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Louise Erdrich accepted the 2014 Dayton Peace Prize with the following statement:

*"I am not a peaceful writer. I am a troubled one, longing for peace. But we are all engaged in a war we hardly dare think of from day to day. As W.S. Merwin wrote, 'we are melting the very poles of the earth.' By allowing fossil fuel corporations to control earth's climate and toxify pure water, we are visiting wars of scarcity upon our children, our generations. Indigenous people are in the front lines because our lands are remote, vulnerable, and often energy rich. I am honored to accept this prize so that I can speak to how we can define our possibilities -- we can still astonish history. Peace depends on clean water for everyone, rich and poor, clean energy for everyone, rich and poor. Most of all peace depends upon our collective will to resist our own destruction."*

Dayton Literary Peace Prize

2014 Richard C. Holbroke Distinguished Achievement Award

<http://daytonliterarypeaceprize.org/2014-holbrooke.htm>

Topics:

1. Can we see Erdrich's "The Shawl," Alexie's "What You Pawn I Will Redeem," and the film *Smoke Signals* as demonstrating the Native American "collective will to resist our own destruction"? Erdrich's acceptance speech refers to ecological destruction, but can her claim concerning resisting destruction also apply to the lives of these fictional characters in the stories by Erdrich and Alexie? Draw support for your thesis from selected stories and Peterson's analysis of Alexie's work.
2. Nancy J. Peterson considers Gerald Vizenor's term "survivance" in her analysis of the work of Sherman Alexie. She says that Vizenor's term works against the stereotype that Native Americans are a "vanishing" people, as it "acknowledges colonialism and trauma but... *claims more than survival as an ending of the story*" (76) (Italics added). Vizenor explains that "Native survivance stories are renunciations of dominance, tragedy, and victimry" (76). Evaluate Erdrich's "The Shawl," Alexie's "What You Pawn I Will Redeem," and the film *Smoke Signals*: do they qualify as survivance stories, by providing a renunciation of dominance, tragedy, and victimry?
3. Explore the possibility of healing and restoration as it is articulated in Erdrich's "The Shawl," Alexie's "What You Pawn I Will Redeem" and the film *Smoke Signals*.

## Resources

Alexie, Sherman. "What You Pawn I Will Redeem." *The New Yorker*, 21 April 2003

[www.newyorker.com/contributors/sherman-alexie](http://www.newyorker.com/contributors/sherman-alexie). Accessed 17 Mar. 2017.

Erdrich, Louise. "The Shawl." *The New Yorker*, 5 Mar. 2001. [www.newyorker.com/magazine/2001/03/05/the-shawl-2](http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2001/03/05/the-shawl-2) Accessed 5 Jan. 2017.

Peterson, Nancy J. "'If I Were Jewish, How Would I Mourn the Dead?': Holocaust and Genocide in the Work of Sherman Alexie." *Society for the Study of Multi-Ethnic Literature of the United States Language*, vol.35, no.4. (2010), pp. 63-84. JSTOR. Accessed 17 Mar. 2017.

*Smoke Signals*. Dir. Chris Eyre. Perf. Adam Beach, Evan Adams, Irene Bedard. Miramax, 1999. DVD.



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