

Detail ⑨

2:5

MONDAY

Consider:

If my mother was in a singing mood, it wasn't so bad. She would sing about hard times, bad times, and somebody-done-gone-and-left-me times. But her voice was so sweet and her singing-eyes so melty I found myself longing for those hard times, yearning to be grown without "a thin di-I-ime to my name." I looked forward to the delicious time when "my man" would leave me, when I would "hate to see that evening sun go down . . ." 'cause then I would know "my man has left this town." Misery colored by the greens and blues in my mother's voice took all of the grief out of the words and left me with a conviction that pain was not only endurable, it was sweet.

— Toni Morrison, *The Bluest Eye*

Discuss:

1. Why are parts of the passage in quotes? What do the quoted details add to the passage?
2. Which details in the passage contribute to the conclusion that pain is sweet? Fill in the chart below to show how Morrison sets up this oxymoron.

"Sweet" Details	"Pain" Details

Apply:

3. Think of a paradoxical feeling such as sweet pain, healthful illness, or frightening comfort; then make a chart listing two details for each side of the paradox. Use the chart above as a model. Share your chart with a partner.

Detail (10)

2:5

WEDNESDAY

Consider:

About suffering they were never wrong,
The Old Masters: how well they understood
Its human position; how it takes place
While someone else is eating or opening a window or just walking dully along;

— W. H. Auden, "Musee des Beaux Arts"

Discuss:

1. *Suffering* is a general term. What is a general term that sums up the detail in line 4?

2. Compare line 4 with the following:

While someone else is not suffering;

Why is Auden's line more effective?

Apply:

3. Substitute the word *laziness* for *suffering* in line one of the poem. Now rewrite line four to complete the following:

While someone else is _____ or _____ or

_____.

Your new line should give details about the *opposite* condition of laziness. Use Auden's line as a model. Share the "new" stanzas with a partner.

Detail ①

2:5

THURSDAY

Consider:

Under the hard, tough cloak of the struggle for existence in which money and enormous white refrigerators and shining, massive, brutally-fast cars and fine, expensive clothing had ostensibly overwhelmed the qualities of men that were good and gentle and just, there still beat a heart of kindness and patience and forgiveness.

— John Okada, *No-No Boy*

Discuss:

1. What does Okada's choice of detail reveal about his attitude toward money?
2. How would the elimination of *and enormous white refrigerators and shining, massive, brutally-fast cars and fine, expensive clothing* modify the meaning and effectiveness of the sentence? Fill in the chart below with details that support your understanding of Okada's attitude toward money.

Money Details

People Details

Money Details	People Details

Apply:

3. Choose a general noun then list three concrete noun phrases that reflect your opinion of the general noun. For example, Okada uses *money* as a general noun. He then expresses his opinion of money with detailed noun phrases: *enormous white refrigerators*; *shining, massive, brutally-fast cars*; and *fine, expensive clothing*. Share your list with the class.

Detail (12)

2:5
FRIDAY

Consider:

I rounded the hut and saw a man's dead body sprawling in the mud. He was an Indian, a black Dravidian coolie almost naked, and he could not have been dead many minutes. The people said that the elephant had come suddenly upon him round the corner of the hut, caught him with its trunk, put its foot on his back and ground him into the earth. This was the rainy season and the ground was soft, and his face had scored a trench a foot deep and a couple of yards long. He was lying on his belly with arms crucified and head sharply twisted to one side. His face was coated with mud, the eyes wide open, the teeth bared and grinning with an expression of unendurable agony.

— George Orwell, "Shooting an Elephant"

Discuss:

1. What is the author's attitude toward the coolie's death? What details in the passage reveal this attitude?
2. Examine the last sentence of this paragraph. How would it have affected the overall impact had Orwell written, *his eyes wide open, his teeth bared and grinning*. . . ?

Apply:

3. Think of an event that you have personally witnessed which horrified you. Your job is to describe that event and evoke the horror. Do not state or explain that you were horrified. Instead, use detail to describe the event and reveal your attitude. Share your description with the class.