

The Tracks Of Petals And Steel (Supporting Document)

The Tracks of Petals and Steel follows the story of a young woman going through a very challenging time after losing her mother. The story takes place in a short portion of her train ride to her mother's town, during which she is trying to write the eulogy for her mother's funeral. The train itself is an analogy of life, and the stages within it. Symbolism is then used to further build meaning in the story. The use of rhetorical questions throughout it provides insight into the main character's anxiety and uncertainty, therefore giving her human flaws.

The Tracks of Petals and Steel follows a more linear timeline, and is set in a liminal space, this being the train ride between places. Writing the story in a liminal space allowed for innovation on establishing ideas from real life. A key idea mentioned in the story is that you need to appreciate life or ground yourself. The reader should take a breath, or break and resonate with the little things in this life, such as a view out of the window. The use of liminal space is a way to further suggest this, as it creates a disconnect and break from the busy aspects of our mundane society, it also suggests that appreciation, grounding techniques or similar acts can be done in our own liminal spaces such as public transport, walking, lunches, and that we don't have to plan them out. These grounding techniques, or gratitude mindsets are designed to build an idea of hope within the short story.

Hope and kindness are central ideas within the text, our words, actions, behaviours and language can have an unparalleled degree of power in other people's lives, for both beneficial reasons and negative outcomes. In the story this concept is apparent through the exchange between the old woman and the female lead. The old woman's words of comfort, whilst intended to be polite and simple, held an astronomical amount of sway in the young woman's life. It gave her the strength and motivation to hold out for a short time longer. To keep a more realistic and human mindset present she is still on edge about the rest of her life.

A major theme within my story consists of the stages of life and working through them. This is established through using the train as an analogy for life. Before boarding the train, the protagonist notices a heavily pregnant woman, then immediately as she enters the train takes notice of a crying baby. This setup is to imply that the ride between places, in this liminal space, is representative of life and the stages within it. As the story progresses the reader is slowly greeted with varied characters each following an age based timeline, this being the baby, the kids, the teenagers, newly-weds, young family, and finally the old woman. To solidify this analogy, as the story comes to a close the old woman exits the train, hinting at her own departure from life.

The story opens in a more gloomy setting, announcing an important analogy about the mother's favourite flowers, setting up room for symbolism throughout the narrative. "*But when the soil is high and happy the hydrangeas grow pink or even red.*" as well as "*When the soil is happy the future will hold plenty of bright things.*" This mention of hydrangeas sets up room for symbolism regarding colours in the rest of the narrative. As the story progresses and the protagonist's mindset slowly changes, or is interrupted, the colours around her change implying positive things will come. Each person the protagonist notices bears a specific colour, the pinks and red slowly representing coming moments of joy or happiness, whilst the frequent blue colours symbolise the past, of which is causing her pain. The

allegorical meaning within the text consists of how focusing on the past, good or bad, can lead to negative feelings. This is seen through the blues and purple being present in the stages of life the protagonist has already been through, whilst the pink and red are in the future moments, or the things yet to happen. When the story concludes she notices the fields of red and pink flowers, which further builds a sense of hope for the reader, showing that she is also starting to look forward to the future.

Overall the story is one about hope, and that a better future is out there. It's written to suggest that the future can be worthwhile, and in moments of hardship appreciating the little things we do, not only ground us, but allows for a calm environment and a more levelheaded reflection. It serves as a reminder to always choose kindness, as you never know what someone is going through and how your words could affect them.