**CULTURAL COLOR ASSOCIATIONS FOR READING**

**LESLIE MARMON SILKO’S NOVEL, CEREMONY.**

Derived from Kathleen Manley and Robert Nelson

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Colors</th>
<th>Keres Pueblo (Laguna)</th>
<th>Mexican</th>
<th>Anglo</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>Color of East and the First World</td>
<td>Purity, derived from Roman Catholicism</td>
<td>Purity, derived from Protestant Christianity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blue</td>
<td>West direction The Night Swan</td>
<td>The Virgin Virginity Protection against witchcraft</td>
<td>No outstanding association</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Green</td>
<td>No outstanding association in the novel.</td>
<td>No outstanding association</td>
<td>Nature and growth Money</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Red</td>
<td>South direction</td>
<td>Danger Passion</td>
<td>Danger Passion Exotic sexuality The Devil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>The Sky The Earth</td>
<td>Mourning Bad Omens</td>
<td>Evil Mourning Bad Omens Night</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brown</td>
<td>The Earth The mixture of Black and White</td>
<td>The Earth</td>
<td>The Earth Dirt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yellow</td>
<td>North Earth’s Power Yellow Woman</td>
<td>Mixed associations: Flora; Cowardice</td>
<td>Cowardice Sunshine</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
READING CEREMONY
AS A FEMALE-CENTERED NOVEL.

Tayo is at the center of a female narrative. His strongest teachings come through the female cultural point of view.

The three women identified in the front of the novel must not be taken for granted.

Ts’its’tsi’nako, who is Thought Woman and Spider Woman, is a principal creative force in Keres cosmology. She is also Yellow Woman, a Pueblo mountain spirit who manifests herself in human form.

Tayo will encounter her in actual spiders and in two avatars: The Night Swan and Ts’eh Montuno

Her sisters, Nau’ts’ity’i (Reed Woman) and I’tcts’ity’i (Corn Woman), helped her create the universe.

The novel’s narrator is telling you the story Ts’its’tsi’nako is thinking.

“The only cure/ I know/ is a good ceremony,/ that’s what she said.”

Warriors coming home from battle must undergo a purification ceremony in order to return in full spiritual balance.

Ku’oosh’s ceremony for Tayo’s healing fails and he refers him to Betonie.

Other Female Figures and Elements
Grandma: early and late in the novel, she says she’s heard “these stories before ... only thing is, the names sound different.”

Auntie: Rocky’s mother and Tayo’s aunt.  
• She has bought into the American way and Christianity, and thus what she stands for serves as contrapuntal significance in the novel.

Mount Taylor (Tse-pi’na), east of Gallup, is the home of Ts’eh Montuño.

The Night Swan:  
• Mexican former mistress of Tayo’s uncle, Josiah.  
• She will help Tayo comprehend life’s boundaries and his place in the universe.  
• She is associated with the color Blue in her shawl, household effects, etc.  
• She is also associated with rain.

Ts’eh Montuño: A “nature goddess” as a protector.  
• She is a Yellow Woman spirit and a water person

OTHER IMPORTANT ELEMENTS IN CEREMONY
Structure
• The narrative of Ceremony is circular; prominently, the story begins and closes with Sunrise.
  • Do not look for a strictly linear mode of composition and structure.

• The mythic poems
  • These poems express traditional Laguna stories and cultural values.
  • Stories as healing agents.
  • Story/poems are inter-stitched throughout the narrative as one would stitch together pieces of clothing garment, or weave clothing and blankets, or fashion certain types of vessels.

• Tayo’s quest and pursuit as ceremonies.
  • He has to pursue the Spotted Cattle South
  • He goes West to Gallup where he lived precariously as a child and where he must meet Betonie.
  • He goes East to Albuquerque in police custody
  • He goes North to Ts’eh at Mount Taylor.

Combinations and Mixtures
Tayo is of mixed Laguna Pueblo and white heritage. The Night Swan and Ts’eh are women of mixed ancestry.

- To be Mexican in the Pueblo world is to be Indian and Spanish. Betonie is Navajo and Mexican, a mixed-blood. He mediates both worlds for
  - Betonie will teach Tayo about responsibility and the inevitability of change.
  - Betonie will send Tayo on his ceremony, his purification quest, which will involve rounding up and returning the spotted cattle.
  - These cattle happen to be Mexican cattle

**Setting**
The narrative encompasses the history of the encounter between Pueblo people and Europeans, especially the Anglos.

- Devastating effects of World War Two on Indian tribes and communities
  - Many Indians returned psychically, physically, and spiritually destroyed: Emo and Harley embody the evil that parallels the witchery.

- Tayo in the jungle during the Bataan Death March had prayed away the rain. This prayer affects his community. He is Laguna wherever he goes.
  - The dispute between Reed Woman and Corn Woman:
    - Corn Woman leaves and takes the rain with her.
    - Part of Tayo’s healing ceremony is to go to the mountain to bring back the rain.
    - Ts’eh Montuño, and the hunter (also a traditional figure in this story) will rescue the rain clouds from the Evil Gambler.

**The Animals**
- Whites cannot see the living as viable. Silko portrays them as
destroyers of the land and the natural world.
- Animals, birds, insects, even stones are nothing but objects. Things without intelligence.

- The Spotted / Mexican Cattle.
  - They are wild, deer-like, hardier than ranchers’ cattle, and smarter.
  - Ranchers tried to kill them off.
  - Tayo must rescue them as part of his healing ceremony.

- The Bottle Fly
  - Fly and Hummingbird assist in healing the town. Pueblo traditional people will not kill flies because of this role they played.
  - Tayo closes door to prevent other flies from being stuck on the flypaper.

- The Ants
  - Betonie performs a Navajo Red Antway ceremony for Tayo’s healing.
  - Recalling the black ants on Rocky’s corpse will help Tayo reconcile life and death.
    - Ants perform their function.

**Good and Evil**
In Native American and most Indigenous cultures, Balance in the world
must be maintained.
• Good exists and so does evil.

• Evil must be negotiated in order for it to be kept away from the lives of the people as much as possible.

• Evil is never absolutely defeated.

• Emo kills but is not vanquished in a “Good triumphing over Evil paradigm.
  • He departs (for California....).

• Tayo must reconcile with evil as he must learn to reconcile life and death.

• Wholeness is balance and well-being. Fragmentation and alienation are negative.