

Where Mountain Lion Lay Down with Deer

— Leslie Marmon Silko —

I climb the black rock mountain
stepping from day to day
silently.
I smell the wind for my ancestors
5 pale blue leaves
crushed wild mountain smell.
Returning
up the gray stone cliff
where I descended
10 a thousand years ago.
Returning to faded black stone
where mountain lion lay down with deer.
It is better to stay up here
15 watching wind's reflection
in tall yellow flowers.
The old ones who remember me are gone
the old songs are all forgotten
and the story of my birth.
How I danced in snow-frost moonlight
20 distant stars to the end of the Earth
How I swam away
in freezing mountain water
narrow mossy canyon tumbling down
out of the mountain
25 out of the deep canyon stone
down
the memory
spilling out
into the world.

BQ BIG Question

What does the speaker's silence suggest about her feelings toward nature?

Free Verse In what way does the line length and arrangement add to the poem's meaning?

Interpret Meaning Explain the feeling that the speaker is expressing in these lines.

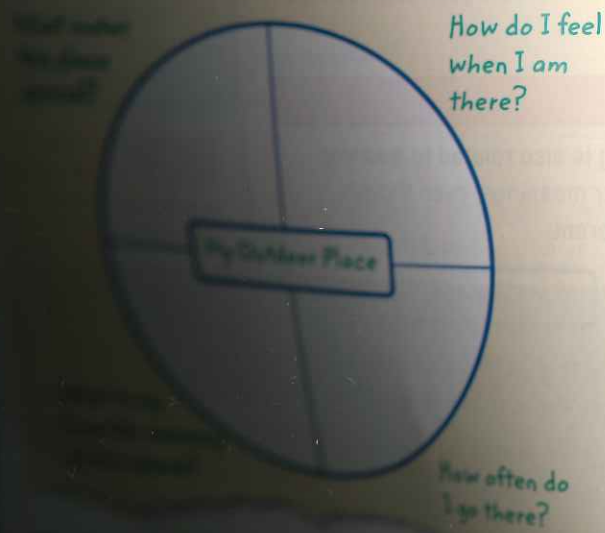
Before You Read

Where Mountain Lion Lay Down with Deer

Connect to the Poem

Think about a special place outdoors. What makes this place special to you?

Graphic Organizer Create a graphic organizer like the one below. In the box in the center, briefly describe your special outdoor place. Write your answer to each question in the space provided.



Meet Leslie Marmon Silko



"I see myself as a member of the global community. . . . When I write, I am writing to the world, not to the United States alone."

—Leslie Marmon Silko

Native American Heritage

Leslie Marmon Silko grew up on the Laguna Pueblo Indian Reservation in New Mexico, listening to tales told by her female relatives. These stories gave Silko a sense of identity and inspired her writing. Silko's own stories explore her Pueblo heritage and the conflict between traditional and modern ways.

Literary Works Silko has written novels, essays, and poetry collections, including *Voices Under One Sky*.

Leslie Marmon Silko was born in 1948.

Literature Online

Author Search For more about Leslie Marmon Silko, go to glencoe.com and enter SearchPass code GL29763u3.

Set Purposes for Reading

BQ BIG Question

As you read, ask yourself, how can one's respect for nature show a connection to the past?

Literary Element Free Verse

Free verse is poetry that has no fixed pattern of rhyme, line length, stanza arrangement, or rhythm. Repetition and strong images are often used in free verse. The arrangement of lines and stanzas also adds to the poem's meaning.

Free verse enables poets to express their feelings and ideas in new and unique ways. Some poets use free verse to give their poems the natural, realistic rhythms of conversation. As you read, pay attention to the ways in which the word choice, imagery, and arrangement of lines help express the poem's meaning.

Reading Strategy Interpret Meaning

When you **interpret meaning**, you use your own understanding of the world to decide what the events or ideas in a literary work mean.

Interpreting meaning helps you understand the author's beliefs and feelings. It also helps you connect your own beliefs and feelings to the literary work. To interpret meaning, ask yourself:

- What is the author really trying to say here?
- In what way does the poem relate to my understanding of the world?
- What larger ideas might the poem be about?

Use a graphic organizer like the one below.

Paraphrase the line or stanza.

What images does the poet use?

What feelings do you have when you read the line or stanza?

What deeper meaning does the line or stanza convey?

Learning Objectives

For pages 362–367

In studying this text, you will focus on the following objectives:

Literary Study: Analyzing poetic form and structure.

TRY IT

Interpret Meaning You interpret meaning every day. For example, think about a time when a friend was happy, angry, or upset. Could you tell how this person felt without even talking to him or her? What clues about his or her emotions did your friend give you?