

## Tracking a Motif throughout “A Very Old Man with Enormous Wings”

### *Colormarking and Comp Book Writing*

A motif is a repeated word, idea, question, image or symbol in a passage from or the entirety of a literary work. A motif can be made up of one literary device or a combination of several types of literary devices.

Example from *The Hen Who Dreamed She Could Fly*:

- “The acacia tree on the edge of the yard was blooming with white flowers” (5) –IMAGERY
- “Their sweet scent caught the breeze and wafted into the coop, filling Sprout’s heart” (5) – SYMBOLISM
- “Sprout looked up at the acacia tree, which reached toward the sky” (30)- FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE

All of these together, along with many other references, build the motif of the acacia tree in the novella.

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Common motifs include nature, death, light, darkness, colors.

Motifs need to be concrete things, things you can point to in the story – you must be able to provide direct quotations. Concrete things exist in a material or physical form; they are real or solid, not abstract. By contrast, abstract things exist in thought or as an idea but do not have a physical or concrete presence.

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1) **COLORMARKING:** Print a hardcopy of “A Very Old Man with Enormous Wings” (by Gabriel García Márquez), read it closely, and use highlighters of different colors to track four of the following motifs (of your choosing) throughout the story. Try to find all of the references that build the motifs throughout the entirety of the story. [Bring your colormarked hardcopy to class on the due date.]

- motif of prosperity, suffering
- motif of suffering, old age
- motif of forgiveness, love
- motif of certainty, doubt
- motif of the unknown, ambiguity
- motif of religion, supernatural

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2) **COMP BOOK TASK #2:** After you’ve read the story multiple times and colormarked the various motifs throughout the story, respond in your composition book (with rough draft writing) to the following question (on its own new page) in a fully developed, proofread paragraph:

What job does the motif do in the work? Does it develop Setting? Character? Thematic idea? Mood? Tone? Incorporate textual evidence in your response.

[Bring your composition book to class on the due date.]