

How Do Communities Shape People?



Name: _____

Quote Analysis - How Geography Makes Up Our Identity

Directions: Listen to and read through the quote below. Answer the questions that follow.

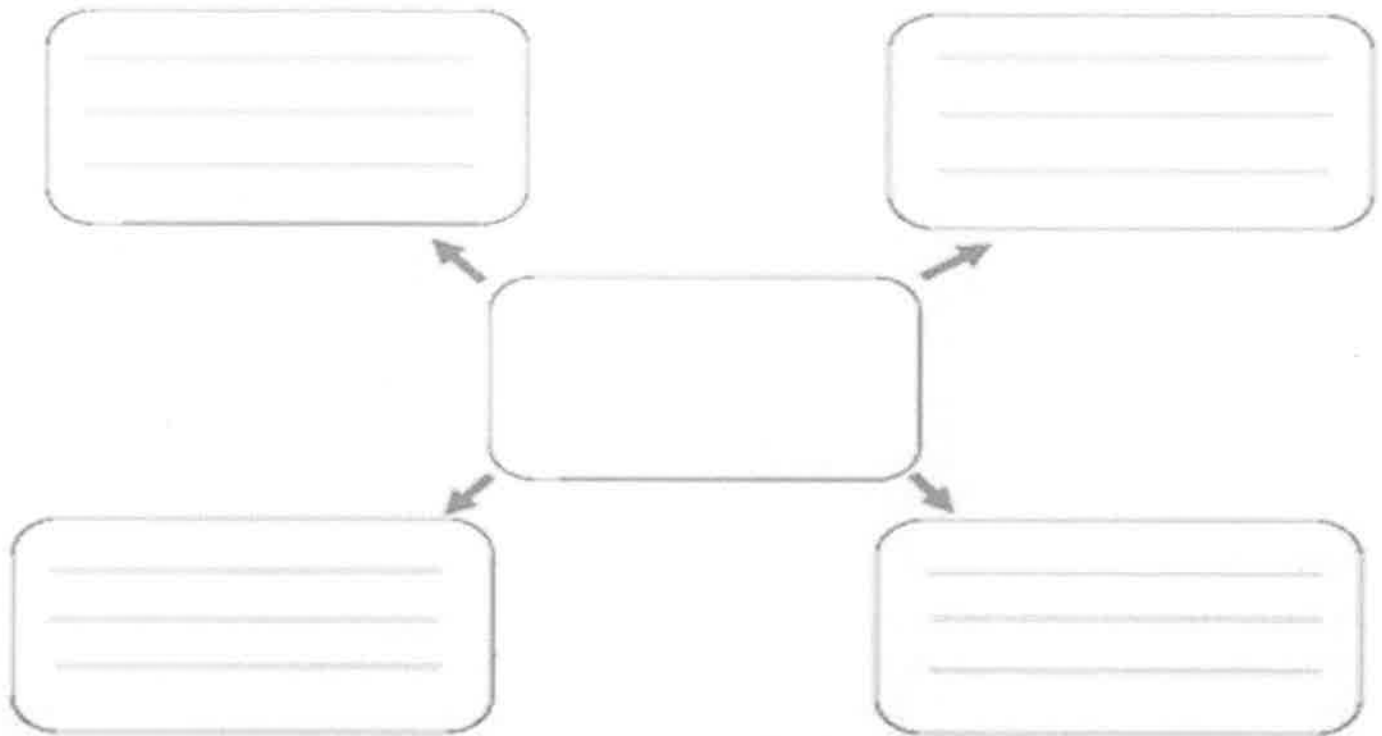
“I always believed it was the things you don't choose that makes you who you are. Your city. Your neighborhood. Your family. People here take pride in these things. Like it was something they'd accomplished. The bodies around their souls. The cities wrapped around those.”

- Detective Patrick Kenzie, *Gone Baby Gone* (written by Dennis Lehane)

What does this quote mean? How has your hometown and neighborhood helped you to become who you are? What makes you proud about where you grew up or where you live?

Build Background (Part 1) - The Pride of the Colonists

Directions: Use the web below to brainstorm different reasons why the colonist who were new to America may have been proud of their new land.



Build Background (Part 2) - Let's Get Specific to *The Witch of Blackbird Pond*

Directions: Read the article on the next few pages. Answer the questions below once you are done.

1. What is the setting of *The Witch of Blackbird Pond*?
2. What is going on in history during the time of *The Witch of Blackbird Pond*?
3. Make a prediction. Kit moves from Barbados to Connecticut. How might this change in location impact her life?
4. Why do you think a sense of community was important to the Puritans?

Introducing the Novel

Speare was once inspired by a writer who said, "History is people." This "personal approach" to history is apparent in *The Witch of Blackbird Pond*.

The main character, Kit Tyler, is orphaned when her much-loved grandfather dies. Kit travels from the island of Barbados in the Caribbean Sea to Wethersfield, Connecticut. She hopes to find a home there with her aunt and uncle, settlers from England. Kit finds her new world to be very different from the one she left behind, and she must struggle long and hard to fit in. Her relatives are Puritans who have come to America to live according to their religious beliefs. The novel itself takes place when Wethersfield is still a fairly new settlement and survival is a challenging task. The place where Kit was raised in Barbados was a more established community with different ideas about religion and social behavior.

In reading the novel, you will also "meet" many other people from the seventeenth century. Some, like "the witch of Blackbird Pond," become Kit's friends and help her to adjust. Others fear Kit because she is different from them. Many critics have praised the novel for its portrayal of colonists. One critic says:

The strength of this book lies in its . . . well-drawn characters. They are neither wholly good nor wholly bad but a very human mixture.

Other critics speak glowingly of the vividness of the novel's historical setting. Speare spent over a year researching the novel to make it realistic and historically accurate. Wethersfield is a real place in Connecticut, founded by Puritans in the 1600s. Other events in the story, such as the colonists' efforts to preserve their charter, really did occur. Some of the characters in the story are based on real people as well.

For many readers, however, the most interesting part of this novel is its themes.

They include the ideas of loyalty and justice. As Kit bravely tries to understand her adopted community, she must often ask herself, Whom must I be loyal to? What is the right, or just, action to take?

THE TIME AND PLACE

The Witch of Blackbird Pond is set in Wethersfield, Connecticut, in 1687. The town of Wethersfield was, and still is, located on the banks of the Connecticut River. It sits about forty-seven miles north of the river mouth. In 1687 the town was a small and fairly new English settlement. It was founded in 1634 by Puritans from Massachusetts.

The first Puritans had come to Massachusetts from England in 1620. In England at that time, people were strongly discouraged from practicing any religion other than that of the Church of England. Some English people, however, did not wholly agree with the Church of England. These Puritans, as they were called, decided to leave England to build a community where they could worship God in their own way.

During the 1600s, the Puritans were concerned by the many political changes taking place in England. From 1642 to 1648, King Charles I of England battled with some of his subjects for control of the government. He and his supporters wanted all English subjects to follow the laws of the Church of England and support the monarchy. His opponents wanted rule by a Parliament, or group of rulers, and more religious freedom. The Parliamentary forces won, and Charles I was removed as king and executed in 1649. The Puritans sided with Parliament and therefore gained power during the Civil War in England.

In 1660, however, Charles II brought back the monarchy, and the Puritans lost some of their power. At the time of *The Witch*

*Puritans - very religious group of people who wanted simple laws, churches, and ways of life

of *Blackbird Pond*, the Puritans' power was in even greater danger because James II, a Catholic, had become king in 1685.

The Puritan settlers who sought religious freedom in the Wethersfield area were at first welcomed by Native Americans. In fact, the leader of the Sequin invited Massachusetts colonists to settle Connecticut. He hoped for help in fighting his enemies, the Pequots. Some of Wethersfield's early settlers did help fight and defeat the Pequots in 1637. As more and more settlers arrived looking for land, local Native American groups were gradually pushed out.

In 1636 the three river towns of Hartford, Windsor, and Wethersfield joined together to establish the Connecticut Colony. A separate colony, Old Saybrook, was settled in 1635 but did not join the Connecticut Colony until 1644.

In 1639 the colony agreed on a set of laws called the Fundamental Orders. These laws were quite unusual for their time because they said that lawmakers had to get the people's agreement on their decisions. The colony also adopted a law requiring schools in towns of a certain size. In 1662 the colony received a charter from King Charles II. This document established the colony's boundaries, defined the colonists' rights, and granted the colonists a measure of self-government.

By 1687, when Kit Tyler arrived in Wethersfield, the community was well established. However, a threat was brewing in England. King James wanted to increase his power in the colonies by joining Massachusetts and Connecticut. Residents of Wethersfield had many different reactions to King James's efforts, especially his attempt to revoke the colony's charter.

Did You Know?

Not all English settlers went to mainland America. Some went to the islands of the Caribbean Sea, found south of what is now Florida. These early island settlers shared goals similar to the New England settlers. However, the island settlements were quite different from the settlements to the north. This was partly because of the Caribbean settlers' success at growing sugarcane. Sugar, which was easily produced in the warm tropical climate, was in great demand and made the

island settlers quite wealthy. Their riches, however, were largely acquired through the work of servants working off the price of their fare from England and enslaved people brought over from Africa.

Barbados, the island from which Kit Tyler comes, was England's prize Caribbean possession. It made the most money and had the wealthiest community. Sugar planters lived in fine houses, and some were even given titles by the British government.

Build Background (Part 3) – What Else Was Going On?

Directions: Watch the video about the *Salem Witch Trials*. Answer the questions below once you are done.

5. What does it mean to be an outcast?
6. What does it mean to have a good reputation?
7. Why do you think the girls accused three “social outcasts” of being witches instead of “reputable members of society,” or people with good reputations in the community?
8. What happened to the people who survived that were accused of witchcraft?
9. Why is reputation important in a community?
10. How might being labeled “an outcast” negatively impact someone?

Exit Ticket

Directions: Why are people who are different called outcasts? How does this impact someone? How does this relate to the idea that communities (hometowns, neighborhoods, schools, etc) are important to who someone becomes?

