

ENGLISH – TRACKS & CHARLIE’S COUNTRY PRACTICE ESSAY + PLAN

In what way does nature play a role in establishing identity and self in Tracks & Charlie’s Country?

Plan

Tracks

- Her own camels, Diggity, wild bulls.
 - Strengthened resolve.
 - “There is nothing so real as having to think about survival.”
 - Anthropomorphizing her camels as a coping mechanism from solitude.
 - Connect with her camels on a deeper level.
- Influenced her actions when hunting for game.
- “Camel lady.”
 - Learned to rely on her instinct and trust herself.
 - “All I remember of that first day alone was a feeling of release; a sustained, buoyant confidence as I strolled along.”
 - “Stars all made sense to me now that I lived under them.”
 - “They told me where I was and where I was going.”
 - “The trip was responsible. It was changing me in a way that I had not in the least expected. It was shaking me up and I had not even noticed. It had snuck up from behind.”
 - “I liked, still like, the person who emerged from that (desocialising) process far better than the one who existed before it.”
 - “I believed I could now track them over anything.”
 - Accepted her fear and incompetence of certain aspects of nature and her journey.
 - “Rather than putting the fear of god into me, this incident reinforced my confidence in them.”
- Found liberation with the landscape.
 - Solitude enabled her to discover self.
 - Allowed her to connect with the land and find identity.
 - “I could feel the enormity of the desert in my belly and on the back of my neck.”
 - “The sense of space, clean bright limitless space was with me again.”
 - “The self did not seem to be an entity living somewhere inside the skull, but a reaction between mind and stimulus.”
 - “The self in a desert becomes more and more like the desert. It has to, to survive. It becomes limitless, with its roots more in the subconscious than the conscious – it gets stripped of non-meaningful habits and becomes more concerned with realities related to survival. But as is its nature, it desperately wants to assimilate and make sense of the information it receives.”
- At the end of her journey.
 - Culture-shock.
 - “No, no it’s not, it’s awful, I want to go back.”
- Solitude with nature allowed her to distance herself from misogynistic society and its standards of women.

- “I liked myself this way, it was such a relief to be free of disguises and prettiness and attractiveness. Above all that horrible, false, debilitating attractiveness that women hide behind.”

Charlie's Country

- Foundation of his tradition.
 - Source of his knowledge and values.
 - “It’s like a supermarket out there.”
 - Donating his pension to other Indigenous Australians/family.
 - Acting as the elder to look after the younger generation.
- Historical and cultural value.
 - 40,000+ years of tradition and culture.
 - “This means my country is my home.”
 - When Charlie is crestfallen that Albert will die too far from his country in Darwin.
 - Charlie sobbing and cursing next to Albert when he finds him in Darwin hospital.
 - No dialogue or background music, emphasis on rawness of cultural injury and resentment.
- Desire to go back into nature to relive traditional hunting and life.
 - “I am not a recreational shooter. I am a hunter.”
 - Pete: “Where are we going?” Charlie: “To live the old way.”
- When not in the bush/nature.
 - Gives in to Indigenous Australian stereotype.
 - Unemployed.
 - Alcoholic.
 - Druggies.
 - Feral.
 - Goes to prison.
 - “You’re still trying to change our whole culture. To your bastard culture.”
- Film techniques.
 - Long shot of Charlie in the bush when it’s raining.
 - Imagery of Charlie and his fish.
 - “Such a good fish. Look at you. Perfectly cooked.”
 - Short close-ups of different aspects of nature to build imagery.
 - Long grass.
 - Tall trees.
 - Dirt roads.
 - Puddles/rain.
 - Audio of birds, rain and crickets.
 - Establish atmosphere of nature in Charlie’s perspective.
 - Emphasis of nature’s enduring presence in Charlie’s life.

Comparison

- Foundation of identity.
 - Both identities derive from knowledge about the landscape.
 - Both experience nature in its raw form.
 - Hunting.
 - Surviving.

- Both maintain emotional sustenance from nature.
- Connection with landscape, flora and fauna.
 - Robyn with her camels and Diggity.
 - Charlie and his fish.
 - Building secure shelter.
- Influence to their actions.
 - Robyn decided not to skin and cut kangaroos after Eddie told her not to.
 - Charlie's desire to live in the bush again manifests in a form of resistance.
 - Uses a gun as a "hunter".
 - "Wherever there is pressure to conform (one person's conformity is often in the interests of another person's power), there is a requirement to resist."

Thus, both texts portray that nature has a role in establishing identity and self for individuals who have been oppressed by the standards from society around them and therefore, unable to adequately construct one's identity.

The film, *Charlie's Country*, and Robyn Davidson's memoir *Tracks*, explores different ways in which nature plays a role in discovering identity and self. In *Tracks*, nature provides solitude that enables Robyn to diverge from the stereotypical woman and establish her own identity. Whereas *Charlie's Country* reveals that nature serves as a foundation and home for traditional Indigenous culture and hence, the identity of Indigenous Australians like Charlie. Nature in both texts is shared as a motivator for survival in which help construct the protagonists' identity. However, Robyn and Charlie differ with their reliance on the resources provided by nature and its pronounced beauty, ultimately tying a relationship between identity and place.

Tracks, written by Robyn Davidson, displays emphasis on the desert's vastness, providing solitude and opportunity for Robyn to discover her identity that strays away from the expectations of women placed upon her. Robyn's long-term isolation with the outback and her camels, inevitably changes her self-perception and helps establish her identity. The misogynistic view of women from Robyn's community claimed her to be the "weaker sex" – revealing that women were expected to be vulnerable, incompetent and submissive. As Robyn is increasingly secluded from said community, she demonstrates strengthened resolve and acceptance that separates herself from the sexist standards previously placed upon her. This is shown to us as she reveals how "the stars all made sense to (her) now that (she) lived under them" and her developed "newfound calm, lack of fear". This highlights that Robyn establishes her identity as highly independent and instinctual because of her desire to survive in the desert alone and her struggles with nature, such as the confrontation of wild camel bulls. Nature in this case, provides Robyn purpose to learn how to survive and become independent, manifesting an identity that is different from the "weaker sex". This is further pronounced by Davidson: "The self in the desert becomes more and more like the desert. It has to survive...to become limitless." – in which demonstrates her acknowledgement that nature played a major role in establishing her identity. Furthermore, she states that "it was a relief to be free from disguises and prettiness and attractiveness", describing the impact that nature has provided for her self and identity. *Tracks* depicts Robyn experiencing change and a new establishment to her identity, the deliverance of solitude from nature as a major factor.

The film, *Charlie's Country*, shows us that nature acts as a foundation and source of belonging for Indigenous Australians and their culture hence, featuring the establishment of identity and self. Charlie's source of knowledge and values come from his culture, which derived from living in the bush. As the elder of the Indigenous community, he donates his pensions to the younger generation and gives his only house to his family. These actions

describe his position in the community and how his tradition influences his actions: to serve as the guardian of the community. The foundation of these traditions source from experience and struggle in the bush, before the colonisation of Australia. Furthermore, Charlie expresses a clinging desire to live in the bush and relive “the old way,” denoting his close relation to nature and establishment of his identity. The close-up shots of the trees, long grass and puddles suggests the enduring presence of nature in Charlie’s life during his time in the bush. Charlie is also notably happier when he is alone in the bush, compared to his time in the urban areas of Arnhem Land. This signifies Charlie’s perception of belonging in the bush, where his identity had derived from as well as his culture. His knowledge of hunting, tracking and wildlife are also acquired from experience in nature, stated to be “like a supermarket.” Charlie carving a hunting spear and hunting for fish is a demonstration of his knowledge and inheritance of his culture. This is also further highlighted in Charlie’s statement: “I am not a recreational shooter. I am a hunter,” emphasising his self-perception as a survivor and non-association with white culture. Therefore, Charlie persists to sustain his tradition that is, his identity, attributed to the presence of nature and the foundation it provided for his culture.

Both *Tracks* and *Charlie’s Country* explore nature in similar ways concerning establishment of identity and self of the protagonists, motivated by the need to survive. Robyn and Charlie’s identities both derive from struggle and experience in nature. For example, Robyn learns to acknowledge her fear, it became “direct and useful,” and the “natural healthy fear one needs for survival.” This highlights that Robyn accepts that her sense of fear is an important quality that aids her through the outback and therefore, a part of her that developed as a part of her identity. In the case of Charlie, thousands of years in the bush resulted in usage of resources and values and surviving in nature. This is illustrated through Charlie, such as the scene where he expertly builds a secure shelter in the forest using various branches, vines and leaves. Charlie’s identity as an Indigenous Australian originated from habiting the bush for many years, similarly to Robyn’s establishment of independence in the desert; the protagonists’ foundation of self is shared in their need to survive in nature. In contrast, *Tracks* and *Charlie’s Country* features differences in the way nature develops the protagonists’ sense of self relating to emotional and psychological connection. Robyn’s journey enables her to discover that she can separate her identity from the “horrible, false, debilitating attractiveness that women hide behind.”

Solitude in the desert allowed her to develop her self-perception as independent and transparent, as well as connect emotionally with the landscape, to feel the “enormity of the desert in my belly and on the back of (her) neck.” This highlights that Robyn psychologically feels related to the desert, that the vastness reflects her freedom and independence and like desert, she becomes “more concerned with realities related to survival.” This is in distinction of the way Charlie expresses belonging in nature; Charlie inherited his identity from the bush whereas Robyn discovers her identity from the desert. That is, Charlie feels the most comfortable and closest to his identity and culture when he is living in nature, therefore nature is illustrated as his emotional sustenance. This is heavily emphasised with Charlie’s desire to live in the bush and revive his culture, as his “country is (his) home.”. Nature helps establish the identities of Charlie and Robyn by building an emotional relationship with them, in different ways.

Nature plays various roles in establishing identity and self in both texts, *Charlie’s Country* and *Tracks*. Both Robyn and Charlie share the drive to survive in nature that ultimately result in discover or reliving of identity. However, they differ in the emotional connection that nature provides and inevitably, also contribute to their self-perception. Robyn finds her identity to be unyielding, separate from standards of women in the 1970’s, due to the solitude the desert delivers. Whereas Charlie’s culture is founded from struggles in nature and became a part of his identity for many generations. Both individuals establish their identity in nature, away

from the society that oppresses them. Therefore, nature in these texts share a role in providing emotional and psychology sustenance and a need to survive.