

“Perhaps the World Ends Here:”  
by Joy Harjo

Author Bio:

Joy Harjo is a renowned Native American poet, musician, and author, best known for her powerful poetry that explores themes of indigenous identity, history and personal and collective memory. She was born on May 9, 1951, in Tulsa, Oklahoma, and is a member of the Muscogee (Creek) Nation. Harjo became the first Native American U.S. Poet Laureate in 2019 and served for three terms, the second-longest tenure in the history of the position.



Background and Historical Context:

From the 1950s to today, the Muscogee (Creek) Nation has navigated significant challenges, including federal policies aimed at assimilation, legal battles over sovereignty, and the struggle to preserve their cultural heritage. However, the nation has also seen remarkable success in revitalizing its culture, asserting its sovereignty, and developing its economy. Today, the Muscogee (Creek) Nation stands as a vital and thriving community, with a strong focus on education, healthcare, and the preservation of its identity for future generations.

Her work often draws on Native American storytelling traditions, blending personal and cultural narratives with vivid imagery and strong spiritual themes. Furthermore, she uses poetry to reflect her deep connection to the land, her heritage, and her belief in the transformative power of art. Her writing not only preserves and celebrates Native American culture but also addresses universal themes of identity, resilience, and the human experience.

Literary Terms:

- **Personification:** when **human** qualities, characteristics, or actions are **attributed** to **non-human entities**, such as animals, objects, or abstract concepts.
- **Metaphor:** a figure of speech that directly compares two unlike things **without using "like" or "as."** Instead, it states that one thing is another, **implying a deeper, symbolic connection** between them.
- **Imagery:** the author’s use of **descriptive language** to **create vivid sensory experiences** for the reader. It appeals to the five senses—**sight, sound, smell, taste, and touch**—helping to paint a picture in the reader’s mind and evoke emotions.
- **Symbolism:** an **image** that represents something **beyond the literal meaning**. It is an object, often ordinary and commonplace, that has been imbued with extraordinary significance.

Part I: TPCASTT Analysis

**Directions:** As you read the poem with your partner, use the [TPCASTT](#) method and the highlighting key to guide your analysis of the poem. You may work with your peers to analyze the poem, but each person must work on their own separate document. *Listen, Speak, and Learn.*

**Highlighting Key:**  
**Personification:** **Blue**  
**Metaphor:** **Yellow**  
**Imagery:** **Underline**

“Perhaps the World End Here”		TPCASTT
1	The world begins at a kitchen table. No matter what, we must eat to live.	<div>Title:</div> <div>From the title, I believe the poem could be about _____.</div> <div>Paraphrase (at least 11 Sentences):</div> <div>1.</div> <div>2.</div> <div>3.</div> <div>4.</div> <div>5.</div> <div>6.</div> <div>7.</div> <div>8.</div> <div>9.</div> <div>10.</div> <div>11.</div>
2	The gifts of earth are brought and prepared, set on the table. So it has been	
3	since creation, and it will go on.	
4	We chase chickens or dogs away from it. Babies teethe at the corners. They	
5	scrape their knees under it.	
6	It is here that children are given instructions on what it means to be human.	
7	We make men at it, we make women.	
8	At this table we gossip, recall enemies and the ghosts of lovers.	
9	Our dreams drink coffee with us as they put their arms around our children.	
10	They laugh with us at our poor falling-down selves and as we put	
11	ourselves back together once again at the table.	
12	This table has been a house in the rain, an umbrella in the sun.	
13	Wars have begun and ended at this table. It is a place to hide in the shadow	<div>Connotation:</div> <div>● <b>Personification:</b> The speaker personifies _____ by _____ . Such use of personification suggests _____.</div> <div>● <b>Metaphor:</b> The speaker compares _____ to _____ to highlight _____.</div> <div>● <b>Imagery:</b> Many of the images presented are of _____ . Together, they communicate _____.</div>
14	of terror. A place to celebrate the terrible victory.	
15	We have given birth on this table, and have prepared our parents for burial	
16	here.	
17	At this table we sing with joy, with sorrow. We pray of suffering and remorse.	
18	We give thanks.	
19	Perhaps the world will end at the kitchen table, while we are laughing and	
20	crying, eating of the last sweet bite.	

		<u>Attitude</u> (go <a href="#">here</a> for words describing attitude):  The speaker comes across as _____ because they _____.
		<u>Shifts</u> : The speaker shifts from _____ to _____, demonstrating how _____.
		<u>Title Revisited</u> : After having read the poem, the title of the poem suggests _____.
		<u>Theme</u> (1 Sentence):

Part II: Answer Post Reading Questions

Directions: Answer the following questions thoughtfully and in complete sentences.

1. What role does the kitchen table play in the development of human identity, according to the poem? (2-3 Sentences)

Answer:
2. How does Harjo depict relationships within the family and community in this poem? (2-3 Sentences)

Answer:
3. How might this poem reflect Native American cultural values, especially the importance of community and shared spaces? (2-3 Sentences)

Answer: