

Assimilation Viewpoints in St. Lucy's

Nuns

- "Stage 4: As a more thorough understanding of the host culture is acquired, your students will begin to feel more comfortable in their new environment. Your students feel more at home, and their self-confidence grows. Everything begins to make sense." (p. 240)
- "Stage 5: At this point your students are able to interact effectively in the new cultural environment. They find it easy to move between the two cultures." (p. 245)
- "'Congratulations!' the nuns would huff. 'Being human is like riding this bicycle. Once you've learned how, you'll never forget.'" (p. 238)

Parents

- "Our parents wanted something better for us; they wanted us to get braces, use towels, be fully bilingual. When the nuns showed up, our parents couldn't refuse their offer. The nuns, they said, would make us naturalized citizens of human society. We would go to St. Lucy's to study a better culture. We didn't know at the time that our parents were sending us away for good. Neither did they." (p. 227)
- "My mother recoiled from me, as if I was a stranger. TRRR? She sniffed me for a long moment. Then she sank her teeth into my ankle, looking proud and sad." (p. 246)

Jeanette

- "The pack hated Jeanette. She was the most successful of us, the one furthest removed from her origins. Her real name was GWARR!, but she wouldn't respond to this anymore. Jeanette spiffed her penny loafers until her very shoes seemed to gloat. (Linguists have since traced the colloquial origins of 'goody two-shoes' back to our facilities.) She could even growl out a demonic-sounding precursor to 'Pleased to meet you.' She'd delicately extend her former paws to visitors, wearing white kid gloves." (p. 232)
- "Jeanette blew her nose into a nearby curtain . . . She sniffled and pointed to a line in her book: 'The lakewater was reinventing the forest and the white moon above it, and wolves lapped up the cold reflection of the sky.'" (p. 239)

Claudette

- "I was one of the good girls. Not great and not terrible, solidly middle-of-the-pack. But I had an ear for languages, and I could read before I could adequately wash myself. I probably could have vied with Jeanette for the number one spot; but I'd seen what happened if you gave in to your natural aptitudes. This wasn't like the woods, where you had to be your fastest and your strongest and your bravest self. Different sorts of calculations were required to survive at the Home." (p. 232)

- "The music ground to a halt. And I have never loved someone so much, before or since, as I loved my littlest sister at that moment. I wanted to roll over and lick her ears, I wanted to kill a dozen spotted fawns and let her eat first. But everybody was watching; everybody was waiting to see what I would do. 'I wasn't talking to you,' I grunted from underneath her. 'I didn't want your help. Now you have ruined the Sausalito! You have ruined the ball!' I said more loudly, hoping the nuns would hear how much my enunciation had improved." (p. 244)
- "'So,' I said, telling my first human lie. 'I'm home.'" (p. 246)

Mirabella

- "Mirabella would rip foamy chunks out of the church pews and replace them with ham bones and girl dander. She loved to roam the grounds wagging her invisible tail. (We all had a hard time giving that up. When we got excited, we would fall to the ground and start pumping our backsides. Back in those days we could pump at rabbit velocities. *Que horror!* Sister Maria frowned, looking more than a little jealous.) We'd give her scolding pinches. 'Mirabella,' we hissed, imitating the nuns. 'No.' Mirabella cocked her ears at us, hurt and confused." (pp. 230–231)
- "Mirabella's inability to adapt was taking a visible toll. Her teeth were ground down to nubbins; her hair was falling out. She hated the spongy, long-dead foods we were served, and it showed—her ribs were poking through her uniform. Her bright eyes had dulled to a sour whiskey color." (p. 236)
- "'You have ruined it!' my sisters panted, circling around us, eager to close ranks. 'Mirabella has ruined it!' Every girl was wild-eyed and itching under her polka dots, punch froth dribbling down her chin. The pack had been waiting for this moment for some time. 'Mirabella cannot adapt! Back to the woods, back to the woods!'" (p. 244)