consisting of several rooms. When the people began to move up into the cliffs, the earth dwellings did not disappear, but, rather, took on a new significance in the culture. By 900 A.D., the pithouses were completely subterranean, and they were used in the ceremonial role of the village "kiva." Kivas are prominent throughout the history of all Pueblo tribes and are typically underground chambers used especially by men to hold

council and to perform religious ceremonies. In this literal sense, then, the Anasazi did sink "deeper and deeper in earth." Line 5 may also be seen as a metaphor for the deep ties these Native American people had with nature. They grew their food in the earth, lived in the earth, and worshiped in the earth, requiring an obvious respect and love for the land.

Lines 6-9:

Lines 6-8 carry the metaphor a bit further by highlighting the rituals often performed in the kiva and addressing in particular the intertwining of natural elements in a celebration of life for all. The "Gods" are of the earth, and eagle feathers become headdresses; the dancing of "knees and elbows" appears like lightning, and the eyes are "full of pollen" because pollen represents fertility and growth. All these natural entities - eagle-down, lightning, knees, elbows, eyes, pollen - blend into the poem to help create its praise of nature and of the people who themselves had such a strong alliance with the natural world. In his essay, "Gary Snyder: The Lessons of *Turtle Island,"* critic Michael Castro describes the poet's response to the common overuse and misuse of natural resources in the industrialized world: "Snyder pointed to Indian societies as models of human organization that do not self-destruct by exploiting and exhausting their resources. Their relationship to the land is characterized by protection rather than production." And although pollen may indeed represent reproduction and growth, it is not used here to indicate an explosive and overriding increase, but one that lives in harmony with the earth and its creatures.

Lines 10-12:

These lines (as well as all the remaining ones) may be viewed as chunks of imagery that depict the Anasazi lifestyle and its interdependence on and with natural surroundings. "The smell of bats" reminds us that these people lived in caves and on steep cliffs and shared their dwellings with other mammals who made their homes in the rocks. "The flavor of sandstone/ grit on the tongue" refers not only to the cliff houses, but to the pottery created by the Anasazi for both utilitarian and decorative purposes. These Native Americans were very adept at masonry and working in clay, and stone was so prevalent that it must have gotten into their mouths, as well as their eyes and noses.

Lines 13-15:

While these lines may seem to imply a terrible hardship in the lives of Anasazi women - giving birth to their children in the night at the bottom of steep ladders which they had to climb to their houses - it is not written in a bemoaning style or with a harsh tone. Instead, there is a *softness* in its simple statement, made more evident by the two-syllable, one-word lines: wo-men/ birth-ing. Line 15 again reiterates the remarkable

dwellings the Anasazi constructed and tells us how they had to enter and exit their homes.

Lines 16-17:

Lines 16 and 17 give us a panoramic view of the natural setting in which the Indians lived. The imagery pulls us away from the people themselves and takes us to the "trickling streams," the "hidden canyons," and the "cold rolling desert." Although brief, these phrases paint a vivid picture of the natural beauty that surrounded the Anasazi. Since the desert is "cold," we must assume it's nighttime, and, therefore, the lines provide an idyllic connection between the childbirth "in the dark" addressed in the previous lines and the beginning of a new life with the cliff dwellers cited in the next.

Lines 18-20:

The Anasazi were not only skilled potters, but fine basket weavers as well. They found many uses for their baskets, including hauling corn and carrying babies. If lines 18-19 were turned into a complete sentence, it may read something like, "The red and wide-eyed newborn was carried to his home in the cliffs in a corn basket." The effect, of course, would be greatly diminished.

Line 21:

Snyder ends his poem the way he began it. Not only does the repetition of the word *Anasazi* bring a sense of "roundness" or of coming full circle to the work, but it reemphasizes the "sound" of it. Speaking the name of the people one more time, slowly - ah-nah-sah-zee - completes the song of praise on a peaceful and very resonant note.

Themes

Humans and the Environment

Gary Snyder the poet is inseparable from Gary Snyder the anthropologist. He has a distinct interest in studying human life not in isolation, but as an integral part of everything that is natural. The need to recognize the earth itself as a living being□along with all its trees, rocks, plants, and animals, including humans□is a major theme in much of Snyder's work, and such is the case for "Anasazi." Throughout the poem, there is interplay of humans, animals, plants, even sandstone and rock canyons. While many of us may not visualize living in the crags of a mountain as a very comfortable existence, here the lifestyle is portrayed as almost cozy. The Anasazi are "tucked up" in the cliffs, a phrase usually reserved for a softer, warmer form of protection or comfort. Along the same lines, "sinking deeper and deeper in earth" may not evoke a pleasant image, and yet in this poem, it is a wonderful experience, one that moves people closer to a spiritual (as well as a physical) oneness with the land. They are up to their "hips in Gods" because the supreme beings live in the earth that surrounds them. During their religious dance rituals, there is again a mixture of natural beings. Humans, eagles, and pollen seem to celebrate together.

In the essays contained at the end of *Turtle Island,* Snyder points out that many Native Americans, the Sioux in particular, consider things other than human beings as "people" too, such as insects, trees, birds, and fish. Snyder, too, believes that all of nature should be given a voice on our planet and tells us that "what we must find a way to do is incorporate the other people□the creeping people, and the standing people, and the flying people, and the swimming people□into the council of government." In "Anasazi," this incorporation is evidenced in the humans sharing the cliffs with bats, as opposed to killing them or driving them out, and in the "flavor" of sandstone, implying such a closeness to their surroundings that they can taste it. Even one of a woman's most intimate moments is intertwined with her environment. There is no complaint about giving birth at the foot of a ladder on a cold, dark night. Rather, this kind of childbirth is merely a part of the natural course, just as the "trickling streams" and "rolling desert" nearby. There is no resentment toward the natural surroundings here. The mother simply places her new baby in the basket she has brought with her and totes him home. We must understand that the child is only one of the living organisms in her presence, for she is also among streams, canyons, trees, rocks□all a part of the living earth.

Understanding Place

A theme related to humans and our relationship with the environment that Snyder touches upon in "Anasazi" is that of the need for human beings to have a thorough understanding of the place we inhabit on earth. By "place," he does not mean our own country, our own state, nor even our own city, but, instead, our own *land.* Whether that encompasses a backyard, a field on a farm, or thousands of acres surrounding a close-

knit village, without a knowledge of the animals, insects, wild berries, soil types, and prospering crops that share our small piece of the planet, we really do not know the place where we live. In his 1977 collection of essays called *The Old Ways,* Snyder claims that we will one day "reinhabit this land with people who know they belong to it" and we will "learn to see, region by region, how we live specifically□in each place." Living *specifically* in a place means knowing your surroundings *completely.* It means understanding the plants and animals indigenous to a region, the crops that will grow best, the wild foods that are edible and the ones that are poison, and the best means of preserving the natural resources available. It means truly knowing how to live off the land and how to do so without destroying it.

In "Anasazi," the people live "specifically." They are able to grow "strict fields of corn and beans" because they know just how to tend the crops in order to gain the best yield from the desert land. They know "the smell of bats" because they live with them, and they know "the flavor of sandstone" because they work the rock into utensils, into pottery, and into walls for their homes. They know, too, the sound of streams in the canyons, even though the water may be only "trickling" and even though the canyons may be "hidden." In truth, nothing in the environment is hidden from the Anasazi, for they genuinely *know* the land they inhabit.

Religion

A discussion of Snyder's general themes in this poem (and in many others) would be incomplete without mention of his belief in and practice of Zen Buddhism. Whether we view Buddhism as a religion or as a philosophy, or both, its tenets are very similar to that of most Native American beliefs. Buddhism maintains that every being in the universe is interrelated, and that nothing can exist separately from other beings. The world is essentially a network of all creatures and all natural objects, and each lives in relation to another. Examples from "Anasazi" that demonstrate this theme would simply be the same as those addressed above, illuminating the philosophy of environment in Indian culture, as well as that within the poet himself.

While the first two "lines" are merely exact repetitions of the title, they set an alliterative tone for the rest of the poem. Not only do the first three syllables of the word "ah-nah-sah-zee" rhyme, but they also carry a soft, pleasant rhythm that warrants the repetition. The alliteration continues in the very next lines with the short *u* sound in "tucked up" and the *cl* sound in "clefts" and "cliffs," followed by the hard *c* in "corn." Lines 5, 7, and 8 all end with the short *e* sound in "earth," "eagle-down," and "elbows," and toward the end of the poem, we have "canyons," "cold," and "corn-basket" blended with "rolling," "red," and "rock." The last line rounds out the work by simply bringing us back to its rhythmic beginning.

Line length plays a major roll in the presentation of this poem by the gradual flow of nearly complete sentences into briefer phrases and finally into one- or two-word lines that wind us down as though a dance or song is coming to an end. In his *Ideogram, History of a Poetic Method,* critic Laszlo Gefin tells us that in*Turtle Island*"the form is

coextensive with the material. As Snyder comments, 'Each poem grows from an energy-mind-field-dance, and has its own inner grain.' □.[In other words], energy invades the mind, expands out into a field from which the poem, the dance of words, comes into being." In "Anasazi," Snyder moves from the longer cadences of lines such as "your head all turned to eagle-down/ & lightning for knees and elbows" to the briefer "□ smell of bats/ the flavor of sandstone/ grit on the tongue" to the drum-like beat of the last few lines. Read these phrases slowly and notice how the accents fall at the beginning of each to give them a TA-dum, TA-dum rhythm: Corn-basket. Wide-eyed. Red baby. Rock lip. Clearly, Snyder's form here relates directly to the subjects of the poem as well as the feelings he has for them. While the work may be "officially" free verse, there is much evidence of careful crafting by the poet to create a specific sound, a specific rhythm, and a specific movement. In doing so, he has composed a piece whose form can be heard and felt, as well as seen.

Style

Style in "Anasazi" is intrinsic to the poem's presentation and meaning. A song of praise or celebration needs rhythm and a discernible cadence to bring its full bearing to life. Snyder uses two predominant mechanisms to convey the adulatory intent of this work□alliteration (similar vowel sounds and similar consonant sounds) and line length.

Historical Context

Gary Snyder wrote most of the poems in *Turtle Island* in the late 1960s and early 1970s when he returned to the United States from his 12-year hiatus in Japan. The influence of Far Eastern culture and Zen Buddhism on his work is clear in many poems, including "Anasazi," but considering the similarity of Native American philosophy to Zen, we cannot always tell where references to one end and the other begin. Fundamentally, it makes little difference, for these poems were written in a time of large-scale revolution in American thought, politics, and behavior, much of it leaning toward - if not completely enveloping - the same sentiments and ideas that Snyder had been promoting for decades. A sampling of only the *titles* of the journals in which many of *Turtle Island's* poems first appeared is indicative of the world the poet lived in and the values he held: *Rising Generation, Not Man Apart, Unmuzzled Ox, Peace & Pieces,* and *Marijuana Review.* And while it may be easy to place Snyder in the "hippie" category of 1960s

America, his personal beliefs and lifestyle existed long before and go well beyond any cultural fads or pseudo-political movements that came about.

The time setting of "Anasazi" and that of the poet when he wrote it are hundreds of years apart. Even so, Gary Snyder was living in the same general region of the country as these ancient Indians, performing many of the same daily routines and taking on the same daily responsibilities. He and his family built their own home (not in "clefts in the cliffs," but with their own hands and a "village" of friends), grew their own food, used water from mountain streams for bathing and cooking, and prepared most meals over an open fire set in a pit in the middle of the living room. While the Anasazi people had no other methods from which to choose, Snyder opted for an environmentally conscious life that did not depend on technology, and he was happy to welcome neighbors and strangers alike to his home rather than put up fences and walls to keep them out.

The poetry that Snyder wrote during the 1960s and early 1970s was often didactic, or "preachy," in nature. His essays also addressed political and social issues, reflecting the American shift in attitude toward the government, the environment, war, drag use, and other controversial topics. It was a turbulent time, and there was much fuel for anyone looking to light a fire under social reform. The war in Vietnam dragged on, and the streets in America filled up with more and more protesters. Various factions of the population who had historically had little say in government and in society began to organize movements, from Black Power to women's rights to the American Indian Movement. Also during these years, many people became concerned about pollution and the misuse of natural resources. A "greens" movement developed, and its followers advocated an earthy spirituality, believing in "Gaia," or in the earth as a living organism. Many environmentalists turned against hunting wild animals for sport, and a large vegetarian crusade developed. Amidst all these movements, the use of recreational drags increased dramatically, especially within the younger generation, but hippies and peaceniks by no means invented "getting high." Hallucinogenic herbs and powders have been used for centuries all over the world for both relaxation and in cultural and religious rites, and Native Americans often included peyote in their rituals. Gary Snyder,

too, has been noted for his experimentation with a variety of drags and for the common use of them during meditative group gatherings at his home in the mountains.

"Anasazi" is a poem that Snyder could have written at any point in his career, considering his lifelong interest in Indian culture and in living in harmony with the environment. The inclusion of it, however, in *Turtle Island,* as well as the publication of that book in 1974, allowed its message to be even more pertinent. The world was *ready* for it, so to speak. There was widespread acknowledgment that minority populations deserved an equal voice, and there was general appreciation of the lessons the majority could learn - from artistic style to soil conservation - from diverse cultures. There was a growing outcry to protect the natural resources that industrialized nations had been treating as "endless," and part of that protection meant treating the earth more gently and with greater respect. The Anasazi had already done that. And though these people faced the hardships of enemy tribes, inclement weather, and disease, they never straggled with nor pillaged their natural environment. Instead, they took care of it and, in turn, prospered from its resources.

Critical Overview

Gary Snyder's first few books of poetry were reviewed by only a handful of critics, but all of them wrote very favorably of the poet's work. Most comments centered on Snyder's easy lyrical style and precise portrayal of the natural world, some noting that he was simply writing the life he was living. After this positive beginning, Snyder moved to Japan and little was heard from him back in the States. When he returned and began construction on his home in the Sierra Nevadas, he wrote the poems for *Turtle Island.*

This book was not received favorably by many critics at first. It was considered too limited in scope, most of the poems drawing on the poet's own regional environment and on his own friends and experiences. In his " 'Thirty Miles of Dust: There Is No Other Life,'" Scott McLean states that, "scholars lamented his departure from the purely imagistic lyric for forms that were too overtly political or were too centered on one locality." Later, however, critics came to regard the book as one of Snyder's best, and it was awarded a Pulitzer Prize in 1975. McLean attributes this change in critical attitude to readers developing a better understanding of the importance that social issues and community involvement held for the poet. McLean points out that "these poems represented for Gary a series of notes in an open scale, a range of poetry that community life and involvement demanded. For when the developers are right there at a neighbor's property line it is important to have a poem that ends, 'And here we must draw/ Our line.'" (This line appears in the poem "Front Lines.")

Critical Essay

Pamela Steed Hill

Pamela Steed Hill has had poems published in close to a hundred journals and is the author of In Praise of Motels, *a collection of poems published by Blair Mountain Press. She is an associate editor for* University Communications *at The Ohio State University.*

To understand and appreciate fully Gary Snyder's "Anasazi" we need to know something about the Native American people who are the subject of the poem. The Anasazi are thought to be ancestors of the modern Pueblo Indians, and they inhabited Utah, Colorado, New Mexico, and Arizona from about 200 to 1300 A.D. They are remembered for their skills at horticulture, pottery making, basket weaving, and architecture, especially their "cliff houses." These dwellings - literally two- and three-story structures carved into the sides of steep cliffs and requiring ladders for entry and exit - replaced the partially underground homes where the Anasazi had lived for centuries. As they began to move to the cliffs and to expand their skills at masonry and architecture, the underground rooms were reserved as "kivas," or places to hold council or perform religious rituals. The most important aspect of Anasazi life, as well as of all Native American cultures, was their respect for the land they lived on and their ability to care for it and prosper from it without destroying it.

Gary Snyder himself was greatly influenced by Indian customs and lifestyle, and he patterned his own life and surroundings after them. With an interest in anthropology as well as poetry, he often combines the two areas in his work, frequently sending messages of pro-environmentalism through essays, lectures, and poems. In a 1977 collection of essays entitled *The Old Ways,* Snyder addresses the issues of technology and industrialization gone out of control. He defends a need for "modern" human beings to take a hard look at what we have done to the earth - to the trees, the soil, the mountains, the animals, the air - and to begin to reverse the damage by seeing our planet as a living organism. One way that each person can help turn things around, according to Snyder, is to "rein-habit this land with people who know they belong to it." By doing so, we will come to understand how we "live specifically in each place."

The poem "Anasazi" exemplifies a people who lived specifically in their place. They took time to get to know their region of the world, including the plants that grew there, the animals that lived there, the fish that filled the streams and rivers, and the best types of crops for the soil they had. These were people who truly could live off the land and did so without exploiting its resources. The Anasazi not only took care of the environment, but also celebrated it. Snyder's poem reveals and imitates this celebration through its soft, rhythmic cadence and its strong imagery. Each line reads as though it was written in reverence for the thing or person being described, and the mixture of human life, animal life, and nature is reflective of the poet's opinion on how all life should be lived.

Not only is the line "tucked up in clefts in the cliffs" a wonderful use of alliteration, but it also indicates how the Anasazi felt about their rock homes. Contrary to how people in

contemporary society may view a seemingly harsh, rough existence, Snyder describes the Native Americans as "tucked up," a pleasant phrase connoting gentleness and comfort. The Anasazi were so in tune with the earth that they chose to live, literally, among its natural stone and craggy mountainsides. Their knowledge of the surrounding soil is evident in the fact that they were able to grow "strict fields of corn and beans" on terrain that would likely prove impossible for less skilled, less caring farmers. Snyder merges nature with spirituality in the lines "sinking deeper and deeper in earth / up to your hips in Gods," implying a religious connection between the people, the land, and a divine presence. He carries the union further by pairing human physical attributes to animals and natural phenomena: head and eagle-down; knees, elbows, and lightning; and eyes and pollen. The lines containing these elements describe a ritual taking place, probably in a kiva, since we know the underground rooms were converted for such after the Anasazi moved into the cliffs.

The concept of living specifically in a place and of being keenly aware of the nature that shares the space is nowhere more evident than in the middle three lines of the poem. "[T]he smell of bats. / the flavor of sandstone / grit on the tongue" present images that touch directly upon the senses and indicate how close the Anasazi people were to their environment. Most of us do not know what bats smell like because we don't live where bats live. Nor do we know what sandstone tastes like or how it feels on the tongue because we don't have reason to come into such close contact with it. While we may be able to imagine these sensations and to carry them even further into the senses of sight and sound - we can "see" bats in our minds and we can "hear" sandstone grinding in one's teeth - but the Anasazi knew them firsthand. Instead of "overtaking the land with" man-made comforts and bombarding the natural setting with unnatural inventions, these Native Americans got to know their environment as though it were a "neighbor" and came to live at peace with it.

For most people in industrialized, technology-centered nations today - and especially for the women - the idea of giving birth to a child without taking every measurement of comfort into consideration is unthinkable. From special beds to numbing drugs, we want to make childbirth as easy and painless as possible. Therefore, reading about "women / birthing / at the foot of ladders in the dark" can send chills down the spine of anyone who has been through, or can imagine going through, the process of having a baby. But this section of "Anasazi" is not there to horrify and dismay. Nor is it there to imply any complaints from the Indians about how and where the women gave birth. Instead, the image leads directly to a description of the surrounding natural beauty: "trickling streams," "hidden canyons," and "the cold rolling desert." Again the connection is made between human phenomena and natural phenomena, with a bit of ambiguity thrown in to make any separation even harder to distinguish. If our first notion is to see the "trickling streams in hidden canyons" line as a shift to a description of the natural setting, we may also consider it a continuation of the depiction of real childbirth. With the presence of both water and blood during birth, the use of "trickling streams" works as well as a metaphor as it does a simple description of a nearby creek or river. The point here is that there is an undeniable interconnectedness and interdependence between people and nature.

It is fitting that the poem ends with a new beginning, so to speak. The baby described in the last few lines signifies not only a new life among the Anasazi people, but also a new creation out of the union with nature. Here, the images are extremely brief and the syllabic pattern makes a very pronounced cadence, all in tune with the celebratory effect of the poem. The four distinct images - "corn basket," "wide-eyed," "red baby," and "rock lip home" - may be seen as separate entities, but more likely there is an intentional pairing of the object with the human. That is, corn basket pairs with wide-eyed and red baby pairs with rock lip home. This match-up would be in keeping with the blending of people and environment that we find throughout the poem. On the literal level, this string of images tells us that the wide-eyed newborn will be carried to its home in the cliffs in a corn basket. The Anasazi, we recall, were excellent basket weavers, and their wares served a variety of purposes, from toting crop yields to infants. And on the metaphorical level, these words illuminate the necessary alliance between humankind - from infancy on - and the world around us.

Even with an understanding of the history of the Anasazi culture, some readers may find Gary Snyder's poem difficult because it seems disjointed or incomplete. But the style and the presentation lend themselves well to what the poet is trying to convey. His ability to select just the right words and brief phrases to portray an entire philosophy and lifestyle is actually more effective than belaboring the points with long, explanatory sentences and a didactic, or "preachy," defense. With such exact imagery and unadorned detail, the poet simply shows us a picture of true environmentalism and of how one group of people accomplished living in harmony with nature.

The theme of "Anasazi" is not unique in the world of poetry. Countless poets over the centuries have penned verses of praise for the natural world, including many in more recent times who have used the venue to make social statements in favor of environmentalism. What makes Snyder's poem a bit different is that his subject is not just about respecting the earth or convincing people that nature is beautiful and worth protecting. Rather, this poet writes from a perspective of an absolute necessity for human beings to pay critical attention to their relationship with the natural world. The Anasazi people not only recognized that their existence depended upon nature, but they knew that nature depended on them as well. In the poem, this is demonstrated by the continuous blending of people, animals, earth, rocks, and so forth. With such an interweaving tie between all living things, Snyder makes a very strong case for taking our current notion of environmentalism to a much higher level.

Adaptations

Snyder recorded a collection of his prize-winning essays called *Practice of the Wild.* The two audio cassettes (1991 edition) pertain to the relationship between humans and the land that Snyder believes must occur, for both our sake and the earth's.

In 1992, Snyder recorded a series of Zen master Dogen's "lessons" regarding self-liberation on two cassettes entitled *The Teachings of Zen: Master Dogen.* One review called the writings "practical and down-to-earth, paradoxical and mystical."

Art of the Wild is a VHS tape based on interviews with 14 writers of prose and poetry discussing their love of the natural world and what motivated them to "give back to the earth." Writers include Gary Snyder, Garrett Hongo, Sandra McPherson, and Pattiann Rogers, among others.

Topics for Further Study

Consider all the environmental issues that have come to the forefront along with technological advances□from the invention of the gasoline-powered engine to space modules landing on Mars. Select one issue in particular and write an essay on its pros and cons for both human beings and for the environment.

Choose one Native American tribe and research its beginnings in North America through to its sudden end or to its gradual dispersion into other tribes. Write an essay that concentrates on what happened to the tribe when the Europeans arrived and how the members' lives changed.

Write a poem about the natural environment that surrounds your home. Try to pattern your poem after "Anasazi," using strong descriptive words and brief phrases.

Gary Snyder's introductory note in*Turtle Island* states "The 'U.S.A.' and its states and counties are arbitrary and inaccurate impositions on what is really here." Write about what you think he means by this statement and why you agree or disagree with it.

Many architects today are designing homes that "respect" the natural environment. If you were going to build an unconventional home on any type of land, describe what it would be like and how/why you would make your choices.

Compare and Contrast

1970: The first "Earth Day" observation was held throughout the world. More than 20 million people took part, making it the largest organized demonstration in history.

1970: The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) was created by Congress to control water and air pollution.

1973: Members of the American Indian Movement seized the village of Wounded Knee, South Dakota, the site where Sioux Indians had been massacred by the U.S. Cavalry in 1890. Two Indians were killed by police in the 70-day occupation, and the village of Wounded Knee was destroyed by fire.

1973: A global energy crisis emerged, and President Richard Nixon encouraged Americans to conserve. He pointed out that the United States had 6% of the population but consumed nearly 35% of the world's energy.

1989: Brazil, South America's wealthiest country, began to regulate previously uncontrolled land clearances in the Amazon basin after profiting for years on the destruction of the land.

1992: Seven prominent Native Americans filed a lawsuit against the NFL's Washington Redskins, citing the nickname and mascot as offensive to American Indians. In 1999, the Trademark Trial and Appeal Board canceled federal protection of the trademark name, but it was still in use during the 1999-2000 season.

1995: The construction of a man-made mountain of 10,000 trees was begun in Finland, as organized by environmental artist Agnes Denes. Called "Tree Mountain-A Living Time Capsule-10,000 Trees-10,000 People-400 Years," the project invites people from around the world to plant a tree which will bear their name and those of their heirs for the next 400 years.

1999: Bangladesh Water Resources Minister Abdur Razzak announced that dwindling water supplies and poor water quality will soon threaten the lives of hundreds of millions of people in South Asia. Razzak noted that 80% of illnesses and 30% of unnatural deaths in the developing countries were caused by drinking polluted water.

What Do I Read Next?

The Back Country (1971) is one of Gary Snyder's most Eastern-influenced collections of poetry. What makes it especially interesting is his blending of East Asian thought and western United States culture.

Probably the most prolific collection of poems dealing with Buddhist thought is the 358-page *Beneath a Single Moon: Buddhism in Contemporary American Poetry,* published in 1991. Edited by Kent Johnson and Craig Paulenich. and with an introduction by Gary Snyder, this massive volume contains dozens of poems by writers from around the world, including Stephen Berg, Diane Di Prima, Allen Ginsberg, and Anthony Piccione.

Most people know author Jack Kerouac for his Beat-movement "bible" *On the Road.* But he is also the author of *Dharma Bums,* an autobiographical work, published in 1958, relating his experiences with Buddhism while living in California in the mid-1950s. The character "Japhy Ryder" - a poet, woodsman, and Buddhist - is actually Kerouac's real-life friend and mentor, Gary Snyder.

American Indian Studies: An Interdisciplinary Approach to Contemporary Issues provides a new and provocative way of looking at many facets of Native American life. Edited by Dane Morrison and published in 1997, this book is a collection of essays by writers drawing upon their expertise in diverse disciplines - economics, education, film, history, linguistics, literature, museum studies, popular culture, and religion - to highlight a particular aspect of the American Indian experience.

Gerald Hausman's *Tunkashila: From the Birth of Turtle Island to the Blood of Wounded Knee* reads more like a complex novel than a collection of fables, folktales, and myths concerning Native Americans. Published in 1994, this book tells the stories of the continent's beginning through 88 myths and 100 illustrations and brings Indian legends to life in the contemporary world.

Robin Attfield's *The Ethics of a Global Environment* is a very accessible, reader-friendly book that discusses the ethical principles of humans to nature, natural resources, and the planet. Attfield offers some startling, future scenarios, including a limited water supply, changing climates, overpopulation, and the destruction of ecosystems.

Further Study

Brody, J. J., *The Anasazi: Ancient Indian People of the American Southwest,* New York: Rizzoli, 1990.

This is an oversized book containing 222 illustrations and text written for the non-specialist. It highlights the land the Anasazi inhabited, their social and cultural rise, their architecture, and their ultimate dispersion throughout the Southwest.

Mails, Thomas E., *The Pueblo Children of the Earth Mother,*

Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1983.

This book provides insight into the ancient Indians even before the Anasazi group settled in America. It tells the story of both the Anasazi and Pueblo Indians, from their roots in Peru in 2000 B.C. to the first Anasazi basket makers in the American Southwest, highlighting their centuries of living at peace with the environment.

Snyder, Gary, *Earth House Hold,* New York: New Directions, 1969.

This is Gary Snyder's first collection of prose, containing both essays and journal entries. Most pieces concentrate on his life and studies in Japan and address issues of wilderness life, community, and the philosophy of Zen Buddhism.

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BOOKRAGS

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Introduction

Purpose of the Book

The purpose of Poetry for Students (PfS) is to provide readers with a guide to understanding, enjoying, and studying novels by giving them easy access to information about the work. Part of Gale's□For Students□ Literature line, PfS is specifically designed to meet the curricular needs of high school and undergraduate college students and their teachers, as well as the interests of general readers and researchers considering specific novels. While each volume contains entries on □classic□ novels

frequently studied in classrooms, there are also entries containing hard-to-find information on contemporary novels, including works by multicultural, international, and women novelists.

The information covered in each entry includes an introduction to the novel and the novel's author; a plot summary, to help readers unravel and understand the events in a novel; descriptions of important characters, including explanation of a given character's role in the novel as well as discussion about that character's relationship to other characters in the novel; analysis of important themes in the novel; and an explanation of important literary techniques and movements as they are demonstrated in the novel.

In addition to this material, which helps the readers analyze the novel itself, students are also provided with important information on the literary and historical background informing each work. This includes a historical context essay, a box comparing the time or place the novel was written to modern Western culture, a critical overview essay, and excerpts from critical essays on the novel. A unique feature of PfS is a specially commissioned critical essay on each novel, targeted toward the student reader.

To further aid the student in studying and enjoying each novel, information on media adaptations is provided, as well as reading suggestions for works of fiction and nonfiction on similar themes and topics. Classroom aids include ideas for research papers and lists of critical sources that provide additional material on the novel.

Selection Criteria

The titles for each volume of PfS were selected by surveying numerous sources on teaching literature and analyzing course curricula for various school districts. Some of the sources surveyed included: literature anthologies; Reading Lists for College-Bound Students: The Books Most Recommended by America's Top Colleges; textbooks on teaching the novel; a College Board survey of novels commonly studied in high schools; a National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) survey of novels commonly studied in high schools; the NCTE's Teaching Literature in High School: The Novel;and the Young Adult Library Services Association (YALSA) list of best books for young adults of the past twenty-five years. Input was also solicited from our advisory board, as well as educators from various areas. From these discussions, it was determined that each volume should have a mix of □classic□ novels (those works commonly taught in literature classes) and contemporary novels for which information is often hard to find. Because of the interest in expanding the canon of literature, an emphasis was also placed on including works by international, multicultural, and women authors. Our advisory board members□educational professionals□ helped pare down the list for each volume. If a work was not selected for the present volume, it was often noted as a possibility for a future volume. As always, the editor welcomes suggestions for titles to be included in future volumes.

How Each Entry Is Organized

Each entry, or chapter, in PfS focuses on one novel. Each entry heading lists the full name of the novel, the author's name, and the date of the novel's publication. The following elements are contained in each entry:

- Introduction: a brief overview of the novel which provides information about its first appearance, its literary standing, any controversies surrounding the work, and major conflicts or themes within the work.
- Author Biography: this section includes basic facts about the author's life, and focuses on events and times in the author's life that inspired the novel in question.
- Plot Summary: a factual description of the major events in the novel. Lengthy summaries are broken down with subheads.
- Characters: an alphabetical listing of major characters in the novel. Each character name is followed by a brief to an extensive description of the character's role in the novel, as well as discussion of the character's actions, relationships, and possible motivation. Characters are listed alphabetically by last name. If a character is unnamed□for instance, the narrator in Invisible Man-the character is listed as □The Narrator□ and alphabetized as □Narrator.□ If a character's first name is the only one given, the name will appear alphabetically by that name. □ Variant names are also included for each character. Thus, the full name □Jean Louise Finch□ would head the listing for the narrator of To Kill a Mockingbird, but listed in a separate cross-reference would be the nickname □Scout Finch.□
- Themes: a thorough overview of how the major topics, themes, and issues are addressed within the novel. Each theme discussed appears in a separate subhead, and is easily accessed through the boldface entries in the Subject/Theme Index.
- Style: this section addresses important style elements of the novel, such as setting, point of view, and narration; important literary devices used, such as imagery, foreshadowing, symbolism; and, if applicable, genres to which the work might have belonged, such as Gothicism or Romanticism. Literary terms are explained within the entry, but can also be found in the Glossary.
- Historical Context: This section outlines the social, political, and cultural climate in which the author lived and the novel was created. This section may include descriptions of related historical events, pertinent aspects of daily life in the culture, and the artistic and literary sensibilities of the time in which the work was written. If the novel is a historical work, information regarding the time in which the novel is set is also included. Each section is broken down with helpful subheads.
- Critical Overview: this section provides background on the critical reputation of the novel, including bannings or any other public controversies surrounding the work. For older works, this section includes a history of how the novel was first received and how perceptions of it may have changed over the years; for more recent novels, direct quotes from early reviews may also be included.
- Criticism: an essay commissioned by PfS which specifically deals with the novel and is written specifically for the student audience, as well as excerpts from previously published criticism on the work (if available).

- Sources: an alphabetical list of critical material quoted in the entry, with full bibliographical information.
- Further Reading: an alphabetical list of other critical sources which may prove useful for the student. Includes full bibliographical information and a brief annotation.

In addition, each entry contains the following highlighted sections, set apart from the main text as sidebars:

- Media Adaptations: a list of important film and television adaptations of the novel, including source information. The list also includes stage adaptations, audio recordings, musical adaptations, etc.
- Topics for Further Study: a list of potential study questions or research topics dealing with the novel. This section includes questions related to other disciplines the student may be studying, such as American history, world history, science, math, government, business, geography, economics, psychology, etc.
- Compare and Contrast Box: an □at-a-glance□ comparison of the cultural and historical differences between the author's time and culture and late twentieth century/early twenty-first century Western culture. This box includes pertinent parallels between the major scientific, political, and cultural movements of the time or place the novel was written, the time or place the novel was set (if a historical work), and modern Western culture. Works written after 1990 may not have this box.
- What Do I Read Next?: a list of works that might complement the featured novel or serve as a contrast to it. This includes works by the same author and others, works of fiction and nonfiction, and works from various genres, cultures, and eras.

Other Features

PfS includes □The Informed Dialogue: Interacting with Literature,□ a foreword by Anne Devereaux Jordan, Senior Editor for Teaching and Learning Literature (TALL), and a founder of the Children's Literature Association. This essay provides an enlightening look at how readers interact with literature and how Poetry for Students can help teachers show students how to enrich their own reading experiences.

A Cumulative Author/Title Index lists the authors and titles covered in each volume of the PfS series.

A Cumulative Nationality/Ethnicity Index breaks down the authors and titles covered in each volume of the PfS series by nationality and ethnicity.

A Subject/Theme Index, specific to each volume, provides easy reference for users who may be studying a particular subject or theme rather than a single work. Significant subjects from events to broad themes are included, and the entries pointing to the specific theme discussions in each entry are indicated in boldface.

Each entry has several illustrations, including photos of the author, stills from film adaptations (if available), maps, and/or photos of key historical events.

Citing Poetry for Students

When writing papers, students who quote directly from any volume of Poetry for Students may use the following general forms. These examples are based on MLA style; teachers may request that students adhere to a different style, so the following examples may be adapted as needed. When citing text from PfS that is not attributed to a particular author (i.e., the Themes, Style, Historical Context sections, etc.), the following format should be used in the bibliography section:

□Night.□ Poetry for Students. Ed. Marie Rose Napierkowski. Vol. 4. Detroit: Gale, 1998. 234-35.

When quoting the specially commissioned essay from PfS (usually the first piece under the □Criticism□ subhead), the following format should be used:

Miller, Tyrus. Critical Essay on □Winesburg, Ohio.□ Poetry for Students. Ed. Marie Rose Napierkowski. Vol. 4. Detroit: Gale, 1998. 335-39.

When quoting a journal or newspaper essay that is reprinted in a volume of PfS, the following form may be used:

Malak, Amin. □Margaret Atwood's □The Handmaid's Tale and the Dystopian Tradition,□ Canadian Literature No. 112 (Spring, 1987), 9-16; excerpted and reprinted in Poetry for Students, Vol. 4, ed. Marie Rose Napierkowski (Detroit: Gale, 1998), pp. 133-36.

When quoting material reprinted from a book that appears in a volume of PfS, the following form may be used:

Adams, Timothy Dow. □Richard Wright: □Wearing the Mask,□ in Telling Lies in Modern American Autobiography (University of North Carolina Press, 1990), 69-83; excerpted and reprinted in Novels for Students, Vol. 1, ed. Diane Telgen (Detroit: Gale, 1997), pp. 59-61.

We Welcome Your Suggestions

The editor of Poetry for Students welcomes your comments and ideas. Readers who wish to suggest novels to appear in future volumes, or who have other suggestions, are cordially invited to contact the editor. You may contact the editor via email at: ForStudentsEditors@gale.com. Or write to the editor at:

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