

**Directions:** The following excerpt is from the opening of *The Beet Queen*, a 1986 novel by Louise Erdrich. Read the passage carefully. Then write a well-developed essay in which you analyze how Erdrich depicts the impact of the environment on the two children. You may wish to consider such literary devices as tone, imagery, selection of detail, and point of view.

### The Branch

Long before they planted beets in Argus and built the highways, there was a railroad. Along the track, which crossed the Dakota-Minnesota border and stretched on to Minneapolis, everything that made the town arrived. All that diminished the town departed by that route, too. On a cold spring morning in 1932, the train brought both an addition and a subtraction. They came by freight. By the time they reached Argus their lips were violet and their feet were so numb that, when they jumped out of the boxcar, they stumbled and scraped their palms and knees through the cinders.

The boy was a tall fourteen, hunched with his sudden growth and very pale. His mouth was sweetly curved, his skin fine and girlish. His sister was only eleven years old, but already she was so short and ordinary that it was obvious she would be this way all her life. Her name was square and practical as the rest of her. Mary. She brushed her coat off and stood in the watery wind. Between the buildings there was only more bare horizon for her to see, and from time to time men crossing it. Wheat was the big crop then, and the topsoil was so newly tilled that it hadn't all blown off yet, the way it had in Kansas. In fact, times were generally much better in eastern North Dakota than in most places, which is why Karl and Mary Adare had come there on the train. Their mother's sister, Fritzie, lived on the eastern edge of town. She ran a butcher shop with her husband.

The two Adares put their hands up their sleeves and started walking. Once they began to move they felt warmer, although they'd been traveling all night and the chill had reached deep. They walked east, down the dirt and planking of the broad main street, reading the signs on each false-front clapboard store they passed, even reading the gilt letters in the window of the brick bank. None of these places was a butcher shop. Abruptly, the stores stopped, and a string of houses, weathered gray or peeling gray paint, with dogs tied to their porch railings, began.

Small trees were planted in the yards of a few of these houses, and one tree, weak, a scratch of light against the gray of everything else, tossed in a film of blossoms. Mary trudged solidly forward, hardly glancing at it, but Karl stopped. The tree drew him with its delicate perfume. His cheeks went pink, he stretched his arms out like a sleepwalker, and in one long transfixed motion he floated to the tree and buried his face in the white petals.

Turning to look for Karl, Mary was frightened by how far back he had fallen and how still he was, his face pressed in the flowers. She shouted, but he did not seem to hear her and only stood, strange and stock-still among the branches. He did not move even when the dog in the yard lunged against its rope and bawled. He did not notice when the door to the house opened and a woman scrambled out. She shouted at Karl too, but he paid her no mind and so she untied her dog. Large and anxious, it flew forward in great bounds. And then, either to protect himself or to seize the blooms, Karl reached out and tore a branch from the tree.

It was such a large branch, from such a small tree, that blight would attack the scar where it was pulled off. The leaves would fall away later on that summer and the sap would sink into the roots. The next spring, when Mary passed in on some errand, she saw that it bore no blossoms and remembered how, when the dog jumped for Karl, he struck out with the branch and the petals dropped around the dog's fierce outstretched body in a sudden snow. Then he yelled, "Run!" and Mary ran east, toward Aunt Fritzie. But Karl ran back to the boxcar and the train.

Louise Erdrich  
*The Beet Queen*

beets  
railroad tracks  
town arrived  
duminski departed  
by that route too

+/- Spring 1932

now Karl  
pale 14 Boy  
violet ups  
nump who?  
vine/girlish

better weather  
aunt Fritzie

Mary 11 short  
Squad Practical  
left shop area  
shabby houses  
dogs tied up

a single tree  
mesmerizes  
Karl

tore a branch  
from the tree

Karl killed the tree  
(back to box car Huh?)

cold on the train  
ups violet  
nump

detail  
POV

|        |  |
|--------|--|
| Thesis | <input type="checkbox"/> distinct thesis<br><input type="checkbox"/> makes a claim<br><input type="checkbox"/> can be proven with evidence |
|--------|--|

In the (genre) (title), (author) presents (literary element or wording from prompt) in order to (give the why the author does that), ultimately illustrating that (universal idea).

The Beet Queen novel Louise Erdrich <sup>impact of enviro on the two children</sup>

Point 1  
 Karl was a negative impact on the environment  
 sudden growth  
 pale

| Quote/Evidence   | Literary Element                     | Explanation How Proves to Thesis  |
|--|--------------------------------------|---|
| "wheat top soil. Kansas..."  | contextual references                | Shows they came from Kansas we can assume it is a place where enviro is messed up |
| Karl stops mesmerized by nature admires unable to leave his fascination lead to encounter with dog...<br>destroying nature | is a place where enviro is messed up | Karl runs back to his camp  |

Point 2  
 Mary has no impact - she moves quickly leaving no boot print

description characterization Mary - her growth wasn't

| Quote/Evidence               | Literary Element | Explanation How Proves to These |
|------------------------------|------------------|---------------------------------|
| Mary trudged solidly forward |                  | ....                            |
| Mary runs to Fritzle         |                  |                                 |

Conclusion  
 Address  
 the UHE