

Moon Palace

An American Mythology

*How is a
American*



modern

mythology created in Paul Auster's Moon Palace?

Objectif final : être capable de parler de la dimension mythique du voyage à travers les paysages urbains et naturels emblématiques des États-Unis.

Midchapter task ⇒ *Write the page after last.*

EO ⇒ Present a slideshow or video tour across the US, spanning both urban and wild iconic places. You can either make a film of your presentation or do it in class but you should talk without a script!

Vocabulary:

- *describing surroundings, real and imaginary landscapes*
- *expressing one's emotions*
- *idioms linked to the moon*

Grammar & Pronunciation skills:

- Comparatives and superlatives, double comparatives
- Expressing goal, cause and effect.
- Write fictional pieces (*Write a story using words and idioms linked to the moon, write the page after last, write and tell an Indian myth...*)
- Analyse symbols: fiction to represent reality

Culture : Travelling as a quest for identity (// Bildungsroman), the moon as an American, literary and mythological symbol (to be linked to unit 1 : *We choose to go to the moon/space conquest*)

CECRL Correction grammaticale

C1 ⇒ Peut maintenir constamment un haut degré de correction grammaticale; les erreurs sont rares et difficiles à repérer.

B2 ⇒ A un bon contrôle grammatical ; des bévues occasionnelles, des erreurs non systématiques et de petites fautes syntaxiques peuvent encore se produire mais elles sont rares et peuvent souvent être corrigées rétrospectivement.

A un assez bon contrôle grammatical. Ne fait pas de fautes conduisant à des malentendus.

Moon Palace – An American Mythology



Lesson plan

Introduction ⇒ Moon Palace book covers + blurb + urban and natural canyons.

I – UNTETHERED, LIKE A LONE STAR IN A FOGGY SKY

a) To cut a long story short: the incipit

☆ **Introducing the “I” of the story**

☆ **Jumbled sentences: find a consistent order to understand the plot**

☆ **Characters and onomastics** Quest for identity: family portrait + onomastics

b) Everything comes full circle – the last page

Read the last three paragraphs of *Moon Palace*. PA’s interview: *The moon is many things at once.*

Intermediate task ⇒ Write the page after last.

II – AMERICAN MYTHOLOGY – NOTHING CAN ASTOUND AN AMERICAN

a) A picture is worth a thousand words...

☆ **Welcome to the Navajo Nation’s Monument Valley Park** Picture + quote “Why does the American West look so much like the landscape of the Moon?” + description of the West p. 156-7 is a picture really worth a thousand words?

☆ **Dreaming awake: Art and the West** watching Blakelock’s painting *Moonlight* like a ceremony/spiritual experience p.134-139 **realism that becomes abstraction**

b) Back to origins: Native Americans and the American West

☆ **Hallucination in Central Park** Central Park pp. 69-71 = the centre of the universe, Sun & Moon converge, but also past and present, China and America, dream & reality.

☆ **Native mythology – a tradition of story-telling** 2 videos Visitors from the Sky/ How Coyote and Eagle Stole the Sun and Moon + Legends from Native Indians and the American West.

CL° ⇒ How about touring the American West now? Mojo Travel video + article

Final task ⇒ Present your own imaginary tour of the USA with a slideshow or a video.

• Step 1

SUPPORT	Book covers + blurb, Chap. 1
OBJ. CULT	Introduction to <i>Moon Palace</i> . Analysing images (book covers: what they reveal of the plot)
OBJ. LING	EO, IO, CE
DEM. PEDA/ ACT DE L'ELEVE	<p>⇒ Take turns looking at one of the front covers for <i>Moon Palace</i> by Paul Auster. Share the information you have and together, imagine what the story may be about.</p> <p>⇒ Read the blurb summary and check your hypotheses. List the different kinds of space that are mentioned in the summary. There are at least 3! = Outer space: moon landing, physical/geographical space, from the canyons of Manhattan to the cruelly beautiful landscape of the American West, inner space: The only place you exist is in your head + a meditation upon, and re-examination of, America, art and the self.</p> <p>⇒ “The canyons of Manhattan”: explain this reference + look at the pictures (Bryce Canyon: Wall street + Manhattan from below) = metaphor, back and forth between the cityscape and the wilderness.</p> <p>⇒ Incipit: read the first paragraph of <i>Moon Palace</i>. Recap what you now know about the narrator. Compare this paragraph with the first paragraph in <i>The Buddha of Suburbia</i>.</p>
HW	<i>Finish reading the beginning of the first chapter. 1) Identify what belongs to his past – present – future at the time of his studies (1969). 2) Explain his feelings for books.</i>

• Step 2

SUPPORT	Chap. 1, Jumbled sentences exercise. Onomastics – the diagram.																	
OBJ. LING	EO, CE.																	
DEM. PEDA/ ACT DE L'ELEVE	<p>⇒ Recap 1) what you learn about his past, present and future.</p> <table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <thead> <tr> <th style="width: 25%;">Past</th> <th style="width: 50%;">“Present” – late 1960’s</th> <th style="width: 25%;">Future</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td style="vertical-align: top;"> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Arrival in NYC: 1965 </td> <td style="vertical-align: top;"> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - First moon landing - Lived in an apartment with over 1,000 books. - The books were used as furniture. - Uncle Victor dies = “<i>I began to vanish into another world</i>” </td> <td style="vertical-align: top;"> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - I nearly did not make it - I saw my money dwindle to zero - I lost my apartment - I wound up living in the streets - If not for a girl named Kitty Wu, I probably would have starved to death. - I took the job with the old man in the wheelchair. - I found out who my father was. - I walked across the desert from Utah to California. </td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>2) Explain his feelings for books: 1st purpose for books: symbolic objects, what they are used for is what they contain (escape from reality, into fiction). Here, they are used as basic, trivial objects = furniture. But even stacked in boxes, they help the narrator invent stories based on them: “<i>I was a great one for making up stories</i>” = introduces himself as a story-teller. The result of his making up stories may be the book you are now reading!</p> <p>⇒ Understanding the plot: rearrange the jumbled sentences into the right order to make a consistent plot + 1492 books: why is the number symbolic?</p> <table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse; text-align: center;"> <tr> <td style="width: 10%;">1.e</td> <td style="width: 10%;">2.b</td> <td style="width: 10%;">3.g</td> <td style="width: 10%;">4.i</td> <td style="width: 10%;">5.k</td> <td style="width: 10%;">6.d</td> <td style="width: 10%;">7.a</td> <td style="width: 10%;">8.c</td> <td style="width: 10%;">9.h</td> <td style="width: 10%;">10.j</td> <td style="width: 10%;">11.f</td> </tr> </table> <p>⇒ Now look at the diagram with the main characters in <i>MP</i>: like Indian names, their names describe who they are/ are meant to be. Try to make sense of these names (= make suppositions based on what you know of the plot and what the names symbolise in your opinion).</p>	Past	“Present” – late 1960’s	Future	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Arrival in NYC: 1965 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - First moon landing - Lived in an apartment with over 1,000 books. - The books were used as furniture. - Uncle Victor dies = “<i>I began to vanish into another world</i>” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - I nearly did not make it - I saw my money dwindle to zero - I lost my apartment - I wound up living in the streets - If not for a girl named Kitty Wu, I probably would have starved to death. - I took the job with the old man in the wheelchair. - I found out who my father was. - I walked across the desert from Utah to California. 	1.e	2.b	3.g	4.i	5.k	6.d	7.a	8.c	9.h	10.j	11.f
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HW	<i>Read the three extracts “Onomastics – 1, 2, 3”. Underline the elements that shed light on the meaning/symbol of each name.</i>																	

• Step 3

SUPPORT	Onomastics 1 – 2 – 3 (MS and Effing’s names), last paragraphs in <u>MP</u> .					
OBJ.CULT	What’s in a name? Onomastics.					
OBJ. LING	CE, EO, EE, IO. GRAM: expressing goal, cause and effect.					
DEM.	⇒ Onomastics 1-2-3: recap what you know about the characters’ names.					
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	<p>⇒ In your opinion, why does Uncle Victor find symbolic meanings for Marco’s names? Type de productions attendues : <i>He does that because... He does it (in order) to...</i> = introducing the idea of a goal. Now focus on these sentences from the <i>Onomastics</i> extracts: <i>It didn’t matter that my mother had chosen Marco simply because she liked it. – The book you are writing is not yet finished. Therefore, it’s a manuscript. – The gerund had then given way to another: <i>fucking Thomas, which for convention’s sake had been further modified into f-ing. Thus, he was Thomas Effing, the man who had f***ed his life.</i> What do they express? ⇒ CAUSE – EFFECT Grammar exercise https://www.liveworksheets.com/jk1442019fr</i></p> <p>⇒ Remember the blurb for <u>MP</u>: “<i>Moon Palace is the story of Marco Stanley Fogg and his quest for identity in the modern world (...) moving from the canyons of Manhattan to the cruelly beautiful landscape of the American West.” Imagine writing a novel about a character based on you a lot: 1) What name would you give this character and why? 2) Also imagine this character taking on a trip: what kind of travel would it be (= where – when – what for)? = Write your ideas in your notebook.</i></p> <p>⇒ In small groups, introduce your character to your mates (name + meaning + travel). Each of your mate asks you a question about your character and you need to make up an answer.</p>					
HW	<p><i>Everything comes full circle: read the last page of the novel. Compare it with the incipit. Show how the last paragraphs echo the first ones. Write your ideas in your notebook.</i> <i>Improve your skills: CAUSE - EFFECT</i> https://www.liveworksheets.com/worksheets/en/English_as_a_Second_Language_(ESL)/Connectors/CONNECTORS_-_Cause_and_Consequence_td1271946fb</p>					

• **Step 4**

SUPPORT	Last page in <u>MP</u> + words that come from the moon! Quizlet https://quizlet.com/_8fgmyh?x=1jqt&i=2qilus
OBJ.CULT	Idioms linked to the moon.
OBJ. LING	EO-IO, Translation, EE.
DEM. PEDA/ ACT DE L'ELEVE	<p>⇒ Recap: Compare the last page with the incipit. Show how the last paragraphs echo the first ones.</p> <p>Key themes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - End vs. beginning: “<i>I had come to the end of the world, and beyond it there was nothing but air and waves, an emptiness that went clear to the shores of China. This is where I start, I said to myself, this is where my life begins”</i> p. 306 ⇒ life begins where the book ends (= a metaphor for the reader’s experience?) - True to his name: towards China, like Marco Polo. Phileas Fogg: has come to the end of his world, around the American West, in 6 months. - The moon: “<i>Then the moon came up from behind the hills. It was a full moon, as round and yellow as a burning stone. I kept my eyes on it as it rose into the night sky, not turning away until it had found its place in the darkness.</i>” = the moon like the narrator had to find its place in the darkness/the emptiness: “<i>to push myself as far as I could go, and then see what happened to me when I got there</i>”. <p>NB: the moon is like a “<i>burning stone</i>” // like the sun (also yellow) + like “<i>the desert from Utah to California</i>”.</p> <p>CL° = General idea of a cycle.</p> <p>⇒ Vocabulary + translation workshop Quizlet.</p> <p>⇒ Be a story-teller! Make up a story with as many idioms related to the moon as possible. You may use the characters in <u>MP</u>. Then tell your story to your mate (IO).</p>
HW	<i>Read the short extract from an interview of Paul Auster about the meanings of the moon in his novel. If you know about other symbols of the moon, list them. Be ready to recap to your mates.</i>

• **Step 5 – intermediate task**

SUPPORT	Interview PA – <i>The moon is many things at once.</i>
OBJ. LING	EO, EE.
DEM. PEDA/ ACT DE L'ELEVE	<p>⇒ Recap what you know about the meanings of the moon in Paul Auster’s novel. If you know about other symbols of the moon, also mention them.</p> <p>Mythology = <i>a radiant Diana: imagination, love, madness + celestial body, as lifeless stone + the longing for what is not, the unattainable, the human desire for transcendence + American history = Columbus, the west, outer space + repetition, the cyclical nature of human experience</i></p> <p>⇒ A mysterious quote by Nikola Tesla appears twice in <i>Moon Palace</i>: “<i>The sun is the past, the earth is the present, the moon is the future.</i>”</p> <p>Starting with this quote, write the page after last, as Marco, the narrator of <i>MP</i>. Make sure your page is consistent with what you know about Marco’s story and the genre of the novel. Describe your surroundings (in the city or in the wilderness?) and your feelings. Use the moon as a symbol. ≈ 200 words.</p>
HW	<i>Look at the picture and quote. React (=say how you would feel if you went there and why) and explain the quote.</i>

Moon Palace – An American Mythology

Intermediate task



A mysterious quote by Nikola Tesla appears twice in *Moon Palace*:

“The sun is the past, the earth is the present, the moon is the future.”

⇒ Starting with this quote, write the page after last, as Marco, the narrator of *MP*.

Make sure your page is consistent with what you know about Marco’s story and the genre of the novel. Describe your **surroundings** (in the city or in the wilderness?) and your **feelings**. Use the moon as a symbol. ≈ 200 words.

Check you do the task right:

	Not quite	Quite	Totally
The narrator in my “last page” is MS Fogg.			
My story is logical and consistent with the plot.			
I have used one word or idiom linked to the moon.			
I have described my surroundings.			
I have expressed my feelings.			
I have used the moon as a symbol.			
<i>BONUS: I have used a literary device to describe the moon (ex: a simile)</i>			
I have read my text once I have finished writing it and I have corrected some mistakes. (= fiche de suivi des erreurs)			
I have written 200 words or more.			

• Step 6

SUPPORT	Monument Valley picture & quote p. 33 + Effing's description pp. 156-7
OBJ. CULT	The American West: myths and reality
OBJ. LING	EO, CE + GRAMMAR: comparatives and superlatives
DEM. PEDA/ ACT DE L'ELEVE	<p>⇒ Recap the picture + quote: express feelings + explain the quote.</p> <p>⇒ Read Effing's description of Monument Valley. Find similarities with the picture and quote you had to study.</p> <p>⇒ Focus on:</p> <p>a) the lexical fields: EVANESCENCE <i>silence and emptiness l. 2-3, no world, no land, no nothing l. 5, making pictures out of clouds l. 17, to see it is to make it vanish, ll. 23-4</i>, an INDEFINABLE DREAM WORLD at the <u>center</u> of known states: <i>the center of the state, Four Corners, where Utah, Arizona, Colorado, and New Mexico come together l.9-10 the only place you exist is in your head l. 6, the strangest place, contorted rocks, l.11 built by giants l. 12</i> a MINERAL WORLD, both natural and man-made: <i>red earth, rocks, structures, ruins, glaciers and erosion, a million years of wind and weather</i></p> <p>= VOID, EMPTINESS vs. IMMENSITY, FULLNESS OF THE LANDSCAPE + accumulation of names, places, shapes, pictures of the place, (<i>too big, all, too monstrous, everything, a million years, everyone, a hundred times, all, every night</i>) and it all amounts to nothing (neither a picture nor a thousand words can describe it).</p> <p>b) the stylistic devices: find a metaphor (the land "<i>starts to swallow you up</i>" l. 1), a simile (<i>like making pictures out of clouds</i>, ll. 16-7, NB: this is called pareidolia), a superlative (<i>That was the strangest place of all l. 10</i>), a paradox (<i>everything was at once recognizable and alien l. 13, the more you see, the less your pencil can do. To see it is to make it vanish ll. 23-4</i>)</p> <p>⇒ Using comparatives and superlatives:</p> <p><u>The strangest</u> place of all + <u>the more</u> you see, <u>the less</u> your pencil can do. See lesson <u>SB</u> p. 68</p> <p>Rewrite Effing's description or make up a new description of Monument Valley using comparatives or superlatives. 5 sentences.</p>
HW	<p><u>SB</u> p. 68: Grammar – expression de la comparaison, ex 1&2</p> <p>Find information about: - George Armstrong Custer - Custer's last Stand (where and when)-the Wounded Knee Massacre (one sentence for each is enough!)</p>

• Step 7

SUPPORT	Exercises from SB, students' information about Custer etc., Blakelock's painting <i>Moonlight</i> + <u>MP</u> extract about the painting p. 137-139
OBJ. CULT	Representing Native Americans in the 19 th century
OBJ. LING	EO, CE, translation, GRAMMAR: double comparatives.
DEM. PEDA/ ACT DE L'ELEVE	<p>⇒ Correct the exercises.</p> <p>⇒ Recap what you know about: - George Armstrong Custer - Custer's last Stand (where and when)-the Wounded Knee Massacre (one sentence for each is enough!)</p> <p>⇒ Observe the painting. Describe it and the feeling(s) it conveys in your opinion. Write down your ideas.</p> <p>⇒ Read the extract from <u>MP</u> about the same painting.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Compare the narrator's description of the painting with yours. Are there more similitudes than differences or is it the other way round? Why? 2. Find the equivalents of the underlined words among the following: <i>tiny - darker - completely - a very small river - a hue/a tint - impregnated – the material used to paint on - human shapes - made smaller - slightly coloured - remains, residue - skillful – saintliness/ godliness – varnish/ polish - difficult to read - moved in circle</i> 3. How does the narrator feel about American history and Westward expansion in your opinion? Argue your point. 4. Focus on the words the narrator uses to express describe his experience at the museum. To what extent is watching the painting like a spiritual ceremony? Argue your point. 5. GRAMMAR – Double comparatives <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) Observe the sentence and translate it into French: <u>The farther</u> back I went toward the horizon, <u>the brighter</u> that glow became (ll. 43-4) b) Find another example of double comparatives in the text. c) Make your own sentence with double comparatives based on this extract.
HW	<p>Read one last excerpt from MP: <i>Hallucinations in Central Park</i>. Focus on one theme in the text.</p> <p>Team A: Central Park = the centre, Team B: time, Team C: people and cultures, Team D: dream & reality.</p>

• **Step 8**

SUPPORT	<i>MP</i> Hallucinations in Central Park, Video History Channel <i>Visitors from the Sky in Anasazi and MesoAmerican Culture</i> https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ljNt_BYK6O0 , Video "How Coyote and Eagle Stole the Sun and Moon" https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cGXRSfdObag , <i>Legends from Native Indians and the American West</i> .
OBJ. CULT	Introduction to Native American mythology
OBJ. LING	EO, CE, CO, IO, EE.
DEM. PEDA/ ACT DE L'ELEVE	<p>⇒ Recap: Central Park = the centre of the universe, Sun & Moon converge, but also past and present, China and America, dream/nightmare & reality.</p> <p>⇒ Get ready to watch a video:</p> <p>a) Read the short description Effing makes of the Anasazi culture</p> <p>b) Look at the film still and make suppositions as to the theme of the video.</p> <p>⇒ Watch the video. Compare and contrast: share the information you understood with your mates and list the elements that echo the themes/symbols in <i>MP</i>. (Monument Valley, mysterious sky/celestial events, the ruins of Anasazi cities ≠ realism vs. belief in supernatural events/UFOs). Recap.</p> <p>⇒ Now watch and listen to this more traditional Indian myth. Take notes to gather typical elements. Share your notes with your mate. Say which legend you prefer and why.</p>
HW	<i>Read the Legend from Native Indians and the American West that was given to you. Sum it up briefly (no more than 5 ideas). Be ready to recap for your mates.</i>

• **Step 9**

SUPPORT	Video Mojo Travel (edited) https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=43v3YSfFmAQ&feature=youtu.be
OBJ. CULT	Touring the American West, experiencing the legend.
OBJ. LING	EO, IO, EE, CO.
DEM. PEDA/ ACT DE L'ELEVE	<p>⇒ Recap the main ideas in your Native Indian legend. Take notes when your mates present their story. You will use these elements/ideas for your own legend.</p> <p>⇒ Write your own myth based on the elements found in the myths you read/ heard about. ≈ 100-150 words.</p> <p>⇒ Pairwork: tell your mate about your own Native American legend.</p> <p>⇒ Watch the video about the best places to see when touring the American West. Take notes.</p>
HW	<i>Watch the video again and also read the tips in the short article: "Touring the American West". Identify the vocabulary/elements you might keep for your own imaginary tour of the American West. Make a list of the places you will include.</i>

• **Step 10**

SUPPORT	Students' homework + whole unit.
OBJ. LING	CE, EO
DEM.	⇒ Compare your route with your mate's. Discuss your choices.
PEDA/ ACT DE L'ELEVE	⇒ Get ready for your final task: start organizing your ideas to present your slideshow or video. Make sure you include: - urban and natural iconic places in the USA (pictures or footage) - descriptions of the landscapes (city + national parks) - references to at least one myth or legend from Native Americans to illustrate your tour. - a meaningful symbol for my trip and experience that must be clearly explained. - the expression of your feelings while visiting these places.
HW	<i>Your final task!</i>

• **Step 11**

Moon Palace – An American Mythology
Final task

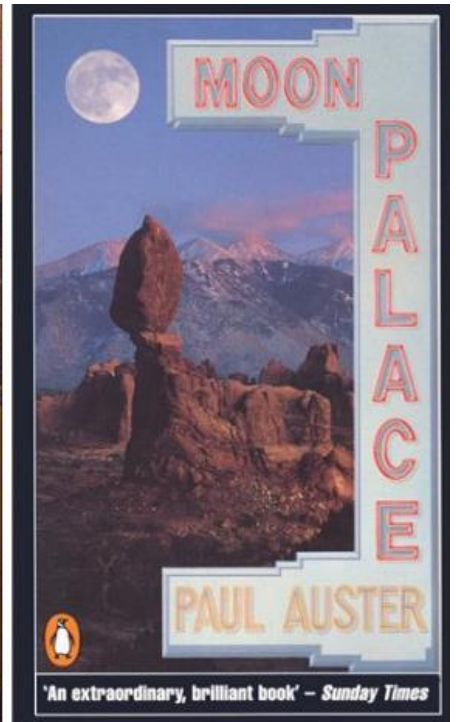
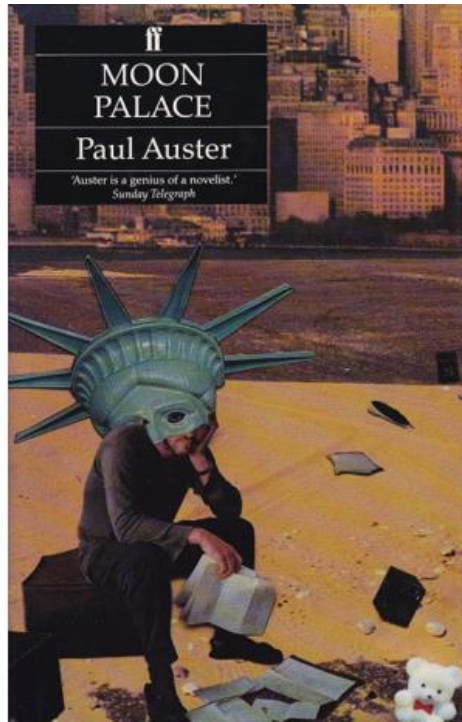
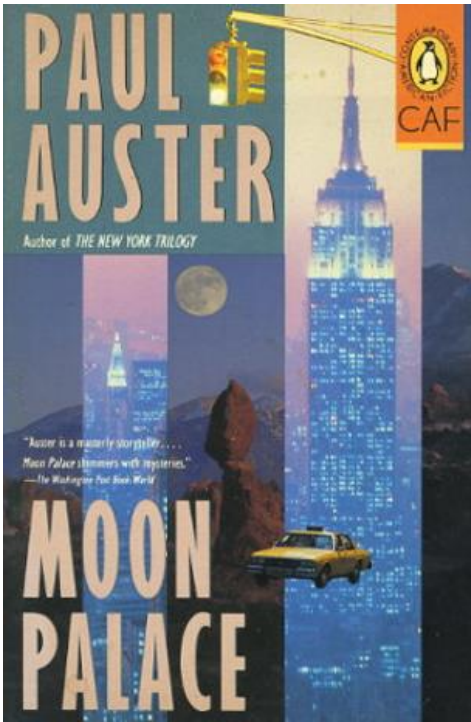
Present a slideshow or video tour across the US, spanning both urban and wild iconic places. You can either make a film of your presentation or do it in class but you should talk with notes and without a script!



- I have spanned urban and natural iconic places in the USA.	0 – 1 – 2	CONTENTS /10
- I have described the landscapes (city + national parks).	0 – 1 – 2	
- I have explicitly referred to at least one myth or legend from Native Americans to illustrate my tour.	0 – 1 – 2	
- I have chosen a meaningful symbol for my trip and experience and I have explained it clearly.	0 – 1	
- I have explained how this tour has changed me as a person (expressing my feelings).	0 – 1 – 2 – 3	
- Pronunciation – word stress – intonation – flow	0 – 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5	LANGUAGE /10
- Language (syntax, tenses, articles...)	0 – 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5	

• **Step 12:** recap what needs improving and what was well done in the final task.

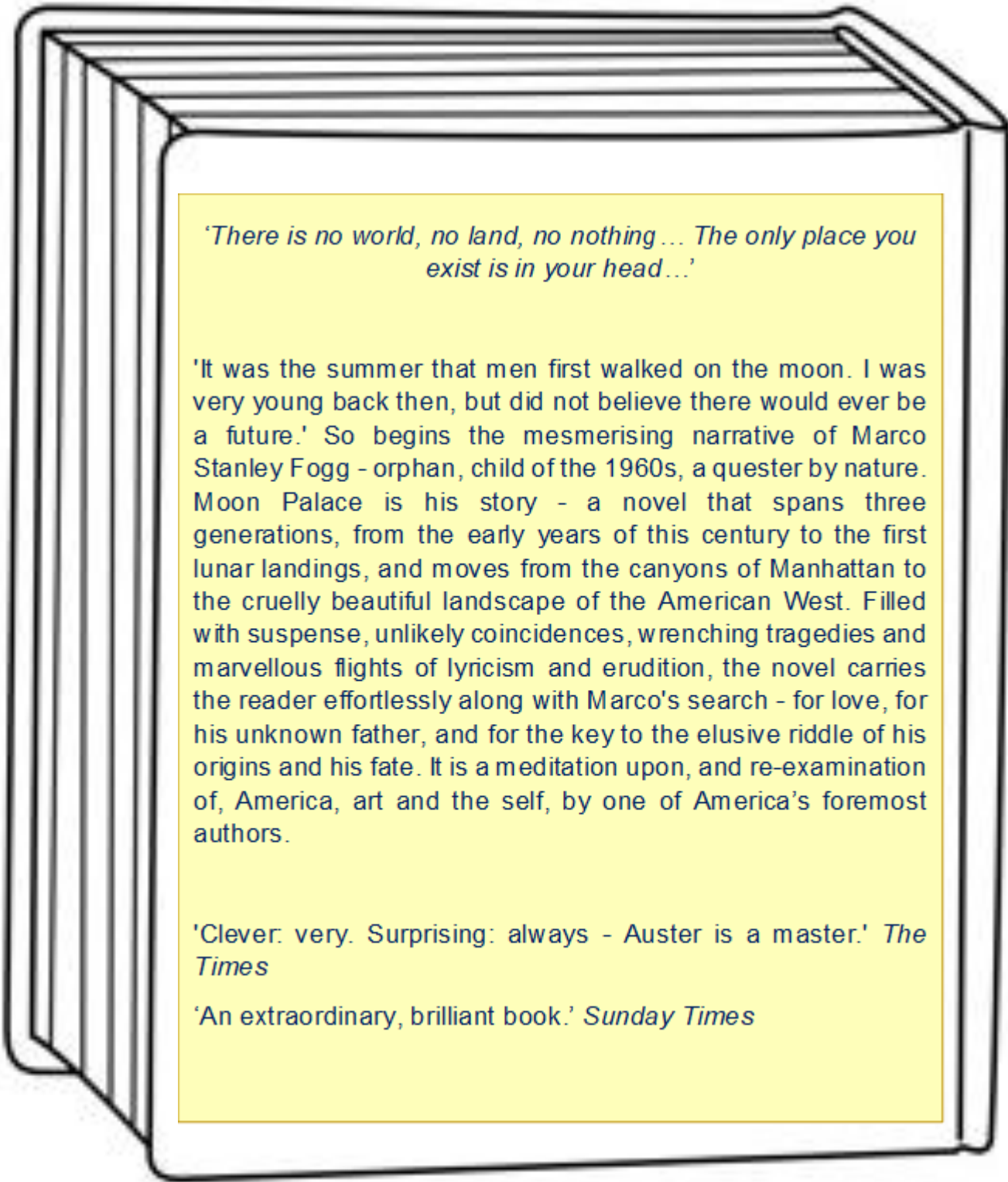
Introduction



Bryce Canyon, Wall Street



Manhattan, NYC



'There is no world, no land, no nothing... The only place you exist is in your head...'

'It was the summer that men first walked on the moon. I was very young back then, but did not believe there would ever be a future.' So begins the mesmerising narrative of Marco Stanley Fogg - orphan, child of the 1960s, a quester by nature. Moon Palace is his story - a novel that spans three generations, from the early years of this century to the first lunar landings, and moves from the canyons of Manhattan to the cruelly beautiful landscape of the American West. Filled with suspense, unlikely coincidences, wrenching tragedies and marvellous flights of lyricism and erudition, the novel carries the reader effortlessly along with Marco's search - for love, for his unknown father, and for the key to the elusive riddle of his origins and his fate. It is a meditation upon, and re-examination of, America, art and the self, by one of America's foremost authors.

'Clever: very. Surprising: always - Auster is a master.' *The Times*

'An extraordinary, brilliant book.' *Sunday Times*

It was the summer that men first walked on the moon. I was very young back then, but I did not believe there would ever be a future. I wanted to live dangerously, to push myself as far as I could go, and then see what happened to me when I got there. As it turned out, I nearly did not make it. Little by little, I saw my money dwindle to zero; I lost my apartment; I wound up living in the streets. If not for a girl named Kitty Wu, I probably would have starved to death. I had met her by chance only a short time before, but eventually I came to see that chance as a form of readiness, a way of saving myself through the minds of others. That was the first part. From then on, strange things happened to me. I took the job with the old man in the wheelchair. I found out who my father was. I walked across the desert from Utah to California. That was a long time ago, of course, but I remember those days well, I remember them as the beginning of my life.

I came to New York in the fall of 1965. I was eighteen years old then, and for the first nine months I lived in a college dormitory. All out-of-town freshmen at Columbia were required to live on campus, but once the term was over I moved into an apartment on West 112th Street. That was where I lived for the next three years, copy up to the moment when I finally hit bottom. Considering the odds against me, it was a miracle I lasted as long as I did.

I lived in that apartment with over a thousand books. They had originally belonged to my Uncle Victor, and he had collected them slowly over the course of about thirty years. Just before I went off to college, he impulsively offered them to me as a going-away present. I did my best to refuse, but Uncle Victor was a sentimental and generous man, and he would not let me turn him down. "I have no money to give you," he said, "and not one word of advice. Take the books to make me happy." I took the books, but for the next year and a half I did not open any of the boxes they were stored in. My plan was to persuade my uncle to take the books back, and in the meantime I did not want anything to happen to them.

As it turned out, the boxes were quite useful to me in that state. The apartment on 112th Street was unfurnished, and rather than squander my funds on things I did not want and could not afford, I converted the boxes into several pieces of "imaginary furniture." (...) My friends found it a bit odd, but they had learned to expect odd things from me by then. Think of the satisfaction, I would explain to them, of crawling into bed and knowing that your dreams are about to take place on top of nineteenth-century American literature. Imagine the pleasure of sitting down to a meal with the entire Renaissance lurking below your food. In point of fact, I had no idea which books were in which boxes, but I was a great one for making up stories back then, and I liked the sound of those sentences, even if they were false.

My imaginary furniture remained intact for almost a year. Then, in the spring of 1967, Uncle Victor died. This death was a terrible blow for me; in many ways it was the worst blow I had ever had. Not only was Uncle Victor the person I had loved most in the world, he was my only relative, my one link to something larger than myself. Without him I felt bereft, utterly scorched by fate. If I had been prepared for his death somehow, it might have been easier for me to contend with. But how does one prepare for the death of a fifty-two-year-old man whose health has always been good? My uncle simply dropped dead one fine afternoon in the middle of April, and at that point my life began to change, I began to vanish into another world.

Moon Palace – The plot

Jumbled sentences: find a consistent order for those sentences to get the right summary for the novel.

*Marco Stanley Fogg is an orphan and his Uncle Victor his only caretaker. Fogg starts college, and a few months later moves from the dormitory into his own apartment furnished with **1492** books given to him by Uncle Victor...*

- a. When Effing dies, leaving money to Fogg, Marco and Kitty Wu set up a house together in Chinatown, NYC.
- b. Marco becomes an [introvert](#), spends his time reading, and thinks, "Why should I get a job? I have enough to do living through the days." After selling the books one by one in order to survive Fogg loses his apartment and seeks shelter in Central Park.
- c. After an abortion Fogg breaks up with Kitty Wu and travels across the U.S. to search for himself.
- d. Fogg learns about Effings' previous identity as the painter [Julian Barber](#). Effing had a son he never met, named Solomon Barber.
- e. Uncle Victor dies before Fogg finishes college and leaves him without friends and family.
- f. Marco continues his journey alone, which ends on a lonely California beach: "This is where I start, ... this is where my life begins."
- g. Marco lives in Central Park for several weeks. He scavenges food from bins and sleeps in bushes. He becomes very feeble.
- h. Marco begins his journey with Solomon Barber (Effing's son), whom he realizes is... his own father.
- i. Marco meets Kitty Wu and begins a romance with her after he has been rescued from Central Park by Zimmer and Kitty Wu.
- j. Solomon Barber dies shortly after an accident at Westlawn Cemetery, where Fogg's mother is buried.
- k. Eventually M. S. finds a job taking care of Thomas Effing, an old man in a wheelchair.

1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.	8.	9.	10.	11
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Bonus question: *Why is **1492** a symbolic number?*

Moon Palace – Onomastics I

I was Marco Fogg, and my mother was Emily Fogg, and my uncle in Chicago was Victor Fogg. We were all Foggs, and it made perfect sense that people from the same family should have the same name. Later on, Uncle Victor told me that his father's name had originally been Fogelman, but someone in the immigration offices at Ellis Island had truncated it to Fog, with one g, and this had served as the family's American name until the second g was added in 1907. *Fogel* meant bird, my uncle informed me, and I liked the idea of having that creature embedded in who I was. I imagined that some valiant ancestor of mine had once actually been able to fly. A bird flying through fog, I used to think, a giant bird flying across the ocean, not stopping until it reached America. [...]

Moon Palace – Onomastics 2

Not long after I arrived in Chicago, Uncle Victor took me to a showing of the movie *Around the World in 80 Days*. The hero of that story was named Fogg, of course, and from that day on Uncle Victor called me Phileas as a term of endearment¹—a secret reference to that strange moment, as he put it, “when we confronted ourselves on the screen.” Uncle Victor loved to concoct elaborate, nonsensical theories about things, and he never tired of expounding on the glories hidden in my name. Marco Stanley Fogg. According to him, it proved that travel was in my blood, that life would carry me to places where no man had ever been before. Marco, naturally enough, was for Marco Polo, the first European to visit China; Stanley was for the American journalist who had tracked down Dr Livingstone “in the heart of darkest Africa;” and Fogg was for Phileas, the man who had stormed around the globe in less than three months. It didn’t matter that my mother had chosen Marco simply because she liked it, or that Stanley had been my grandfather’s name, or that Fogg was a misnomer², the whim³ of some half-literate American functionary. Uncle Victor found meanings where no one else would have found them, and then, very deftly⁴, he turned them into a form of clandestine support. The truth was that I enjoyed it when he showered all this attention on me, and even though I knew his speeches were so much bluster and hot air, there was a part of me that believed every word he said.

When I was fifteen, I began signing all my papers M. S. Fogg, pretentiously echoing the gods of modern literature, but at the same time delighting in the fact that the initials stood for manuscript. Uncle Victor heartily approved of this about-face⁵. “Every man is the author of his own life,” he said. “The book you are writing is not yet finished. Therefore, it’s a manuscript. What could be more appropriate than that?” Little by little, Marco faded from public circulation. I was Phileas to my uncle, and by the time I reached college, I was M. S. to everyone else.

¹ endearment ≈ affection

² misnomer: a name that is not correct

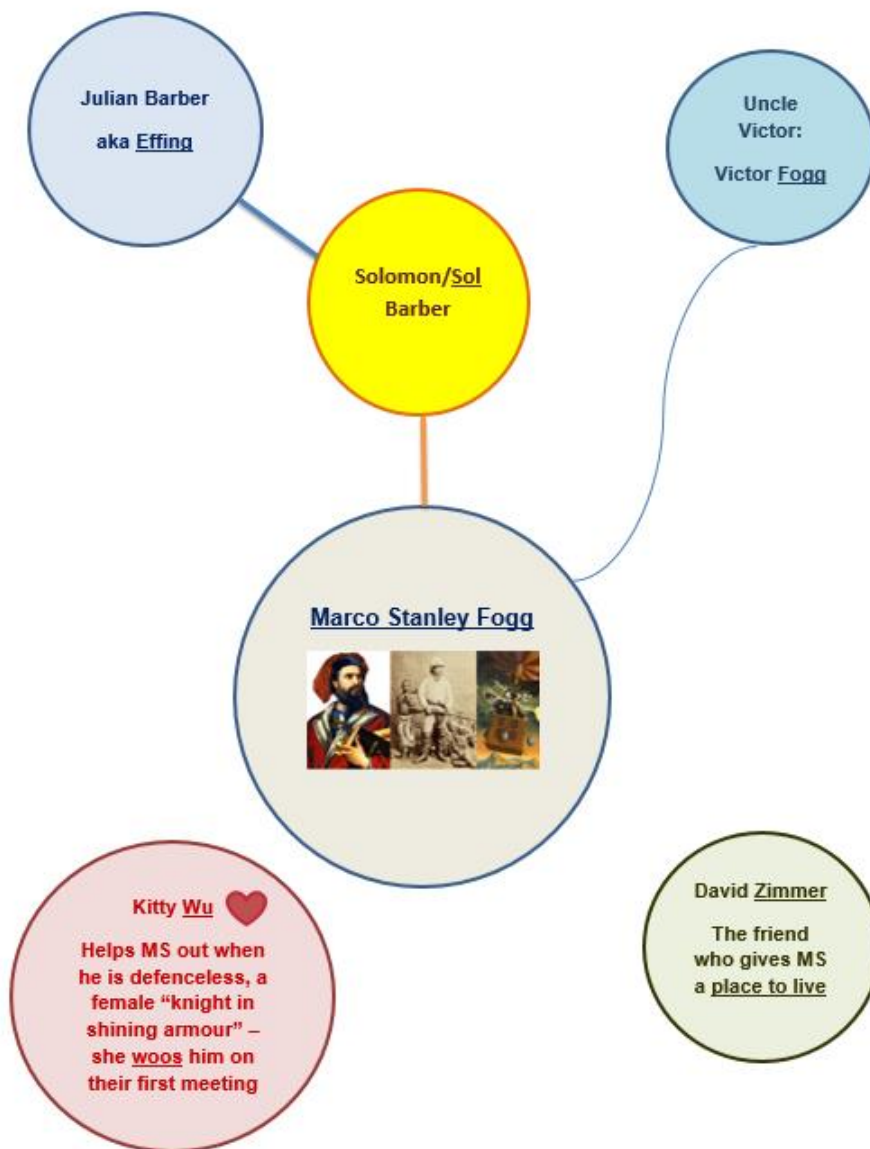
³ a whim: a sudden, unreasonable idea

⁴ deftly ≈ cleverly

⁵ about-face: change of opinion

Moon Palace – Onomastics 3

He had already told me that Effing was a pun, and unless I had misread him in some crucial way, I felt I knew where it had come from. In writing out the word *Thomas*, he had probably been reminded of the phrase *doubting Thomas*. The gerund had then given way to another: *fucking Thomas*, which for convention's sake had been further modified into *f-ing*. Thus, he was Thomas Effing, the man who had fucked his life. Given his taste for cruel jokes, I imagined how pleased he must have been with himself.



Moon Palace - The end

I walked without interruption, heading toward the Pacific, borne along by a growing sense of happiness. Once I reached the end of the continent, I felt that some important question would be resolved for me. I had no idea what that question was, but the answer had already been formed in my steps, and I had only to keep walking to know that I had left myself behind, that I was no longer the person I had once been.

I bought my fifth pair of boots in a place called Lake Elsinore on January 3, 1972. Three days later, all ragged with exhaustion, I climbed over the hills into the town of Laguna Beach with four hundred and thirteen dollars in my pocket. I could already see the ocean from the top of the promontory, but I kept on walking until I was all the way down to the water. It was four o'clock in the afternoon when I took off my boots and felt the sand against the soles of my feet. I had come to the end of the world, and beyond it there was nothing but air and waves, an emptiness that went clear to the shores of China. This is where I start, I said to myself, this is where my life begins.

I stood on the beach for a long time, waiting for the last bits of sunlight to vanish. Behind me, the town went about its business, making familiar late century American noises. As I looked down the curve of the coast, I saw the lights of the houses being turned on, one by one. Then the moon came up from behind the hills. It was a full moon, as round and yellow as a burning stone. I kept my eyes on it as it rose into the night sky, not turning away until it had found its place in the darkness.

Moon Palace

"The Moon is many things all at once"

An interview with Paul Auster

“The moon is many things all at once, a touchstone. It's the moon as myth, as ‘radiant Diana, image of all that is dark within us’; the imagination, love, madness. At the same time, it's the moon as object, as celestial body, as lifeless stone hovering in the sky. But it's also the longing for what is not, the unattainable, the human desire for
5 transcendence. And yet it's history as well, particularly American history. First, there's Columbus, then there was the discovery of the west, then finally there is outer space: the moon as the last frontier. But Columbus had no idea that he'd discovered America. He thought he had sailed to India, to China. In some sense *Moon Palace* is the embodiment of that misconception, an attempt to think of America as China. But the
10 moon is also repetition, the cyclical nature of human experience. There are three stories in the book, and each one is finally the same. Each generation repeats the mistakes of the previous generation. So it's also a critique of the notion of progress.”



The Red Notebook, Faber & Faber, Boston, 1995

Expressing GOAL – CAUSE – EFFECT

GOAL	Uncle Victor may invent hidden meanings for Marco's names in order to give him a sense of purpose, a goal for his future life. It may also be so that he finds legitimacy, as Marco is an illegitimate child (born with no known father).
CAUSE	<i>It didn't matter that my mother had chosen Marco simply because she liked it.</i> Marco loses his apartment as/since he has no money left.
EFFECT	<i>The book you are writing is not yet finished. Therefore, it's a manuscript.</i> <i>The gerund had then given way to another: fucking Thomas, which for convention's sake had been further modified into f-ing. Thus, he was Thomas Effing, the man who had f***ed his life.</i>

Fill in the sentences with the right link words:

That is why – in order to – because – so that – because of – therefore – as/since

- a. MS travels through the American West find himself.
- b. MS was an orphan, his uncle Victor raised him.
- c. Uncle Victor gives Marco all of his books he has no money to give him.
- d. Marco's ancestors were named Fogel, but when they came to the USA, the employee at Ellis Island made a mistake, his last name is Fogg.
- e. MS can be considered a gifted story-teller he makes up extraordinary stories all the time.
- f. Uncle Victor expects Marco to travel a lot his three names.
- g. Julian Barber changes his name and makes it a joke F-ing becomes Effing.



Ralph Albert Blakelock, *Moonlight*, 1890

Moon Palace – Blakelock's painting

It was a weekday morning in winter, and the museum was nearly deserted. After paying my admission at the front desk, I held out five fingers to the elevator man and rode upstairs in silence. The American paintings were on the fifth floor, and except for a drowsing guard in the first room, I was the only person in the entire wing. This fact pleased me, as though it somehow enhanced the solemnity of the occasion. I walked through several empty rooms before I found the Blakelock, doing my best to follow Effing's instructions and ignore the other pictures on the walls. I saw a few flashes of color, registered a few names—Church, Bierstadt, Ryder—but fought against the temptation to have a real look. Then I came to *Moonlight*, the object of my strange and elaborate journey, and in that first, sudden moment, I could not help feeling disappointed. I don't know what I had been expecting—something grandiose, perhaps, some loud and garish display of superficial brilliance—but certainly not the somber little picture I found before me. It measured only twenty-seven by thirty-two inches¹, and at first glance it seemed almost devoid of color: dark brown, dark green, the smallest touch of red in one corner. There was no question that it was well executed, but it contained none of the overt drama that I had imagined Effing would be drawn to. Perhaps I was not disappointed in the painting so much as I was disappointed in myself for having misread Effing. This was a deeply contemplative work, a landscape of inwardness and calm, and it confused me to think that it could have said anything to my mad employer.

I tried to put Effing out of my mind, then stepped back a foot or two and began to look at the painting for myself. A perfectly round full moon sat in the middle of the canvas—the precise mathematical center, it seemed to me—and this pale white disc illuminated everything above it and below it: the sky, a lake, a large tree with spidery branches, and the low mountains on the horizon. In the foreground, there were two small areas of land, divided by a brook that campfire; a number of figures seemed to be sitting around the fire, but it was hard to make them out, they were only minimal suggestions of human shapes, perhaps five or six of them, glowing red from the embers of the fire; to the copy of the large tree, separated from the others, there was a solitary figure on horseback, gazing out over the water—utterly still, as though lost in meditation. The tree behind him was fifteen or twenty times taller than he was, and the contrast made him seem puny, insignificant. He and his horse were no more than silhouettes, black outlines without depth or individual character. On the other bank, things were even murkier, almost entirely drowned in shadow. There were a few small trees with the same spidery branches as the large one, and then, toward the bottom, the tiniest hint of brightness, which looked to me as though it might have been another figure (lying on his back—possibly asleep, possibly dead, possibly staring up into the night) or else the remnant of another fire—I couldn't tell which. I got so involved in studying these obscure details in the lower part of the picture that when I finally looked up to study the sky again, I was shocked to see how bright everything was in the upper part. Even taking the full moon into consideration, the sky seemed too visible. The paint beneath the cracked glazes that covered the surface shone through with an unnatural intensity, and the farther back I went toward the horizon, the brighter that glow became—as if it were daylight back there, and the mountains were illumined by the sun. Once I finally noticed this, I began to see other odd things in the painting as well. The sky, for example, had a largely greenish cast. Tinged with the yellow borders of

¹ ≈ 68x81cm

clouds, it swirled around the side of the large tree in a thickening flurry of brushstrokes, taking on a spiralling aspect, a vortex of celestial matter in deep space. How could the sky be green? I asked myself. It was the same color as the lake below it, and that was not possible. Except in the blackness of the blackest night, the sky and the earth are always different. Blakelock was clearly too deft a painter not to have known that. But if he hadn't been trying to represent an actual landscape, what had he been up to? I did my best to imagine it, but the greenness of the sky kept stopping me. A sky the same color as the earth, a night that looks like day, and all human forms dwarfed by the bigness of the scene—illegible shadows, the merest ideograms of life. I did not want to make any wild, symbolic judgments, but based on the evidence of the painting, there seemed to be no other choice. In spite of their smallness in relation to the setting, the Indians betrayed no fears or anxieties. They sat comfortably in their surroundings, at peace with themselves and the world, and the more I thought about it, the more this serenity seemed to dominate the picture. I wondered if Blakelock hadn't painted his sky green in order to emphasize this harmony, to make a point of showing the connection between heaven and earth. If men can live comfortably in their surroundings, he seemed to be saying, if they can learn to feel themselves a part of the things around them, then perhaps life on earth becomes imbued with a feeling of holiness. I was only guessing, of course, but it struck me that Blakelock was painting an American idyll, the world the Indians had inhabited before the white men came to destroy it. The plaque on the wall noted that the picture had been painted in 1885. If I remembered correctly, that was almost precisely in the middle of the period between Custer's Last Stand and the massacre at Wounded Knee—in other words, at the very end, when it was too late to hope that any of these things could survive. Perhaps, I thought to myself, this picture was meant to stand for everything we had lost. It was not a landscape, it was a memorial, a death song for a vanished world.

-
6. Compare the narrator's description of the painting with yours. Are there more similitudes than differences or is it the other way round? Why?
 7. Find the equivalents of the underlined words among the following:
tiny - darker - completely - a very small river - a hue/a tint - impregnated – the material used to paint on - human shapes - made smaller - slightly coloured - remains, residue - skillful – saintliness/ godliness – varnish/ polish - difficult to read - moved in circle
 8. How does the narrator feel about American history and Westward expansion in your opinion? Argue your point.
 9. Focus on the words the narrator uses to express describe his experience as soon as he arrives at the museum. To what extent is watching the painting like a spiritual ceremony? Argue your point.
 10. GRAMMAR – Double comparatives
 - d) Observe the sentence and translate it into French:
The farther back I went toward the horizon, **the brighter** that glow became (ll. 43-4)
 - e) Find another example of double comparative in the text.

Moon Palace – Blakelock's painting correction

1. Compare the narrator's description of the painting with yours. Are there more similitudes than differences or is it the other way round? Why?
2. Find the equivalents of the underlined words among the following:
 - tiny – minimal l. 28
 - darker – murkier l. 34
 - completely – utterly l. 30
 - a very small river – a brook l. 26
 - a hue/a tint – cast l. 46
 - impregnated – l. 54
 - the material used to paint on – canvas l. 22
 - shapes – silhouettes, black outlines l.33, figure l. 36
 - made smaller – dwarfed l. 54
 - slightly coloured – tinged l. 46
 - remains, residue – remnants l. 38
 - skilful – deft l. 51
 - saintliness/ godliness – holiness l. 65
 - varnish/ polish – glazes l. 42
 - difficult to read – illegible l. 55
 - moved in circle – swirled l.47
3. How does the narrator feel about American history and Westward expansion in your opinion? Argue your point.
4. Focus on the words the narrator uses to express describe his experience as soon as he arrives at the museum. To what extent is watching the painting like a spiritual ceremony? Argue your point.
5. GRAMMAR – Double comparatives
 - a) Observe the sentence and translate it into French:
The farther back I went toward the horizon, **the brighter** that glow became (ll. 43-4)
Ex : *Plus je m'éloignais de l'horizon, plus vive devenait cette lumière.*
 - b) Find another example of double comparative in the text. the more I thought about it, the more this serenity seemed to dominate the picture ll. 59-60

Moon Palace – Monument Valley

“Why does the American West look so much like the landscape of the Moon?” *Moon Palace*, chapter 1



Effing is telling Marco about his trip to Monument Valley back in 1916, when he was a young painter looking for inspiration in the American West.

“The land is too big out there, and after a while it starts to swallow you up. I reached a point when I couldn’t take it in anymore. All that bloody silence and emptiness. You try to find your bearings in it, but it’s too big, the dimensions are too monstrous, and eventually, I don’t know how else to put it, eventually it just stops being there. There’s no world, no land, no nothing. It comes down to that, Fogg, in the end it’s all a figment². The only place you exist is in your head.

“We worked our way across the center of the state, then angled down into the canyon country in the southeast, what they call the Four Corners, where Utah, Arizona, Colorado, and New Mexico come together. That was the strangest place of all, a dream world, all red earth and contorted rocks, tremendous structures rising out of the ground, they stood there like the ruins of some lost city built by giants. Obelisks, minarets, palaces: everything was at once recognizable and alien, you couldn’t help seeing familiar shapes when you looked at them, even though you knew it was all chance, the petrified sputum of glaciers and erosion, a million years of wind and weather. Thumbs, eye sockets, penises, mushrooms, human beings, hats. It was like making pictures out of clouds. Everyone knows what those places look like now, you’ve seen them a hundred times yourself. Glen Canyon, Monument Valley, the Valley of the Gods. That’s where they shoot all those cowboy-and-Indian movies, the goddamned Marlboro man gallops through there on television every night. But pictures don’t tell you anything about it, Fogg. It’s all too massive to be painted or drawn; even photographs can’t get the feel of it. Everything is so distorted, it’s like trying to reproduce the distances in outer space: the more you see, the less your pencil can do. To see it is to make it vanish.”

² A figment = something that seems real, but is not

Moon Palace – Central Park

After being expelled from his apartment, M.S. lives in Central Park for a few weeks, finding food in garbage cans and sleeping in bushes. After a storm he becomes ill and stays in and out of a cave, in a delirium.

The fever must have been quite high, and it brought ferocious dreams with it—endless, mutating visions that seemed to grow directly out of my burning skin. Nothing could hold its shape in me. Once, I remember, I saw the Moon Palace sign in front of me, more vivid than it had ever been in life. The pink and blue neon letters were so large that the whole sky was filled with their brightness. Then, suddenly, the letters disappeared, and only the two os from the word *Moon* were left. I saw myself dangling from one of them, struggling to hang on like an acrobat who had botched a dangerous stunt. Then I was slithering around it like a tiny worm, and then I wasn't there anymore. The two os had turned into eyes, gigantic human eyes that were looking down at me with scorn and impatience. They kept on staring at me, and after a while I became convinced that they were the eyes of God.

The sun appeared on the last day. I don't remember doing it, but at some point I must have crawled from the cave and stretched myself out on the grass. My mind was in such a muddle that I imagined the warmth of the sun could evaporate my fever, literally suck the illness out of my bones. I remember pronouncing the words *Indian summer* over and over to myself, saying them so many times that they eventually lost their meaning. The sky above me was immense, a dazzling clarity that had no end to it. If I went on staring at it, I felt, I would dissolve in the light. Then, without any sense of falling asleep, I suddenly began to dream of Indians. It was 350 years ago, and I saw myself following a group of half-naked men through the forests of Manhattan. It was a strangely vibrant dream, relentless and exact, filled with bodies darting among the light-dappled leaves and branches. A soft wind poured through the foliage, muffling the footsteps of the men, and I went on following them in silence, moving as nimbly as they did, with each step feeling that I was closer to understanding the spirit of the forest. I remember these images so well, perhaps, because it was precisely then that Zimmer and Kitty found me: lying there on the grass with that odd and pleasant dream circulating in my head. Kitty was the one I saw first, but I didn't recognize her, even though I sensed that she was familiar to me. She was wearing her Navaho headband, and my initial response was to take her for an afterimage, a shadow-woman incubated in the darkness of my dream. Later on, she told me that I smiled at her, and when she bent down to look at me more closely, I called her Pocahontas. I remember that I had trouble seeing her because of the sunlight, but I have a distinct recollection that there were tears in her eyes when she bent down, although she would never admit that afterward. A moment later, Zimmer entered the picture as well, and then I heard his voice. "You dumb bastard," he said. There was a brief pause, and then, not wanting to confuse me with too long a speech, he said the same thing again: "You dumb bastard. You poor dumb bastard."

Moon Palace – The Anasazi culture

We wandered around in those canyons for several weeks. Sometimes we spent the night in ancient Indian ruins, the cliff

5 dwellings of the Anasazi. Those were the tribes who disappeared a thousand years ago, no one knows what happened to them. They left behind their stone cities, their pictographs, their shards of pottery, but the people themselves just melted away.

How to Tour the American West

5 The big landscapes of the American West fascinate even those who inhabit them, so it's no surprise that residents and visitors alike tour this larger-than-life neighborhood. Before setting out--or even planning your trip, following the steps outlined below--explore more personal travel expectations. Fully consider general questions of compatibility, from general flexibility and tolerance to levels of personal independence, before making specific plans.

10 Identify specific trip goals. Read and research, and decide what's most important to you on this trip. If it's your first time in the American West, you may want to "sample" the larger territory by visiting representative destinations--to find out which areas appeal to you most. Or, if you plan to make multiple trips in the years to come, go slower and focus more intently on just a few cities or areas.



25 Start with iconic destinations and "add on" from there, as time and other resources permit. The great national parks--Yosemite, Death Valley, the Grand Canyon, Yellowstone, Glacier, Mount Rainier--are the focus of much travel in the American West, and have been since the 1950s, according to the 2009 PBS television series "The National Parks: America's Best Idea." Many of these parks feature historic lodgings and creature comforts in addition to western wilderness. Yet other national and state parks are also well worth the time.

30 Consider core interests or personal travel goals. Are you a country-western or roots music fan? If so, you'll want to include Austin, Texas. Does California cuisine make life worth living? Then, add San Francisco, Los Angeles or another major fine dining destination. Are you building your bird-watching life list? Plan for strategic seasonal stops along the Pacific or Central Flyway.

<https://traveltips.usatoday.com/travel-civil-war-sites-106548.html>