

Strange as this Weather Has Been: Essay Prompts

Respond to one of the prompts below in a well-developed essay of 750-1,000 words. Be sure to follow MLA format and include direct quotations from the text to support your claims.

1. In Ann Pancake's *Strange as this Weather Has Been*, we meet several characters who were forced to grow up too soon: Lace became pregnant during her freshman year of college, Bant was the oldest child who was exposed to too much at an early age, and Dane lived with the constant fear of death and the End of the World. Then there are characters like Jimmy Make, who technically became a father as a sophomore in high school, but according to Lace, he didn't "grow up" until he was thirty-one. In a well-developed essay, choose one character and discuss how he/she was forced to grow up too early, the effect this had on the character, and how it connects to a larger theme of the novel.
2. Throughout the novel, traditional gender roles are challenged. In fact, Lace recalls a conversation with her mother in which she told her, "everybody around here is raised to take it and take it...but especially the girls, the women, are tougher than the men" (133). How is this idea of the women having to be the strong ones reflected throughout the novel, and how does this connect to a larger theme of the novel?
3. The main narrators of the novel are Lace and her children, Bant and Corey; however, there are two chapters told from other characters' perspectives (Avery and Mogey). What is the purpose of these chapters? How would the story be different without their perspectives? How are the perspectives of Avery and Mogey important to the meaning of the work as a whole?
4. Avery, Lace, and Bant all had moments that forever changed them. These were moments when they were forced to confront the truth and could no longer "unsee" what they had just witnessed. Discuss these moments of realization for the characters and how the concept of educating oneself as an important element of the novel.
5. Alternate views of traditional Christianity are prevalent throughout the novel: Mogey feels God more in nature than in the church, Dane has his lunchbox and the trailer spot where he prays, and Bant has her "Grandma places" in the woods. We also see the conflict of the church's reaction to the destruction of the mountain as some preach against it and others do not. Overall, the religious influence of Pancake's upbringing is clear in this novel. Using your background knowledge of Christ, discuss how Bant could be considered a Christ-figure, and consider how this is emblematic of a larger theme of the novel.