

"Book War" by Wang Ping

Close reading exercise

1. What is the challenge the narrator (Ping) is facing?
2. Identify the language Ping uses to describe her books vs. the language that the "government" is said to see her books (rhetoric in practice)
3. What does the idea/symbol of the Little Mermaid signify? What is the rhetorical effect on the reader?
4. What is the 'battle' and what is the 'war'?

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1. Ping is facing her true passion of reading her favorite stories because she can't read books due to the government's view on them. In the beginning it is also mentioned that her father was being exiled and her mother being arrested so that adds to her pressure as the oldest to take care of the rest of her family.
2. Ping uses a detailed and imaginative explanation of her story while the government sees them as "poisonous weeds." An example of her detailed explanation would be when she found her neighbor reading and how they both bonded: "But the girl squealed and started dancing in the twilight." It is expressed as reading being a magical experience especially when you find a person who shares the same passion.
3. The idea/symbol that the little mermaid signifies is how trapped Ping and the little mermaid feel. The girls both share similar situations. One where the little mermaid wishes to be free, and see the world, while Ping wishes to be free, and read books. The rhetorical effect it has on the reader, is how both girls, despite being in different situations, both share the same problem and desire to "be free" in their own way.
4. I like to think that the "battle" Ping speaks about in the Ted Talk is about the disagreement between her and the Government/ her mother. Her mother was scared that the government would find out that Ping had a book, which caused the mother to heavily disagree with Ping. At the end when the mother listened to Ping's stories, Ping saw it as a winning moment that she finally got her mother to at least listen to her. Thus, winning the "war".