

BLM 3 – Lit Circle Prompts for April Raintree

Response prompts are adaptations from a 2012 NOII Collaborative Project in partnership with educator, Leah Hubbard and Jamaine Campbell

Section One: “Who Am I?” (Chapter 1-3)

Quotation	Prompts
<p>“Memories. Some memories are elusive, fleeting, like butterflies that touch down and are free until caught. Others are haunting. You would rather forget them but they will not be forgotten. And some are always there. No matter where you are, they are there, too.” (p. 1)</p>	<p>Why do you think April wants to look back in order to move forward? Identify memories that you feel would be elusive and haunting for April based on evidence from the first few chapters. Why do you think the word “elusive” is used? Do you think memories can become more or less elusive as we age or as time goes by? Discuss.</p>
<p>“Most of my misery, however, was caused by the separation from my parents. I was positive they would come for Cheryl and me.” (p. 12)</p>	<p>In what ways does the experience at the orphanage contrast with April’s life at home with her parents? Discuss the feelings and realizations that April is struggling with. In what ways are these shaping her ideas about herself and her family?</p>
<p>www.youtube.com/watch?v=7ScLeBqH9jY “Stereotipik” by Litefoot</p>	<p>What is a stereotype? If you are unsure of the definition for “stereotype” visit at least two websites in order to define what a stereotype is. After watching the video Stereotypic, list three stereotypes in the video and identify why they are stereotypes. Identify two stereotypes April encounters in the story (pages 12-48) and reflect on April’s response to how she is stereotyped. These biases and assumptions seem to be already internalized by April even though she is only six years old. Why do you think April responds that way?</p>
<p>Free Choice: Find a quotation that connects to the idea of identity.</p>	<p>Why did you pick this quotation? How does it connect to identity or one of our inquiry questions? What insight does it give us on identity and/or one of our inquiry questions?</p>

Section Two: How do experiences shape identity? (Chapters 4-8)

Quotation	Prompts
<p>“So far, I had not read the book on Louis Riel. Whenever Cheryl wanted to talk about him, I would change the subject. I guess she got the hint because she began staying away from such topics.” (p. 57)</p>	<p>Contrast Cheryl and April’s feelings about being Métis. What do you think has contributed to their individual feelings about who they are and where they come from? What do you notice about their personalities? Share your insights on their relationship.</p> <p>Do you think the girls are receiving an adequate education? Do you think the representation of First Peoples in schools has changed? What do you think is still needed to provide an unbiased portrayal of First Peoples history and culture? Use text evidence and text to self-connections to support your ideas.</p>
<p>“Cheryl, we can’t fight them. ... This won’t last forever. When we’re old enough, we’ll be free. We’ll live together. We’re going to make it. Do you understand me? We are going to make it. We are not going to become what they expect of us.” (p. 66)</p>	<p>What do you think April means by this statement? Discuss the expectations that others (social workers, foster families, nuns and peers) have for Cheryl and April. What other advice does April have for Cheryl? What are your personal thoughts on April’s advice?</p>
<p>“Grade 9 became the very worst school year I’d ever had.”</p>	<p>How do school interactions and peer relationships shape April’s feelings about herself? Despite negative interactions with a number of people, April also has some friends; who are her allies at school? What do you think it means to be an ally? What role do allies play in supporting April? Do you think that April’s allies should have done more to support her? Explain.</p>
<p>Free Choice: Find a quotation that connects to the idea of identity.</p>	<p>Why did you pick this quotation? How does it connect to identity or one of our inquiry questions? What insight does it give us on identity and/or one of our inquiry questions?</p>

Section Three: How do people deal with challenges? (Chapters 9-12)

Quotation	Prompts
<p>“I still think our project with the Native girls is worthwhile. Damn it April, why do you have to be so prejudiced? “</p> <p>“I’m not prejudiced, Cheryl. I’m simply trying to point out to you how I see things.” (p. 116)</p>	<p>Explain the significance of this quote and the interaction between April and Cheryl during the visit to the Radcliff “home” during the holidays. What has become evident to you at this point in the novel? To what extent do you agree with April’s idea that she is not prejudiced? To what extent do you agree with Cheryl’s comment that her sister is prejudiced? Do you feel April is prejudiced? Do you feel Cheryl is prejudiced? Explain.</p>
<p>“I became quite good at it, seeing all the negative sides and criticizing them to high heaven to myself. It came to me that I had criticized the Native people, and here I was doing the same thing to white people. Maybe that’s what being a half-breed was all about, being a critic-at-large.” (p. 126)</p>	<p>Explain what this quote means and comment on April’s sense of identity at this stage of her life. What do you think April has come to realize? What role does criticizing play in understanding ourselves? What advice would you offer to April at this point?</p>
<p>“There is no such thing as an isolated act of violence against aboriginal women. Every attack takes place in the context of a long history of prejudice, discrimination and marginalisation that has denied aboriginal women full equality in Canadian society.” –Ellen Gabriel, the former president of the Quebec Native Women’s Association quoted by Amnesty International.</p>	<p>The sexual assault scene is a graphic portrayal of violence against women. Violence against Indigenous women, in particular, continues to be an issue in Canada. What connections (text to self, text to text and text to world) and insights can you make to Ms. Gabriel’s statement? Consider both the provincial and the national context of violence against Indigenous women.</p> <p>Some people argue that the sexual assault scene should be cut from the novel, especially for young readers. Others argue that the scene is necessary to the overall vision of the text. What position do you agree with and why?</p>
<p>Free Choice: Find a quotation that connects to the idea of identity.</p>	<p>Why did you pick this quotation? How does it connect to identity or one of our inquiry questions? What insight does it give us on identity and/or one of our inquiry questions?</p>

Section Four:

Quotation	Prompts
<p>“I wrote this one piece in university, but they wouldn’t publish it because they said it was too controversial. I still know it by heart. Want to hear it?” (p. 171)</p>	<p>Reflect on Cheryl’s message and its importance in relation to present-day issues. What connections can you make between Cheryl’s address at the powwow and the First Peoples Principles of Learning? Do you think Cheryl’s piece would be considered controversial today? Explain.</p>
<p>“I put my hand to my face where Cheryl had struck me, and looked at her in disbelief. ... “Well, you shouldn’t have done that.” Then she grabbed her jacket and I heard her go down the hall. The front door slammed.” (p. 203)</p>	<p>What event does this quote highlight? Is the fight between the two sisters more than just this one event? Explain what events or experience have caused a separation between the two sisters. What role does identity, shame and acceptance/unacceptance play in their relationship?</p>
<p>“When I wrote <i>In Search of April Raintree</i> over twenty-five years ago, my aim was to find answers only for myself. Out of that writing, I came to the conclusion that I needed to reclaim my heritage. I needed to value the honour of being Métis.” –Beatrice Mosionier, Author’s Note at the end of the 25th anniversary edition</p>	<p>What answers do you think Ms. Mosionier was searching for? What questions do you have as a result of reading this novel? In what ways do you think Beatrice Mosionier’s journey for personal answers provides answers for her readers? What does it mean to reclaim; why do you think Ms. Mosionier uses that term?</p>
<p>Free Choice: Find a quotation that connects to the idea of identity.</p>	<p>Why did you pick this quotation? How does it connect to identity or one of our inquiry questions? What insight does it give us on identity and/or one of our inquiry questions?</p>