

The Surrender Tree: Poems of Cuba's Struggle for Freedom Study Guide

The Surrender Tree: Poems of Cuba's Struggle for Freedom by Margarita Engle

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Plot Summary

"The Surrender Tree: Poems of Cuba's Struggle for Freedom" is a book of poems from the perspective of those involved in the wars for Cuba's independence. It reveals what life was like during the nineteenth century for both Cubans and the Spanish that fought for control of this jungle island.

Part One is mainly from the perspective of Rosa. Rosa is a young girl who many believe to be a witch. In reality she is a medicine woman who has a gift of healing with natural remedies. Throughout most of the chapter, Rosa describes the plight of the runaway slaves. They hide in caves but are often caught and run away again. Rosa also spends this first section of the book observing the slavehunter and his son as they catch slaves and collect the ears of those they have killed. The other character who speaks this section is known as Lieutenant Death, the son of the slavehunter. He learns the tricks of his father, as well as his narrow mindset. His last poem reveals the fear he feels regarding his father's work as a slavehunter. The section ends with Rosa's poem. She tends to both slavehunter and slave, as well as wild dogs and tame ones. Unlike the people, the dogs do not see her as a witch; they trust her. She believes it must be difficult to learn to hate.

In Part Two, Rosa continues with her nursing the ill as Cuba is suddenly free. The slaveowners have rebelled against Spain, freeing the slaves and taking up arms against the Spanish Empire. Rosa can hardly believe this has happened. Although freedom has occurred, it does not last for long. Spain does not accept the freeing of slaves, so now all slaves must go into hiding. Farms, homes, and towns are burned by both the Spanish and the rebels, and Rosa wonders if she should fight with weapons or medicine. She chooses to heal. In this section Rosa falls in love and marries a freed slave named Jose. Together they work as nurses. Many of Jose's poems are about Rosa and her work. While some of Rosa's are about the fear she feels for those around her and their future. Lieutenant Death has grown up and hardened his heart against Rosa and the rebels. He vows to kill her. The chapter ends with a peace treaty in which the Spanish still own Cuba. Rosa wonders if the war was worth it.

Part Three is a short section regarding a war that was considered small, although Rosa questions if any war can be considered small when there are lost lives. She sees war as just another form of slavery. Jose sees all they do as a repetition of what has already taken place. Part Four begins with a description of a famous Cuban poet, Marti, who is killed. It is decided by Weyler, a military leader, to force all peasants into reconcentration camps in only eight days. All other found in the country after eight days would be killed. A new character, Silvia, is introduced in this chapter. She escapes from the camp and joins Rosa in healing others. In the end of this section one of the rebel leaders has been killed, but, on a positive note, Weyler has not succeeded in destroying the rebellion and is sent back to Spain. The camps are now open.

Part Five describes the involvement of the Americans in the Cuba war for independence. In the end, the Americans take over control of Cuba. Although it is not



the freedom the Cubans had hoped for, it still gives them a chance to hope for the future. The final section describes the author's connection to the Cuban fight for freedom, the historical facts that are connected to this story, and a chronological list of historical events pertaining to this story.



Introduction and Part One, The Names of the Flowers, 1850-51

Introduction and Part One, The Names of the Flowers, 1850-51 Summary

"The Surrender Tree" is a book of poems that tell the story of Cuba's quest for freedom. Each part of the book tells of a period of time in which the Cubans are frequently at war with the Spanish. The book ends with peace but now with new ownership of Cuba; the Americans now control this troubled island nation.

In the introduction, the author describes October 10, 1868, the day the Cuban plantation owners freed their slaves and declared independence from Spain. War was a part of daily life for the next several decades. On February 16, 1896, Cuban peasants were forced into reconcentration camps or, if found still in the countryside after eight days, killed. Two of the refugees were the author's great-grandparents.

In Part One, The Names of the Flowers, 1850-1851, there are poems with two titles, either "Rosa" or "Lieutenant Death." The first "Rosa" is from the perspective of a girl who others think of as a "child-witch." She is interested in learning how her people cure the sick using natural remedies. She compares herself to the feared bee, which is not dangerous; its job is simply to provide honey. In the second "Rosa," Rosa compares the runaways to wolves, or wild dogs. They survive in hiding through protective magic and fantastic tales. In the third "Rosa," she tells of the money made for capturing runaways. Once caught, the sick are taken to the speaker and other women, while the healthy either go to work or run away again.

In the first "Lieutenant Death," the speaker is the son of a man whose job is to capture runaways. His father does not think of the runaways as people, only as property. Once captured, they are put to work. Those that kill themselves are chopped into four pieces and put into four separate cages by the speaker's father. This is thought to keep the spirit caged, which creates fear in those who might consider suicide an escape.

In the fourth "Rosa," Rosa says she loves night in the reconcentration camp. She describes the sounds she hears that help her fall into dreamless sleep. In the fifth "Rosa," she gives the names of places the runaways hide. She also describes the boy, who they call Lieutenant Death; he helps his father create lies that make the runaways seem more dangerous and powerful than they really are.

In the second "Lieutenant Death," the boy is corrected for considering the girl even remotely human, like the boy and his father. The man tells the girl, who he considers a witch, to heal his son. The boy grins because his wound makes him seem brave.



In the sixth "Rosa," she says the slave hunter and his son stay away for many months, only to return in November with their own pack of dogs for hunting runaways.

In the third "Lieutenant Death," the wanted posters are described. The boy wonders how all these slaves managed to find hideouts.

In the seventh "Rosa," the Festival of Three Kings takes place. The slaves are given small gifts by their owners and feel a sense of hope. In the eighth "Rosa," Rosa and the other girls discuss the nickname of runaways and magical stories of these fascinating people.

In the fourth "Lieutenant Death," the boy discusses how the runaways must want to be resold and often are caught again and again. He does not understand why they do not give up.

In the ninth "Rosa," she describes the Chinese slaves that also run away. They are skillful at catching various water creatures including crocodiles. Rosa fears the swamps because she is afraid the mermaids will lure her to the water and turn her into a mermaid. In the tenth "Rosa," the slave hunter wants to buy Rosa to bring her with him as he catches slaves, so she may heal them as soon as they are captured. In the eleventh "Rosa," Rosa's owner refuses the offer of the slave hunter because she is needed to heal the slaves in the barracoons. She is relieved by this news, because she does not want to be a part of the capturing of slaves.

In the fifth "Lieutenant Death," the boy describes the weapons made and stolen by the runaways.

In the twelfth "Rosa," she weeps when she learns her owner is loaning her to the slave hunter. In the thirteenth "Rosa," she describes the dangerous and painful climb up a cliff wall to raid the hideouts of the runaways. She is forced to watch as the slave hunter collects the ears of the dead runaways, with some of them being people she had known.

In the sixth "Lieutenant Death," the boy admits he is afraid of many things and wonders what his father would think if he found out his son was scared.

In the fourteenth "Rosa," she describes those she tends to after the raid. She describes the dogs who seem to like her; she says hatred must be a hard thing to learn.

Introduction and Part One, The Names of the Flowers, 1850-51 Analysis

The introduction gives the reader an overview of the entire book and the lives of the Cubans at this time. It gives the reader a sense of what life was like in Cuba. It also reveals the author's feelings about Cuba at this time, as well as Cuban people. She seems to be proud of her people for the fight they put up throughout these many years.



She also shows the outrage she feels for the way these people were treated. It is also hinted by the author that some of the characters in the poems might be her great-grandparents.

In Part One, *The Names of the Flowers*, 1850-51, the poems are from the perspectives of Rosa, a young Cuban slave, and Lieutenant Death, as he is known by the slaves, the slave hunter's son. Based on Rosa's poems, she is a great healer who cares for all creatures. Through her healing powers, she has a connection with nature; these healing powers also lead some to believe her to be a witch. Much of Rosa's role in the poems is to give the reader information about life in Cuba at this time and the feelings of the slaves.

Lieutenant Death is a young, impressionable boy, who is not comfortable with his father's role as slave hunter. The boy's poems show the mindset of one who is in power in this country. They do not see the slaves as human and see nothing wrong with having power over others. Throughout this chapter, the boy is taught by his father how, as a slave hunter, he should think.



Part Two, The Ten Years' War, 1868-78, p. 25-45

Part Two, The Ten Years' War, 1868-78, p. 25-45 Summary

In Part Two, The Ten Years' War, 1868-78, p. 25-45, the poems now include the titles "Jose" and "Lieutenant-General Valeriano Weyler y Nicolae Marquis of Tenerife, Empire of Spain." In the first "Rosa," Rosa forgets she is grown as she collects medicinal herbs. This act brings her peace. In the second "Rosa," the plantation owners free their slaves and rebel against the Spanish. Rosa cannot believe this has happened so suddenly.

In the third "Rosa," the plantations are burning and Rosa wonders if she should fight as a soldier or as a nurse. She decides to serve as a nurse. In the fourth "Rosa," the city of Bayamo is burned by both the former slave owners and their former slaves. A song, "La Bayaneja," remembers this event. This too becomes Rosa's nickname. She watches as he old life burns away with uncertainties about the future. In the fifth "Rosa," the Spanish do not accept the liberation of the slaves, so the slaves must flee and go into hiding, just as before.

In the sixth "Rosa," hurricane season is described as a time when all are affected. In the seventh "Rosa," Rosa feels old from all the hardships she has faced, but she is still young enough to fall in love with Jose, a freed slave. They agree to marry and work as nurses together. In the 8th "Rosa," the forest has its own natural music. Rosa and Jose travel together and witness much destruction. Jose carries a small weapon, their only protection. Fortunately, unlike the Spanish soldiers, Jose and Rosa move silently. In the ninth "Rosa," as Rosa and Jose are almost caught, they catch the soldier call out a made up word. They are inspired to use this word as the name for their new warrior tribe.

In the first "Jose," Rosa is watched by the sick as she lures the tiny bats outside with a gourd filled with fireflies. Everything in the forest is reversed; Jose laughs at this.

In the first "Lieutenant Death," he cannot believe the slaves can be free. He searches relentlessly for slaves, specifically Rosa. He wants her dead because she cures the rebels so they may continue to fight.

In the first "Lieutenant-General Valeriano Weyler y Nicolau, Marquis of Tenerife, Empire of Spain," the speaker will not rest until the witch, Rosa, is dead and the rebels are defeated. If the slave hunter cannot catch her, he will; he will cut off her ear and use it as proof that the rebels in Cuba are doomed.

In the tenth "Rosa," Rosa admits she is afraid of slave hunters, especially Lieutenant Death, who has been hunting and haunting her for so many years. She cannot believe



how stubborn he is; she wishes he would switch sides to be a determined nurse, fighting death.

In the second "Jose," Rosa must stay hidden, because her fame endangers them. As Jose goes out to collect pineapples, he comes across an injured soldier. He tends to him and the boy asks to switch sides. He had been taken from his family in Spain to fight. They decide to switch uniforms to try to end the war.

In the eleventh "Rosa," Rosa describes the experimental process that is medicine. They are constantly learning.

In the second "Lieutenant Death," Lieutenant Death describes his hunt for the witch and her rebels.

Part Two, The Ten Years' War, 1868-78, p. 25-45 Analysis

In Part Two, The Ten Years' War, 1868-78, p. 25-45, the characters have begun to age. Rosa is now accompanied by her husband, Jose, who supports her in her work. Rosa's fame begins to grow. Although she does consider fighting the war as a soldier, she decides to fight death as a nurse instead. This fame as a nurse has both positive and negative consequences. Her healing brings many peace, but her fame also endangers her and those she tends to. Jose must be on a constant look-out to protect her.

Lieutenant Death is one who actively is searching for Rosa. It is clear at this point in the story that Lieutenant Death was swayed by his father's beliefs regarding the inferiority of others. His desire to see Rosa dead is almost obsessive. He is a very stubborn man, and it is unfortunate that he does not use this strong will to help those who are in need. This inability to feel for those who suffer seems to have been developed in him during the time between the first and second parts of the story. Early on he felt fear and called Rosa a girl; this humanity must have been taught out of him as he grew to take his father's place as a slave hunter.

Jose's poems often have to do with Rosa. It is obvious that she is very important to him. He spends much of his time doing the work necessary to allow her to continue healing those in need.



Part Two, The Ten Years' War, 1868-78, p. 46-76

Part Two, The Ten Years' War, 1868-78, p. 46-76 Summary

In Part Two, The Ten Years' War, 1868-78, p. 46-76, the events surrounding the Ten Years' War continue. In the first "Rosa," the people Rosa and Jose heal are very grateful for being healed. They offer what they can as payment although Rosa and Jose do not believe they should be paid for what nature offers. Rosa wants God to give her peace of mind.

In the first "Jose," Jose describes the cave they have moved the patients to. He compares the statues Rosa feels he and she are, holding up the roof of an old building, to their holding up a "roof of hope" (p. 48).

In the second "Rosa," the cave reminds Rosa of the beginning of the war. She describes the make-shift town that was built but could not be fully enjoyed.

In the second "Jose," Jose speaks of the life he dreams of, one that is filled with plenty of food, shelter, and beautiful landscapes to enjoy.

In the third "Rosa," the names of Rosa's caves are given. The fear these people feel seems timeless, just like the many lost battles.

In "Lieutenant-General Valeriano Weyler y Nicolau, Marquis of Tenerife, Empire of Spain," the speaker sees Cuba as their property that the rebels want to steal. So, the land and property is burned, the barracks lay empty, and the land seems to consist mostly of mud and mosquitoes.

In the fourth "Rosa," Rosa describes the various ways she communicates with those she treats. She learns basic words in other languages, creates her own secret codes, and nature guides her in understanding others.

In the third "Jose," Jose describes the two most famous mambi generals, known as the Fox and the Lion. They both have their own reasons for admiring Rosa and her work.

In the fifth "Rosa," the Lion and the Fox visit the many hospital huts and caves. Rosa now wears a gun to appease Jose.

In "Lieutenant Death," Lieutenant Death finds Rosa from the branches of a tree. He is surprised by how human she seems for someone so famous. As he takes aim, she disappears and he wonders how she does this.



In the sixth "Rosa," Lieutenant Death falls from the tree and Rosa finds him in the hospital. She is unsure if she should heal him or let him die. She chooses to heal.

In the fourth "Lieutenant Death," Lieutenant Death sneaks away, still healing. He now knows where Rosa heals the injured, and he can sell this information.

In the seventh "Rosa," the injured have to be moved to a new location to avoid the arrival of the soldiers. She wonders if she will ever be safe and be able to sleep soundly.

In the fourth "Jose," Jose is glad they have escaped safely, yet again. There is still hope.

In the eighth "Rosa," Rosa describes the disgusting, scary interior of the cave which reminds her of her childhood as a slave. In the ninth "Rosa," they adjust to life in the cave where only Fox and Lion know where they are. In the tenth "Rosa," Rosa shows a positive attitude. Many of the sick are healed and return to fight, and those who used to be their owners are now their comrades. They are safely hidden and she is known for what she is, a nurse, not a witch.

In the fifth "Jose," he recalls that Rosa remembers the names of all she heals. That is all she can offer them, the simple medicine and a piece of her memory.

In the eleventh "Rosa," a peace treaty has been signed. Not much seems to have changed and Rosa sees the war as a waste. Rosa is still considered a slave and Lieutenant Death is still powerful.

Part Two, The Ten Years' War, 1868-78, p. 46-76 Analysis

In Part Two, The Ten Years' War, 1868-78, p. 46-47, Rosa comes across as very serious and very worried. She often does not sleep well and continues to hope for sleep without nightmares. She continues her work as a healer but seems very discouraged by the events that surround her daily life.

Jose, on the other hand, seems to have a more positive attitude. He speaks of his dreams of the future, dreams that Rosa seems to be tired of having. Jose seems to be able to accept the fact that these are dreams for the future, while Rosa wants those dreams to be reality. Also in Jose's poems, he continues to focus a great deal on Rosa. This continues to emphasize her position as the protagonist of this series of poems, and it also shows how much he cares for her and her work.

Lieutenant Death is injured and is taken to Rosa's hospital to be healed. He allows her to heal him, but then sneaks away and plans to sell the location of her hospital. This event shows how truly stubborn and unkind Lieutenant Death is. Even through her healing Rosa could not convince Lieutenant Death that she was not a witch and simply

wants peace. He sees her kindness as a weakness in her, much like the fear and humanity he once had most likely was seen as a weakness by his father.



Part Three, The Little War, 1878-80

Part Three, The Little War, 1878-80 Summary

In Part Three, The Little War, 1878-80, the poems include those of "Rosa," "Lieutenant Death," and "Jose." In the first "Rosa," Rosa describes the war as starting too soon, being both brief and futile, and feeling like another form of slavery.

In "Jose," Jose compares the war to "a lonely child's game," in which they are all still wounded and hiding (p. 70).

In the second "Rosa," Rosa describes the free life she and her husband Jose lead when they are in between wars. The only worry is the nearby slave hunter with their name on a list.

In the second "Jose," mothers come to them asking for their help in finding their children. He responds that if he knew how to find them, he would know how to find the part of his mind left in battle.

In the third "Rosa," Rosa explains what is required to heal wounds; these steps are a mixture of both practical and spiritual acts.

In the third "Jose," Jose is teased by a child for being a nurse. Jose sees his medical knowledge as power.

In "Lieutenant Death," the boy has grown into a man and has one wish, which is to kill Rosa, Jose, and the rebels they save.

In the fourth "Rosa," Rosa wonders how a war can be called little, because no matter the amount of death and destruction, it still matter a great deal to those it affects. She, unlike her husband, does not see liberation and freedom in her future.

Part Three, The Little War, 1878-80 Analysis

In Part Three, The Little War, 1878-80, Rosa is still burdened by her work and the feelings of futility and fear. These feelings contrast the free life that she and her husband have in between wars.

Jose, unlike Rosa, seems to focus more on the power that his work as a nurse gives him. Although he tends to be more positive, there are moments when he too is discouraged by the situation with which they are faced. When mothers ask for their help in finding their children, he tells them that if he could find them, wouldn't he be able to find the part of him that he left on the battlefield. This shows that he is burdened by his inabilities just as Rosa is.

Lieutenant Death has grown into a man with only one desire, to kill Rosa. His main reason for wanting to kill her is that she saves rebels. He stubbornly believes that by killing her he could be victorious over the rebels; he seems to believe she is his what is stopping him from being victorious.



Part Four, The War of Independence, 1895-98, p. 79-99

Part Four, The War of Independence, 1895-98, p. 79-99 Summary

In Part Four, The War of Independence, 1895-98, p. 79-99, "Silvia" and "Captain-General Valeriano Weyler y Nicolau, Marquis of Tenerife, Empire of Spain" are added as titles. In the first "Rosa," she describes the life of an influential Cuban poet named Marti. He fought for freedom with words and inspired the rebel leaders. As a teenager, he had been arrested for his writings. He died in battle and Rosa says she "cannot save the poet from bullets" (p. 80).

In "Jose," Jose talks about what is once again happening. Fox and Lion continue to burn the fields, Jose guards Rosa's hospitals, and they travel invisibly through Spanish lines.

In "Lieutenant Death," he is unable to believe that people of various races and social groups have agreed to fight side by side. He sees that all his slave hunting skills may be lost. He longs to retire but not until he has killed the witch.

In "Captain-General Valeriano Weyler y Nicolau, Marquis of Tenerife, Empire of Spain," he has promised Spain he would end the rebellion in thirty days. He discusses his plans, which include sending the peasants to reconcentration camps. This will keep control of the land and make peasants feel safe. Anyone found in the country after eight days would be killed.

In the second "Rosa," she sees Weyler as a madman for believing all peasants can get to town in eight days. It is impossible.

In "Silvia," Silvia is eleven years old; her father is dead and her mother is ill. She learns of the eight-day rumor and wants to see if it is true. The Spanish take everything her family owns. She leads her family, empty-handed, away from the farm with thoughts of the legendary Rosa. In the second "Silvia," Silvia says her grandmother told her the tales of Rosa and how to find the caves. She is young and unsure if she can convince Rosa she is capable of learning how to heal.

In the third "Rosa," Rosa watches the horrific acts of the soldiers from her tree perch. All captives are herded into the camp which is just another prison.

In the third "Silvia," she knows that she must be strong for her mother as she enters the reconcentration camp with her family. She still thinks about Rosa and her caves.



In the fourth "Rosa," at night, Rosa slips out of the tree hideout wishing she could save the refugees. Some refugees find Rosa and her people and get help.

In the second "Jose," he observes Rosa as she eases the fear of children and the pain of a man. Jose says he is the only one who can see Rosa's sorrow and "the exhaustion created by endless hope" (p. 93).

In the fourth "Silvia," Silvia describes the effects of the crowded camp on her family and others as she watches the holes where weapons are aimed at the refugees at all times.

In the fifth "Rosa," there are many who are ill. Rosa lists various remedies, but the one she wants is the cure for sorrow and fear.

In the fifth "Silvia," a special tree is meant for hanging those who try to escape. The refugees live in poorly-constructed shacks and suffer from many illnesses. She says this camp is what is left of humanity when the humanity is taken away.

In the third "Jose," he says there is no time for fear. They joke about the soldiers and pretend to obey the Spanish Empire. Their lives are full of secrets.

In the sixth "Silvia," Silvia is twelve and her mother has died. A man comes to take away her body and she asks him if he knows how to find Rosa. He says she must first escape the camp. In the next "Silvia," the oxcart that comes every day to collect the dead is heaven-sent to Silvia; he always brings her smuggled food.

Part Four, The War of Independence, 1895-98, p. 79-99 Analysis

In Part Four, The War of Independence, 1895-98, p. 79-99, a poet named Jose Marti is first mentioned. He is an inspiration for those involved in the rebellion. This man and his work are examples of how powerful a writer and his words can be. His life also shows how that power can quickly be taken away by fear and hatred.

In Jose's poems, he talks about what is once again happening. This phrase about what is happening again is repeated several times to put an emphasis on how annoying and tiresome these repeated events are. Jose's poems continue to focus a great deal on Rosa; they show how courageous and kind she is, but they also show the sadness and fear she feels on a daily basis.

A new character is brought into this section of the book. Her poems show her to be a strong, young girl who must carry the burden of caring for her family including a widowed mother. She also speaks of Rosa, who she has only heard of. This foreshadows the meeting of these two women later in the story. She, like Rosa, is both brave and fearful. At the end of this section, her escape is foreshadowed during the meeting she has with the man who drives the oxcart that takes away the dead.



Part Four, The War of Independence, 1895-98, p. 100-120

Part Four, The War of Independence, 1895-98, p. 100-120 Summary

In Part Four, The War of Independence, 1895-98, p. 100-120, Rosa explains her medicinal practices. Her biggest fear is being useless, so she does all she can to heal and mask the smell of death.

In "Jose," he says the Fox asks Rosa to choose twelve men to build a bigger, better hospital. The Fox believes she is very strong; she wants to chop the wood for the new hospital.

In "Silvia," her brothers have now died. The camp a place of constant starvation and death. She hides in the oxcart, wondering if she will escape and where she will go. In the next poem it is night and Silvia is escaping. The driver points her the way to Rosa. In the third "Silvia," she is led by the cigar given to her by the oxcart driver to imitate a firefly and guide her to Rosa. In the fourth "Silvia," she worries about learning medicine. She also wonders if Rosa is real. In the fifth "Silvia," she comes across a man and says she wants to help Rosa. He tells her to follow him.

In the second "Rosa," she describes Silvia' she is skinny but resisting food. She does not want to eat when others are starving.

Silvia has arrived at the hospital thinks Rosa is a bully for forcing her to eat soup and causing her pain as she tends to her injuries. When she is told she probably has malaria like most Cubans, Silvia imagines carrying a suitcase full of diseases on her ocean escape.

In the third "Rosa," Silvia is healing and Rosa begins to teach her ways to heal. She also shows Silvia where various things are made and where the children are educated. In the next poem, Rosa compares the dream of the young to light, floating wood. Her own dreams and those of the old are rock-hard, impermeable pieces of wood.

In the seventh "Silvia," Silvia learns about her new world from Rosa and cannot imagine another home. She compares it to a castle.

In the fifth "Rosa," Silvia tells Rosa of her grandparents' caged birds. The life of these captive creatures is compared to her own. In the sixth "Rosa," the Fox names her the first woman Captain of Military Health. She thinks of all the forgotten, nameless nurse that came before her.



In the second "Jose," he hears warnings that Lieutenant Death is still lurking about. Jose watches out for him. Although Rosa healed him physically, she was unable to heal him spiritually.

In "Lieutenant Death," Lieutenant Death gets closer and closer to Rosa. He thinks she is crazy for healing the Spanish soldiers. They are then let go with food to survive. He blames this kindness and mercy for their switching sides and becoming Cubans.

In the seventh "Rosa," Rosa listens to the nature around her as she travels between two hospitals.

In the second "Lieutenant Death," he camps beneath a shelf of rock; he knows he is close to Rosa. He destroys a flower to keep the honeybees from it.

Part Four, The War of Independence, 1895-98, p. 100-120 Analysis

In Part Four, The War of Independence, 1895-99, p. 100-120, Rosa continues to be very conscious of her fears. She mentions that her biggest fear is being useless. This explains a great deal about her behavior throughout the story. She works hard and is willing to experiment if it means that what she does is useful in some way. Rosa shows that she continues to change as she ages through her analogy about wood. She sees herself as hard to destroy but very heavy, unlike the very impressionable young who can float through life on dreams. This shows that she believes she cannot be influenced, but it also shows that she feels a great burden with no relief in sight.

By this time Silvia has escaped and finds Rosa; her stubbornness and independence is clearly shown when she calls Rosa a bully for forcing her to eat and receive medical attention. Their relationship does start off uneasy, but by the end of this section, Rosa is teaching Silvia how to become a nurse. She also begins speaking in Rosa's poems, which most often in the past were about Rosa and from Rosa's point of view. This reveals the relationship that is building between these two women.

Jose has very little to say in this section. The main poem pertains to Lieutenant Death, who continues to be a threat.

Lieutenant Death is getting closer and closer to Rosa. He continues to not understand kindness through his comment about Rosa being crazy for having mercy on the Spanish soldiers and his destruction of a flower so that a bee could not get pollen from it.



In Part Four, The War of Independence, 1895-98, p. 121-138

In Part Four, The War of Independence, 1895-98, p. 121-138 Summary

In Part Four, The War of Independence, 1895-98, p. 121-138, in "Silvia," Silvia compares the green hills to music. Each creature has its own tune. These melodies show her how to evade soldiers.

In "Rosa," Rosa is so afraid of being heard, that she silently guides her horse without conventional equipment to keep it quieter.

In "Lieutenant Death," he searches caves for Rosa but cannot find her. He runs out of the cave; he wonders if she has cursed him.

In the second "Silvia," she compares the old funerary fanfares before the war to the barely notices burials today. She also wonders about the young Spanish king and his ignorance regarding this war.

In the second "Lieutenant Death," he describes the jungle that surrounds him. He is feverish, lost, and alone in the vast jungle.

In "Jose," Jose says there is very little food left. He says that the child said her grandmother had told her how to cure sadness. Suck on an orange and let the peels take your sadness away on the sea.

In the second "Rosa," a woman brings her sick boy through a hole in the hospital roof because the crowd outside to get in was so large. The war is compared to a growing, stretching serpent.

In the third "Silvia," she bandages the wounds of young Spanish soldiers who are very grateful for anything she can do for them. In the next "Silvia," she imagines making a large stew that takes many cooks. This magically helps her fall asleep thinking of her family and not food.

In Captain-General Valeriano Weyler y Nicolau, Marquis of Tenerife, Empire of Spain, he says he practices the art of the lance game, in which he rides around and around on a wooden horse, and plans on purchasing a mechanical carousel when the war is won.

In the fifth "Silvia," she says the most amazing thing happened. A man came to present the Fox with a sword made by Tiffany. When she asked why this newspaper reporter and his paper would find Cuba so interesting, she responded that tales of suffering



always sell newspapers, because those who read the papers are so far removed from the horror of the suffering.

In the sixth "Silvia," she describes some of the young boys and girls who have important roles in the rebel military.

In the second "Jose," Jose describes the various nicknames of the rebels. Most of the nicknames are good ones, with one exception. Maja is the nickname given to cowards. In the next poem, Jose compares war to a game of blind hen, or hide-and-seek.

In the seventh "Silvia," she describes the brave nurses who run onto the battlefield when the rest flee. She says she is learning how to stay too busy to worry about death.

In the third "Rosa," Rosa describes how the children used the bees to scare away the soldiers. They celebrate by eating honey and reading verses by Jose Marti.

In the fourth "Jose," soon after the beehive victory, someone betrays the Lion and he is killed. Only the Fox is left to lead.

In the eighth "Silvia," Silvia cannot decide if she should be happy that Weyler was sent back to Spain for not being able to complete his mission or be sad for the death of the Lion. The camps are now open and survivors can leave if they have the strength to leave.

In Part Four, The War of Independence, 1895-98, p. 121-138 Analysis

In Part Four, The War of Independence, 1895-98, p. 121-138, nature is again compared to music. This comparison has been made several times throughout the book. Both Silvia and Rosa mention the unique tunes of each creature and how those tunes help them to find medicinal plants and evade soldiers.

Lieutenant Death continues his hunt for Rosa, but the closer he gets to her, the more discouraged he seems to become. He begins to wonder if she has placed a curse on him. He then becomes feverish and finds himself lost, scared, and alone in the jungle. This is the last that is heard from Lieutenant Death; this fever hints at his probable death in the jungle.

The other main characters in the book continue their work. They discuss the events taking place, including the liberation of the camps and the death of the Lion. The section ends bittersweet. Freedom seems to be a real possibility, but not without many tragic consequences.



Part Five, The Surrender Tree, 1898-99

Part Five, The Surrender Tree, 1898-99 Summary

In Part Five, The Surrender Tree, 1898-99, Rosa describes the bombing of a U.S. battleship.

In "Jose," he describes how, after the bombing of the U.S. battleship Maine, Spain no longer cares for its army in Cuba. Thousands of deserters come to the rebels for help; they wish to switch sides.

In "Silvia," foreign journalists have arrived; only Jose refuses to be photographed or sketched. He had heard of a man harmed by a camera and did not want the same to happen to him. Silvia believes the real reason is that he wanted to keep the location of the hospitals hidden.

In the second "Rosa," the countryside is destroyed, and rumors fly around about the involvement of the U.S. Some believe they are here to help, others think they are here only to extend the war.

In the second "Silvia," she describes the Rough Riders, or Weary Walkers as they are called by Jose. Some of them are dark men who were told they could not get sick because of their skin color. Life in Cuba has erased that belief.

In the third "Rosa," Silvia begins to learn English and Rosa wonders why the white and black Americans are in separate brigades, since when they die they are all buried together in a mass grave.

In the second "Jose," Jose serves as a guide for the Rough Riders. Rosa refuses Western medicine, so many of the sick Rough Riders are treated on their own ships. Rosa is right about the dangers of this medicine.

In the fourth "Rosa," explains how Gomez, the Fox, is an excellent leader. She also gives thanks to those brave farmers who did not move to the reconcentration camps; they are the reason why Rosa and the rebels have food.

In the third "Silvia," she and Cricket, a young boy, watch as the Americans write letters home; they barely know how to read or write. One American says he is writing a letter to his wife to describe how kind and fair Rosa has been.

In the fifth "Rosa," she describes the camp refugees who wander weak and aimless. She describes the American nurses, like Clara Barton, the famous Red Cross nurse. The nurse gives her a winged white hat that is the hat of the American nurses.

In the fourth "Silvia," she describes the Lakota Sioux nuns who are a part of the U.S. Army nurses.



In the sixth "Rosa," she describes the uncomfortable bed she slept on in the cave, where it was easy to imagine peace in the future and past. Now that she sleeps on a real bed, she dreams that peace is of today.

In the third "Jose," Jose does not want to give his wife the news that, although Spain is defeated, Cuba is not free. The Americans have taken over.

In the seventh "Rosa," Rosa is upset that the Cubans helped the Americans win; they were inspired by other American victories. They had helped the Americans have victory over all Cubans.

In the fourth "Jose," he describes the surrender that takes place between Spain and the Americans. Not even the Fox is invited to this ceremony under the majestic kapok tree. The American flag, not the Cuban flag, is raised up.

In the eighth "Rosa," Silvia has decided to help the Sioux nuns build their orphanage. Rosa and Jose decide to continue healing others. Although this is not the peace they expected, it may help the children of Cuba find ways of feeling free.

In the fifth "Silvia," she says she feels like a child again. The war is over and she does not know about the behavior? Should she be happy? She knows this is not the peace she had dreamed of, but it does give her the chance to imagine a happy future.

Part Five, The Surrender Tree, 1898-99 Analysis

In Part Five, The Surrender Tree, 1898-99, the U.S. has come to the aid of the rebels. The main characters in this book are both suspicious and curious about these new arrivals. They begin to learn English and make friends with the Americans only to find out that the U.S. has not come to give Cuba to the Cubans. It has come to take Cuba for itself. The book ends bittersweet, just as many other events in this story have ended. The Cubans are now free of the Spanish but must deal with the Americans. The book does end with hope for the future, though. The main characters in this book feel that, although freedom did not come how they expected it, there may still be hope for future generations of Cubans to find happy futures.



Author's Note, Historical Note, Chronology

Author's Note, Historical Note, Chronology Summary

In the Author's Note, the author describes the stories her grandmother would tell of the desolate life she had led in Cuba. War had all but destroyed the landscape and any hope for the future. Although there was much destruction and sadness, the author also describes the love and joyfulness that still existed and exists today. She describes the hope that was felt by her great-grandmother, who was young during the wars for independence and the hope that is felt by her cousin Milagros' young children.

In the Historical Note, the only truly fictional characters are Silvia and the man who drives the oxcart. The other characters are historical figures and a part of Cuban history. Although Rosa and Jose were famous for their hospitals, very little is known about their daily lives, so the author admits to taking great liberties in recreating their lives. What is known about Rosa is that she was buried with full military honors.

There was a man known as Lieutenant Death who was a slave hunter, but the author has created a connection between him and Rosa that did not necessarily exist. There also is not evidence that he played an important role in the Spanish military. Other characters, such as Cricket, are based on the journals of soldiers and war correspondents.

Weyler's reconcentration camps did exist; the author describes the over-crowding, hunger, and tragedy that was a part of life in these camps. After Spain ceded Cuba to the U.S., Weyler became a Minister of War. Ever since this time concentration camps have been used to control civilian populations.

Cuba's third war for independence is known in the U.S. as the Spanish-American War. It is the first war in which trench fighting and guerrilla warfare tactics were used. It is also the first time women were involved in military pursuits. It was also known as the "journalists war," because many journalists came from the U.S. to write stories and take photographs and sketches of those involved in the war to promote U.S. involvement in the war.

In Chronology, the author lists the dates and descriptions of early independence movements, Cuba's final war for independence from Spain, and postwar events.

Author's Note, Historical Note, Chronology Analysis

This final section's purpose is to provide the reader with some background information about the author's reasons for writing this book and who the poem's characters were. It is used as proof that, although the author took many liberties when writing these poems,

many of the characters were real and the events that take place in the poems are based on actual events in Cuba's history.

This section also gives the reader information about the events in the poem and to what they led. In the book, the war ends with the giving of Cuba to the U.S., but this section reveals the promotion of Weyler, as well as other events that took place during the war and afterwards.

This information shows the reader how significant the Spanish-American War was and its influence on battle tactics for future wars. It also foreshadows the importance of journalism during wartime and its influence on military campaigns and the beliefs of civilians. Journalism can be a truthful form of expression, in which war is shown for the horror that it is, as well as propaganda that is not altogether accurate for the sake of promoting a certain cause.



Characters

Rosa/Rosario Castellanos Castellanos

Rosa, le Bayamesa, is an historical figure who was born between 1834 and 1840. She is known for creating hospitals in Cuba during the wars for independence. Some of these hospitals included mobile units, thatched huts, and caves. She believed her gift of healing came from God, therefore she did not accept payment for her green medicine. When she died in September of 1907 she was buried with full military honors.

Not much is known about the real Rosa's daily routines, so Engle takes many liberties when creating this story about the famous Rosa. The author recreates Rosa as a kind woman who chose healing over killing. She also was a woman of many sorrows and fears.

The book begins as she is a young girl just learning how to heal using natural remedies. She is called a witch by those who do not understand her powers of healing. As the book progresses, so does her fame as a healer. This fame is both good and bad; she is able to help many, but her fame also puts her and her patients in danger. In the second section of the book, Rosa has married Jose, a freed slave. They work together as nurses.

The poems take the reader on a journey through the years that Cuba experienced war; Rosa spent these years fighting death and tending to all who were near her, both Spanish soldier and rebel alike. The last poem of Rosa's ends with her feelings that peace is not paradise but there is hope for the future.

Lieutenant Death

Lieutenant Death begins the story as a young boy who learns the slave catching trade from his father. He spends the majority of the book searching for Rosa. His one goal is to end the rebellion by killing Rosa.

According to history there was a slavehunter known as Lieutenant Death but there is no evidence that he assisted the Spanish military or pursued Rosa.

Jose

Jose was Rosa's husband who assisted her in nursing the sick. He also helped to protect her, her hospitals, and the ill. Many of his poems are about Rosa and her work.



Silvia

Silvia is a young girl who loses her family to disease and starvation in the reconcentration camp. She runs away and joins Rosa, learning to heal with green medicine. She is one of the few characters in the book who is fictional.

Lieutenant-General/Colonel-General Valeriano Weyler y Nicola

This character, known as the Butcher, fought for Spain by attempting to control the rebellion in Cuba. He was sent back to Spain when his actions were not successful. He implemented the eight-day policy for placing all peasants in reconcentration camps. 10 to 30 percent of the island's population died in those camps.

Sisters of Shade, Flag Captain Girl, and Cricket

These characters are all based on descriptions in the diaries of soldiers and war correspondents. These characters are all young people who join the rebel cause.

U.S. Cavalrymen/Rough Riders

These American soldiers fought alongside the Cuban rebels to successfully end Spanish control of Spain. This war is known in the U.S. as the Spanish-American War.

U.S. Nurses

These characters include people of many races and cultures. These women included Clara Barton, the famous Red Cross nurse, and Sioux nuns. They come to help both Cubans and American soldiers. One woman, Josefina Two Bears, vows to take care of the camp orphans.

The Lion/Antonio Maceo

This character was a rebel leader who was known to be powerful and calm. He is killed during one of the wars.

The Fox/Maximo Gomez

This character was a rebel leader who was a Spanish soldier who became a rebel.



Lakota Sioux nuns who are a part of the U.S. Army nurses.

Josefina Two Bears promises to take care of all the orphans from the camps.

The Slavehunter

This character is Lieutenant Death's father who taught him how to hunt slaves and not consider them to be people.

Slave Owners

These characters freed the slaves when they revolted against Spanish rule.

Slaves

These people were released by the landowning Cubans but were still considered slaves by Spain. Many made both successful and unsuccessful attempts to run away.

Cuban Healers

These people used green medicine to heal and treat the ill.



Objects/Places

Cuba

This is the island owned by Spain and fought for by the Cuban rebels and Americans.

Jungle

This is where Rosa finds many of her medicinal plants. She compares the plants and animals to music.

Cave

This is the location of many of Rosa's hospitals.

U.S. Battleship Maine

This was bombed and led to the inclusion of the U.S. in the Cuban war for independence.

Spain

This is the home of the nation that controls Cuba.

U.S.

This is the country to whom Spain cedes control of Cuba.

The Rebellion

This is the fight for Cuban control over Cuba. It consists of both former slaves and former slave owners.

The Surrender Tree

This is the tree that stood in the spot where Spain ceded control of Cuba to the U.S.



Plantation

This is where many slaves lived and worked.

Barracoons

These are where the slaves lived on the plantation.

Reconcentration Camp

This is where all Cuban peasants were sent in a matter of only eight days. Many died from starvation and disease here.



Themes

Hope

Hope is an important theme in this story. Many of the characters feel a sense of hope, as well as hopelessness throughout this story. Most of the events in this story are tied to either hopefulness or hopelessness. The first use of the word hope is early in the first part of this book. Rosa is describing the runaway slaves who are only armed "with wooden spears and secret hopes" (p. 8). Feelings of hopefulness are sensed even earlier, though. When Rosa describes the runaway slaves hiding in secret caves protected by magic, she gives the sense of hope these people felt for the future. Although they may be in hiding, they are fortunate to have some protection that may keep them safe until a better future comes along. Throughout this book and its many poems, the characters face terrific challenges, yet, for the most part, many are able to cling to hope. This hope gave many a chance at survival.

Although hope did survive the many trials and tribulations, it did ebb and flow. Many of Rosa's poems describe her fear and sorrow for her present condition and unknowable future. Frequently her hope led to feelings of hopelessness and weariness, because the constant focus on the future was tiresome. Only in between wars did Rosa and her husband feel any sense of relief and peace.

For most of the characters the hopes and desires were the same. Those that were runaways, slaves, refugees, or rebels all hoped for freedom and peace. Although this freedom and peace in regards to the Spanish did come, it did not come as expected. The U.S. used their need for assistance and their willingness to trust the Americans as a way of taking control over Cuba, rather than giving it back to its people. Although there was a great deal of disappointment felt by these people, the majority of them believed that with the Spanish gone, there was more hope for the future.

The other characters, such as Lieutenant Death and other military leaders, all hoped for Rosa to be dead and to destroy the rebels. They saw Spain as the rightful owner of Cuba and were willing to do what was necessary to keep the power in Spanish hands.

Hope was felt by all the characters in this book and is passed from generation to generation. The hope of which the author speaks begins this story and ends it with her discussion of her family members in Cuba today.

Nature

Nature is another important theme in this book. The first poem describes Rosa's learning of natural remedies for healing various illnesses. She also compares herself to a honeybee that is harmless, yet feared. Nature is described throughout this story, from the plants used for medicinal purposes to the animal sounds that protect Rosa and other runaways.



Nature is particularly important to Rosa, who is a nurse. On the jungle island of Cuba, the only medicines to be had are those found and created from the plants and animals Rosa and the other healers come across. Rosa gives detailed descriptions of the purposes for various plants and how she spends a great deal of time experimenting and learning.

The sounds of nature are also very important in this story. Several characters describe the sounds of the creatures in the jungle, especially the nocturnal creatures, whose voices help lull Rosa to sleep. These natural sounds also help serve as warnings of enemies, as well as protection against enemies.

Although most characters in this book find the creature's noises to be musical and beautiful, Lieutenant Death is fearful of the nature he encounters. His descriptions of the jungle are vastly different from the descriptions of others.

The destruction of nature is also significant in this story. As the refugees are herded into camps, their untended crops die. As the Spanish burn the landscape to control the rebels, the rebels burn the landscape to destroy Spanish property.

Slavery

Slavery is another theme of this book. Most of the characters in this book are or have been slaves. Even when the owners free the slaves and go to war against Spanish, Spain does not consider the slaves freed. Throughout much of the book, the characters are slaves to Spain.

The military leaders are slaves to power and the Spanish empire. They act cruelly toward the Cubans and have one goal in mind, to destroy the rebels. They force the Cubans into crowded and dirty reconcentration camps, barely providing them with the basic necessities of life. They do not consider the Cubans to be human, with Lieutenant Death being corrected when he calls Rosa a girl.

The owners of the slaves are also slaves of Spain. Their unhappiness leads to a war with Spain and the freeing of their own slaves. They join their slaves in fighting the Spanish, becoming equals with those they once hardly considered human.

The slaves are slaves even when they are freed by their owners; the Spanish consider them the property of Spain whether they are considered slaves by their former owners or not. They are then put into reconcentration camps or forced into hiding. These are seen by Rosa as other forms of slavery. She also sees war itself as a form of slavery.

This book shows many forms of slavery. Other forms exist in our own world today. People are slaves to their work, to television, and to food. Slavery, based on Rosa's use of the term, is anything that holds people back, causes pain and unhappiness, and forces people to act in a way that is not natural for them.



Style

Point of View

The point of view of these poems is from various characters' perspectives. Each poem is named for the speaker in the poem. Rosa has the most poems titled after her, and the focus of the story is on her and her work, therefore she is the protagonist in this story.

Each characters' poems are unique to them and reflect their personalities and opinions. The majority of the poems are from the points of view of the rebels and slaves, but several poems are also from the perspective of those who fight for the Spanish. These Spanish military leaders have one goal in mind and that is to destroy the rebellion. Power is very important to them.

Through these various characters and their perspectives, the author paints a vivid picture for the reader regarding life during these wars for independence and the views of those at that time. Her own biases and opinions are also seen through the characters. Her focus is on those who suffer at the hands of the Spanish, with an emphasis on the evil Spanish Empire. Although her views and poems are based on reality, she persuades the reader to completely side with the rebels.

Setting

The setting of this book is Cuba in the nineteenth century. Although the setting is one country, the characters do find themselves located in different parts of this island nation. Rosa, Jose, and the other rebels spend much of their time in caves and the jungle. Much of Rosa's writings describe her surroundings and the plants she uses to create medicine. She often speaks of the musical quality nature has and its ability to conceal and protect.

Other characters observe more of the destruction taking place in Cuba. Silvia, for example, is forced into a reconcentration camp where food and medicine are scarce. Various characters throughout this story observe the burning of crops and homes.

Many of the poems take place during the day, but several focus on the sounds and happenings at night. Nighttime in the jungle helps lull Rosa to sleep and protects Silvia and others from the Spanish.

An important setting is that of the Surrender Tree, due to it being the title of the book. This is the location of where the Spanish ceded Cuba to the U.S. Although the Spanish surrender, they do not surrender to the Cubans as the rebels had hoped. Peace comes but not as expected.



Language and Meaning

The language of this book is written in poetry form but, in general, without any sort of rhyming or other pattern. Each poem is essentially a short essay from the view point of one of the characters. The language is quite simple, since it is a book for children. Although the language is simple, the story makes a big impact on the reader.

There are a few poems that give more of a sense of poetry to the writing. These use repetition of certain phrases, which give sense of rhythm to the poem. Several of Jose's poems give the reader the feeling of sameness that he feels regarding war, hunger, and the desire for a hopeful future.

The use of poetry allows the writer to play with the use of punctuation. Each stanza contains either commas or no punctuation at all until the very last line of the stanza, which often ended with a period. This use of punctuation gives these poems a sense of rhythm.

Structure

The book is set up in five parts. Each section has poems named after the characters who speak in each poem. The first part begins with Rosa as a young girl learning about healing with natural remedies as a slave. The slavehunter's son, known as Lieutenant Death, also has poems from his perspective. He is learning how to hate the slaves, especially Rosa.

The second part of the book takes place seventeen years later. War leads to the freeing of the slaves, although they are still chased by the Spanish. Rosa has not married and works with her husband, Jose, healing the former slaves and Cuban rebels. Lieutenant Death has grown into man and continues in his father's footsteps as a slavehunter. His main purpose in life is to kill Rosa.

The third part of the book takes place immediately after the Ten Years' War. It describes a "little" war that takes place, although Rosa does not understand how a war can be small when lives are lost. The fourth part of the book takes place fifteen years later. Silvia, a young girl, also begins to have poems from her perspective.

The fifth part continues the story. At this point the Americans join in the war and take over Cuba. The final section shows the connection between Rosa's life and the Cuban wars, as well as the historical connections between these poems and the history of Cuba.

These poems are essentially short essays from the point of view of specific characters set up in a poetic format. They are then placed chronologically to tell a story about the lives of those who lived during the Cuban wars for independence. Most of the characters are real, although the author takes many liberties with what is said and believed by them.



Quotes

"Hatred must be a hard thing to learn."

Part One: The Names of the Flowers, 1850-51, pp. 22

"Jose and I are both learning how to learn."

Part Two: The Ten Years' War, 1868-78, pp. 42

"Sometimes, war feels like just one more form of slavery."

Part Three, The Little War, 1878-80, pp. 69

"Sometimes war feels like a lonely child's game, one that explodes out of control."

Part Three, The Little War, 1878-80, pp. 70

"If we knew how to find the lost, we would know how to rediscover the parts of our minds left behind in battle."

Part Three, The Little War, 1878-80, pp. 72

"This is how you heal a wound: clean the flesh. Sew the skin. Pray for the soul. Wait."

Part Three, The Little War, 1878-80, pp. 73

"The Little War? How can there be a little war? Are some deaths smaller than other, leaving mothers who weep a little less?"

Part Three, The Little War, 1878-80, pp. 76

"Marti loses his life in battle. I cannot save the poet from bullets."

Part Four, The War of Independence, 1895-98, pp. 80

"It makes no sense, healing her enemies so they will turn into friends."

Part Four, The War of Independence, 1895-98, pp. 118

"Rumors blossom and wither like orchids."

Part Four, The War of Independence, 1895-98, pp. 145

"They choose a majestic tree, a ceiba, the kapok tree revered by Cubans, a sturdy tree with powerful roots."

Part Five, The Surrender Tree, 1898-99, pp. 156

"Peace is not the paradise I imagined, but it is a chance to dream..."

Part Five, The Surrender Tree, 1898-99, pp. 158



Topics for Discussion

Rosa is the protagonist. How do you know she is the protagonist? Who is the antagonist? How do you know this? What is the main point of Rosa's poems? What do these poems reveal about Rosa?

The Cuban wars for independence are significant for many reasons. What are these reasons? How have these wars affected the U.S.? How have these wars affected Cuba? How have these wars influenced future wars?

Slavery is an important theme. How is this at home? What are the different forms of slavery found in this story? Describe how these are all forms of slavery? Describe forms of slavery that exist today.

Hope is an important theme. How is this a theme? How are these characters able to feel hope? Should they feel hopeful? Why or why not? How does this hopefulness lend to weariness? How do the author show that the Cubans have hope today?

Nature is an important theme. How is nature a theme? How do various characters feel about nature? Why? What role does nature play in the fight between the rebels and Spanish? How has nature affected wars since this time?

Rosa is determined to fight death. How is this a struggle for her? Why does she choose healing over killing? How does this decision affect her? How might choosing healing over death affect our world if most people chose the same path as Rosa?

Weyler is promoted when the U.S. takes control over Cuba. Describe Weyler's behavior throughout the wars for independence? Why is Weyler promoted by the U.S. military? What does this reveal about the U.S. military? How does this story affect your opinion of the U.S. military?