

Sample Paper

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Hopeful Allusions

In the novel *The Secret Life of Bees* by Sue Monk Kidd, the author presents varying moods throughout the story for a variety of purposes¹. In the beginning of chapter five, as Lily and Rosaleen embark on their journey to freedom, running away from T-Ray, Kidd presents a mood of relief and calmness, exemplified by specific allusions, in order to teach readers that hope and optimism should always be sought^{2,3}. As chapter five opens up, Lily and Rosaleen have just spent their first night away from home, sleeping alongside a creek. Sure, there is some sense of the unknown and subtle anxiety, but readers are led to be hopeful for both female characters⁴. We see Lily allude to two key characters right in the beginning of this chapter—to Henry David Thoreau, and to Eleanor Roosevelt. Lily remarks, in thought-like, commentary form that “next to Shakespeare [she] love[d] Thoreau best . . . [and] had fantasies of going to a private garden [like Thoreau’s Walden Pond] where T-Ray would never find her” (57)⁵. This particular inclusion and reference to Thoreau is significant, because Thoreau was a romantic transcendentalist, meaning, Thoreau found beauty and significance in life by being in nature, living within his means, and finding spirited contentment in solitude, away from the hustle and bustle of everyday life⁶. Similarly, Lily has found a way to escape and finds herself, for now, near a beautiful creekside, able to breathe, observe and enjoy nature, and find peace and solitude away from the abusive and unnecessarily noisy life T-Ray has created⁷. Moreover, Lily’s mentioning of her desire to hide away from T-Ray in a secret garden comes true, as she finds

herself hidden from T-Ray near a creekside, allowing the reader to cheer on and be hopeful for Lily^{8,9}. Within this same reflection of Lily, and even within the same paragraph, the author utilizes another allusion, to Eleanor Roosevelt, also as a way to set up the hopeful mood that is to follow¹⁰. Lily, still within the comfort of nature by the creek, notes, “I started appreciating Mother Nature . . . In my mind she looked like Eleanor Roosevelt” (57). Similarly to Thoreau, Roosevelt is a symbol of hope for both characters in this scene in chapter three; serving as the First Lady, she was a Civil Rights advocate of her time, and also is famously known for her saying that “no one can make you feel inferior without your consent.”^{11,12} Readers, at this point, desire that Lily and Rosaleen stand up for themselves, not allowing the abuse of T-Ray to make them feel inferior any longer.¹³ Thus, as readers are reminded of Eleanor Roosevelt, an idea of hopefulness is already subtly raised before even reading the remaining details of this chapter, which is reflected, too, in Lily’s own thoughts and how Lily and Rosaleen carry themselves throughout the remainder of the chapter.¹⁴ Without a doubt, Sue Monk Kidd craftily incorporates purposeful allusions to Henry David Thoreau and Eleanor Roosevelt, right from the beginning of chapter three, to help readers feel hopeful for the journey of Lily and Rosaleen.¹⁵