

400 - Themes & Motifs
of
Crazy George Takes a Holiday
The Fourth Study Guide
in the
Dragon Bound
a.k.a Dra@g©n B©und a.k.a
a.k.a **The D-B©und Adventuring Series** a.k.a

starring
Ruby FireHaven
and so on and so forth

as conceived, written, and enchanted by

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the

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Themes & Motifs
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400 - Themes & Motifs

Themes and motifs are subtle concepts. At their simplest, a theme is nothing more than an idea, which an author expresses through symbols and metaphors (i.e. motifs). Which is to say, readers wouldn't be nearly as confused while reading most works of highfaluting literature, if the authors were forced to outline their themes along with the motifs they intended to use right at the beginning.

But author's don't.
And so readers are.
What are you going to do?

Themes

Of course, if you're anything like me, you still don't have a handle on what a theme is, so let's use Crazy George as an example. He's a wizard, and he's crazy (like nutso, crazy, insane). And after reading CGTaH a time or two, listening to Crazy George's endless rants, and taking note of his increasingly erratic behavior, one might come to the conclusion that the theme of CGTaH is:

Crazy George is nuts.

But then, that's really more like a character flaw than a theme, so let's try again. Maybe the theme is:

You got to be crazy to use magic. It's generalized. It's easy to understand. And, many people would agree with you, but sadly it's not true. Not that themes have to be true, but you may have

noticed how authors usually only put forth themes in which they, themselves, agree. So maybe instead, we should try:

Magic will make you crazy.

But you know, it's not really compelling to me. I mean, I use magic and I'm not crazy. Granted, I'm probably hard to understand at times, but not crazy. In the end, it simply may be a better idea to leave magic out of it altogether and go with the ever popular:

Love will make you do crazy things.

Hey, I kind of like that one. It's short, sweet, and pretty darn cheesy, so there's like no chance any literary scholar dude is going to pick up my book and rip the symbolic meaning behind my story to shreds. Or worse yet, try to tell you (the dear reader) what I (your most humble of narrators) intended say. As in, "Here the author was trying to..."

Hey! I mean, stop right there, buddy! I'm perfectly capable of telling my audience what I'm trying say. I'm a writer and telling folks what I'm trying to say is exactly what I get paid to do!

Motifs

OK, so we have a theme, to wit:

Love will make you do crazy things.

Now all we need are a few motifs, and we can call this section a wrap.

To keep those fancy-smancy literary scholars off our backs, the motifs should be cheesy. But then, once all those smarty pants academics in their fancy gowns are out of the picture, there won't be anybody left to explain the obscure symbolism I like to use to a reading public, which sad to say, is pretty darn dimwitted at times (present company excepted, of course). So basically, the motifs will need to be kept simple (as in, S-I-M-P-L-E.)

As such, in Crazy George Takes a Holiday (if someone should ever write it... according to my instructions, mind you) you

will find the following motifs in support of the idea that: love will make you do crazy things.

Crazy George will teach Lane how to work magic. And as we all know, that's just sheer madness.

Crazy George will go looking for Lane whenever she runs astray. Once again, not the brightest thing to do if personal survival is, you know, a high priority.

Crazy George will take the rap for, and pay the toll for, Lane's K'fr at the Fox Town Locks. I know, crazy. Right?

Or if you like, we can summarize all of this by pointing out that pretty much anytime George does something, it's crazy. Ergo sum, ipso factor, he must be in love.

But all of the foregoing examples have concentrated on Crazy George. To make the theme convincing, we will need to look at what it is trying to tell us from multiple angles and apply it to other people and situations as well. And since Lane falls in love with George, it only makes sense to, therefore, look at things from her point of view.

First off, Lane agreed to go on a boat ride with Crazy George, twelve Cobalts, and a Celaphopod... even though she's worked with the Cobalts and me before. Pretty wacky, I'd say. Sort of silly, bordering on the stupidly insane. Clearly love is in the air.

Lane taught George's cat, dog, or whatever Rover is to bark, beg, roll over, and play dead. Fair enough, this might not be the best example, but it's the best example I could come up with on the fly... and no, Lane can't fly. She's a pretty, grounded, four-armed demoness and not one to play with the kitties, so clearly she's a bit more flighty than usual... a clear indication she's in love.

But enough of the silly puns. This here example is a little better... and more down to earth. Lane listened to jazz with George and actually enjoyed it. Now that's crazy. Jazz is hardly what you would call easy listening. And so it was clear to even me, that Lane was starting to fall for the old flea-bitten, bathrobe wearing, knee-brace accessorizing sorcerer.

Of course for a really good theme, you need more than just a handful of motifs, you want the motifs to saturate your work so even the dimmest of professors can notice them (finally!) on their thirtieth reading. In other words, everyone in the story who falls in love or is in love has to conform to the thesis. And, it is with this in mind that I give you these additional examples:

The Vixenous Elf whom I call my girlfriend actually let me go on the trip to Lang'don, like willingly. I believe her exact words were, "Anything to get you off the couch and out of the house," or something like that. She's always saying "crazy" things like that, so clearly she's in love. I mean, look at me. How could she not be?

And then, there's me. After the formal journey was over and I was recuperating in my new home away from home (i.e. Stef'fan's condominium apartment), I invited my girlfriend to join me. Now, this might not sound all that crazy, but Stef'fan has an extensive collection of cutlery in his kitchen, and my girlfriend has threatened to "gut me like the pig that I am" on more than one occasion. But still, I invited her to stay with me. Why? Because I enjoy being with her, going so far as to cuddle up with her at night before we drift off into slumber -- even when razor-sharp instruments of Celaphopod gutting destruction are never more than a few dozen feet away. The only explanation for this idiotic behavior is love! Clear and simple. Or reckless stupidity! But then, haven't we shown by now that the two are pretty much one and the same?

Themes & Motifs (in review, ad exhaustum)

In truth though, as far as motifs go, all of the preceding examples pretty much suck (as I'm sure any student of literature would be happy to point out). You see, they're really more like plot points than symbols or metaphors. But then, maybe you already knew that.

And as I look back and scramble to salvage all of the proceeding work, I quickly realize that the problem was that my theme wasn't obscure enough. I mean, love will make you do crazy things is sort of pedestrian. If you want your themes to pack a wallop they have to be trendy and highfaluting, sort of like: power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely. See, now that's a good theme. And then, the motifs you use in support of a theme like that have to be painfully obvious -- not to mention, to be well vetted by the muckity-mucks of academia (so, you know, the profs can see them coming a mile away). As such, using something tediously obvious like a color for your symbol is the best bet. Thus, in CGTaH anyone with the slightest bit of power is dressed in red -- in direct proportion to how much power they have, of course. This means, whenever anyone wearing the slightest bit of red does something nasty, you'll know exactly why.

For instance, the Leprechaun at Bridge 492 wore a red hat and this is why he transported us to the wrong vortex; and why this little mishap had nothing to do with Crazy George being a cheapskate, failing to tip the 'Con generously, or losing his focus as he passed through the gate, as if Crazy George would ever lose his focus.

Or as another example, Sterling Watford's family crest is red and this, obviously, is why the lot of them are such bum-heads: this being Lang'don slang for what is more commonly referred to as a bum-head.

And lastly... or maybe I really shouldn't tell you this. Oh, what the H\$rlk. I mean, in Kiss'wick it does seem to be a fairly well known fact that Morgana Feldstone wears red and black (like exclusively) all the way down to her frilly undergarments (a.k.a. knickers). And this in a nutshell, is why she is such a bad-bad girl and is need of a good and proper spanking.

Hmm. Is it just me? Or does it feel like there is still something lacking in this section? Perhaps something along the lines of a total lack of focus?

Look, I've taken a writing course or two in my time, and the profs were always going on about this and going on about that. And quite frankly, I didn't understand a thing they were saying -- not word one. I mean, it was like they were talking in a totally different language, only they weren't. You know, sort of like how they do in Lang'don.

Look, here's a good example. Sterling invited us to dinner, right. And he said we were going to have Welsch Rabbit. Well, the dish isn't Welsch (the Welsch actually hate Welsch Rabbit, just the name of the dish seems to anger them, like it was some sort of insult, or something). Nor does Welsch Rabbit contain any rabbit. When you get right down to it, the dish looks more like potato-cheese stew than anything else.

And truthfully, everything is misnamed like that. Seriously, I think they just make it up as they go along. "Hey Jonnie, me boy. This one thinks we name the parts of our carriages after items of clothing. We got him calling the front a bonnet and the back a boot. See if you can't get him to call the door a zipper, and the seat a pair of trousers."

And then the laughs ensue, courtesy of another hapless tourist.

OK. Where was I?

Oh right, focusing on themes and proving that I'm more coherent than Crazy George..

Look, the thing is, real themes, killer themes, the kind of themes they give Putzer Prizes for in Interpretive Fiction are always abstract. The theme is never something like love will make you do crazy things. No, the theme is always something artsy, or crazy, man, crazy. As if that in itself was a theme and not some random "outpouring of the soul" from some K'fr'ed up Beat Poet who lost his last brain cell a few decades back.

Anyhow, you probably remember this much from language studies. I mean, you probably remember your Classic Lit teacher

asking, “So class, in what ways does Quagmire communicate Garg’s joy de vivre to us in Garg 67: The Rock of Destiny?”

Me, I don’t know. Like most of my classes, I flunked that one too. Truthfully, I didn’t even know Garg could talk, much less speak Frau’nch. Still, I’m guessing the implied theme there is joy de vivre. Nothing more. Nothing less. Whatever, joy de vivre means.

I guess the main point there is that not only is joy de vivre a short well know phrase, but pretty much everyone thinks they know what it means; but you know, they don’t really know, because if they did, they wouldn’t feel the need to say it in a foreign language. Capiche?

Now, I’m not going to be so cruel as to start talking in a foreign language, but to give you an a better idea of what I’m talking about, let me list off a few classic thematic topics.

Truth: never heard of it.

Justice: not if Lord Sterling has anything to say about it.

And, the Gra’gl way: a Hobbling in every pot and a pot in every home, that’s what I say. Clearly, I continue to struggle with my vow not to kill whenever Hobbings are involved.

Anyhow, do you see how great, how truly fantastic those themes are? Well, whoever ends up writing CGTaH may wish to us any of those and/or any of the following themes that are short and sweet, and utterly ill-defined:

The Mystic Waters: which defies a literal description, and as such I expect it will lend itself nicely to symbolism.

K’fr: is your friend, but then this probably went without saying.

The Dragon: gets what he wants. Don’t they always! I’m beginning to think that underneath all that black, he’s really a red dragon if you get my meaning.

Impermanence (the): of it all. This is actually a classic thematic element and will hopefully make up for a lot of the other gibberish in this section. Me, I’m keeping my fingers crossed.

And then lastly, we have the nature of reality -- including the vortexes and the outer dimensions. In other words, if a thing can't be expensed, how do we ever know it really happen?

The Mystic River

At last! An honest to goodness thematic element!

But alas, it shall be the only one upon which I expand.

However as a sort of compensation for that, I will do something else that I promised I wouldn't do, and that is to write a short blurb of text that can be used for the actual study guide. You should feel honored.

Being the definitive river-trip novel, there can be no doubt that if Crazy George Takes a Holiday had been written first, this masterpiece of interpretive fiction would have profoundly influenced -- Nay! would have undoubtedly been the motive force behind and the impetus which ultimately spawned the derivative works of both Joseph Connors with his Dark Heart Trilogy, and the clearly reactionary Hobbling loving filth, The Ad-Ventures of Huckey-Boy Fin, by Samuel Davis, Jr..

Well, that's it for the actual writing. But, I think you get the idea. The important point to remember is -- even though it's not mentioned in the foregoing outtake -- the Mystic River flows through us all, like blood through our veins. And right there, we've got ourselves another red equals power symbolic tie-in.

Down with the tyranny of the cardiovascular system, that's what I say! No longer shall we kneel before our over-oxygenated masters! The time for a full transfusion of the system is now!

Gee, you spend a month with Crazy George, and he does sort of wear off on you a little.

But the point remains, the Mystic River runs through all of us, like the aforementioned blood through our veins. But, not Morgana's. She can be... um, how to say this... delicately?

Um, Morgana can be a little cold-hearted at times. And if a person was crafty (read between the lines on that one), you might be able to figure out what it is that Morgana hoped to gain by working with us (i.e. access to The Waters), and why she sold us the derivative rights to her works in the first place ('cause it's the only thing she had that we wanted). In the end, everyone has their price. Unfortunately -- like most other authors -- mine just happens to be abnormally low.

OK. Enough of that.

Let's get this Mystic River symbolism stuff squared away, so we can move on.

A canal is nothing more than a river stripped of its freewill. I mean, what type of self-respecting waterway moseys along sideways across a hill? Basically, we're talking about slavery here! And that means that before long, we'll be talking about FREEDOM!

Because where do we all end up when our little vacation is over? Where? I'll tell you where. In a seaside resort located in the Sandwich Islands, that's where. And once you get past a few other islands scattered about in the vicinity, there's not another land mass for... well, lots of leagues, miles, knots, or whatever it is that they measure these things with. Look, even if you have the wind at your back and ole' Trident Face rooting for your side it's a two week voyage before you hit anything more than a sunken reef. And if he's not rooting for you, it's only worse. The Sandwich Isles are totally isolated -- like totally. Which means they're surrounded by lots and lots of water in every direction. Which means they're about as close to the Elemental Plane of Water as you can get.

Capiche?

Fair enough, I promised I wouldn't talk gibberish anymore, or at least in a foreign language, so let me break it down for you. We carried a load of K'fr (seedlings and bales, but seedlings being the important part) with us on our journey (i.e. we opened the K'fr Highway, and read my book by that very same name if the process of doing this is unclear to you). And then because we could hardly avoid it, but also because that was the reason for the trip in the first place, we took the Canal Water along with us on the trip through the portals. Got it? The Water hitched a ride on the back of the K'fr Highway, and seeing as how water and plants have a sort of symbiotic relationship with each other, it's all win-win.

Of course, just because a relationship is symbiotic doesn't mean it's symbolic, so let's take a deep breath, start over, and try to remain focused this time -- maybe go back to that glossary style, which was working so well for us before.

Bridges: the Lang'don Canal goes under bridges left and right. This is, of course, symbolic of the canal water's subservience to the will of man and all other magic using creatures. I've got a hunch this is what Crazy George was trying to allude to when he attempted explain magic in terms of the card game known as Bridge; and then, he sort of forgot where he was going with it, just like he usually does. Whatever the case, oppression of the Waters was the symbolism, which I'm sure, the builders of the canal had this in mind when they were building the bridges in the first place.

The Locks on the waterway obviously follow a similar metric. It's all about keeping the water down... Man! That's why you need a key. And you just don't need a key to work the locks like you might think, but for everything on the canal -- drinking water, sewage disposal, showers, everything. Once again, why do you need a key? Because the water is enslaved... Man! Honestly, it wouldn't surprise me to learn a bunch of capitalistic pig-dogs financed the construction of the entire thing with their ever present lackeys -- Stocks and Bonds. The time for the revolution is now, my friends! The time is now!

And then we have the tunnels. We can get all artsy-fartsy with this one and go on about the endless cycle of birth and death, and the magical passage of reawakening that one goes through while traveling takes down a long wet tunnel -- i.e. the womb.

OK. Sorry. I apologize. You saw through me on that one. Fair enough. I admit it. I'm grasping at straws at this point. That's why it's a bad idea to alienate the academics, they can figure this sort of stuff out for you. Give 'em a long dark tunnel with water dripping from the ceiling and a stagnant cesspool below and they'll find the symbolism in it. Me, I haven't got a clue.

And then, of course, we have the fact that we began in a market town, where everything is for hire. But ended in the Sandwich Isles, which is nothing more than one giant retirement community. Even I can see that this symbolizes a long life slaving away... for the Man! Only to gain your freedom at Death's door.

You know, you got to hand it to the Humans, though. You never hear anybody talking about how the Goblins -- or even more ludicrously, the Hobblings -- have got them down. It's always... the Man! Them Humans be vicious mofos.

Of course, they're not nearly as vicious as The Dragon's tax collectors. Those guys are insane, which is why a long misguided adventure down a canal filled with rank, undrinkable, fetid water, where every decisions turns out to be catastrophic is so symbolic of being audited on your taxes.

And after saying something as patently untrue as that, I get the feeling that maybe I should quit for the day.

And, you know what? The more I think about calling it a day, the better and better that sounds. So on that note, I shall bid both you and this section a fond farewell.

But before I go, I shall leave you with a short transcription of a conversation Crazy George had with Lane. It sort of sums up everything I've been saying about Themes, Motifs, and the hazards to be found among The Dragon's indecipherable tax laws.

CG: Look, if you're lost, then you don't know which way to go... but you might know the general direction... or just have a hunch. One way is as good as the next. So you just go, and you figure you'll figure it out, figure out the next step around the next corner, or over the next hill, or whatever. You just sort of play it by ear, and after a bit, you know exactly where you are.

Lane: So what you're saying is, we're lost.

CG: Yep. Pretty much. I haven't got a clue.