

Oodgeroo Noonuccal Year 12 English Haylie Reynolds

This term, my English Standard Year 12 class are studying Module B: Close Study of Literature. The syllabus explains that we are learning to develop an informed understanding of a substantial literary text. We are to explore and analyse certain ideas and concepts of the poems and establish their distinctive qualities. For this module, my class is studying Oodgeroo Noonuccal's poems of the past and present, her culture and spirituality, and her importance as a public speaker for the Aboriginal population.

I have read and annotated several of her poems including 'The Past', 'Entombed Warriors' and 'China...Woman'. My favourite thing I have noticed within Oodgeroo's writings is her connection to loss and discovery. It is a re-occurring theme throughout the collection of poetry that presents a personal connection with the audience as it informs them that history is never lost and can always be exposed no matter how hard people try to hide it.

In 'The Past', Noonuccal blatantly states "Let no one say the past is dead/The past is all about us and within". This highlights her defensive tone to her audience that the Aboriginal people's trauma and horrific experience from the past cannot be ignored. This is one of the things I love about her writings as Oodgeroo is not hesitant to talk about her culture and their traumatic journey to now.

Noonuccal has also beautifully demonstrated the theme of loss and discovery through 'Entombed Warriors'. She mentions how Qin Shi Huang's army "All guarded his secret/For 2,000 years.../Until/By chance/A pick and shovel". Noonuccal emphasises how the emperor's fear of immortality was hidden for so long after all of his efforts and then ironically found. Oodgeroo is highlighting the importance that eventually, the past is discovered, and history cannot be ignored. It's amazing how she connects to her readers personally and encourages them to embrace the journey that led us to where we are today and to not let our fear get in the way of knowledge.