

## Writing Task #2: analytical close reading of a passage in *No-No Boy*

For my writing task, I wanted to do a close reading of one passage that stood out to me from the past few chapters of *No-No Boy*. This passage describes the internal thoughts of Kenji's father, beginning with "In answer, the father merely nodded, acceding to his son's wish because his son was a man who had gone to war to fight for the abundance and happiness" and ending with "did it not mean something now that he could look around and feel the love of the men and women who were once only children?" (109). In this passage, Okada shows that it was the influence and power of family relationships that led some Japanese Americans to stay in America and let it become their new home. Simple but connotative diction indicating a sense of fulfillment such as "abundance," "happiness," "dear," "richness" and "precious" reveals Kenji's father's deep concern with and attachment to aspects of life that contribute to the family's wellbeing. The syntax, as in other parts of *No-No Boy*, makes heavy use of polysyndeton, inserting coordinating conjunctions such as "and" and "or" in between lists of nouns or verbs to slow down the reader's eye, adding a sense of musical rhythm to the text that parallels the relative flow of life, always moving forward and not hampered by jarring bumps, that results when a close-knit family successfully integrates into America. Finally, Okada repeats the motif of part vs. whole, as Kenji's father notes that America had "become a part of him because it was a part of his children and he saw and felt it in their speech and joy and sorrows and hopes and he was a part of them." The repeated idea of becoming "a part" of something else shows the depth of these family relationships between Japanese Americans. In becoming a "part" of the others, they extended the definition and boundaries of the self to include others, thus treating others' feelings and experiences as their own. Through sentimental diction, lulling syntax, and the repeated idea of becoming a "part" of others and adopting their identities, Okada shows how the love and closeness of one Japanese American family guided them through their journey to accept America as their new home and future.

On the motif of part vs whole: I found it interesting that this idea of "a part" also appeared later on in Ichiro's reflections on his own dysfunctional family and his need to stay with them regardless: "he too was a part of them [his parents] and they a part of him and one did not say this is as far as we go together, I am stepping out of your lives, without rendering himself only part of a man" (138). Ichiro's view that he and his parents are physically blended together, sharing one existence as a part of each other, stops him from leaving them because to do so would betray and split himself. In one more extension of this motif, I wonder if Kenji's leg also can be seen as an example of the idea of part vs whole because only part of Kenji's physical body is left, emphasizing that like Ichiro he feels the need to rely on his relationships to gain a sense of wholeness when he feels incomplete.