

Lily Quench and the Dragon of Ashby – Natalie Jane Prior

Semiotics in Lily Quench

Colours are used as a sign system in Lily Quench to represent cultural meanings about the characters. In the western literary culture, we have grown up assigning meaning to certain colours. For example BLACK signifies evil, WHITE signifies purity or innocence, RED may signify blood or death.

Colours are used skillfully throughout Lily Quench to produce different readings, values and cultural beliefs for each character. Work your way through the novel to see which colours are attached to characters or even places. From there try to work out how that creates the way we view that character.

Here are some examples to get you going:

“ In the castle where he ruled Ashby for the **Black** Count, Captain Zouche called an emergency meeting ...” p2.

“A tall young man with curly brown hair, forget-me-not **blue** eyes and an anxious expression ...” p3.

Binary Opposition

Another way we can make up our minds about the characters in Lily Quench is through the use of binary opposition. We are all aware of ideas or elements that are commonly opposed to each other; dark/light, male/female, good/evil. The practice of creating opposites is a common way of introducing the concepts of one element being privileged over another, or even the absence of an element results in the devaluing of that facet. Eg. an extremely rational character denies emotion and therefore emotion is devalued as a personality trait.

Look at the characters of Lionel vs. Captain Zouche, and Lilly vs. Miss Moldavia. What are the opposing elements represented in these characters? Where in the novel do we see the opposite character traits displayed?

Here's some examples:

“Lionel looked at the devastation, lowered his eyes, and was **silent.**” p 103.

“ Captain Zouche made a **growling** noise.” p 5.

Figurative Language

Characters are skillfully shaped throughout Lily Quench through the use of alliteration and metaphor. Students can search for examples of these techniques throughout the novel and discuss how they work to construct each character. Students can add some more to the list or create some of their own for heroes and villains they know of.

Some examples are:

“perfectly painted fingernails “ p.3

“great globs of slobber sloshed under her feet...” p22.

Family Tree

Lily Quench’s Family Tree is quite an impressive account of her family history. Students could research and write up their family tree and complete it with a drawing or symbol like the dragon used in Lily Quench’s family tree.