

Reading between the lines in 'Crooked Letter, Crooked Letter'

Tasks:

1. Read the quotations and put them in their context (Past or present? Topic? Message?). Write down your ideas in the right column.
2. Get together with a partner and compare your ideas.
3. Prepare to present them in class.

Diesterweg edition	Chapter		Context Topic
P. 13 ll. 1 - 4 P. 20 ll. 21 - 30	2	<p>“Silas Jones was [...] the sole law enforcement of Chabot, Mississippi, population give or take five hundred”.</p> <p>“Chabot didn't have an ATM; the nearest was eleven miles north, in Fulsom. Cell phones worked in Chabot sometimes and sometimes they didn't. Because Gerald County, wet, was bordered on two sides by dry counties, the DUI tally was high. Fulsom was the county seat and, with its Wal-Mart, high cotton compared to Chabot's little spate of stores. Chabot's one barber had died, and his son had come and dismantled the building a piece at a time and carried it off in his pickup truck. Now its lot was vacant, an explosion of wildflowers and weeds, and if you wanted your hair cut, you went to Fulsom or did it yourself.”</p>	
P. 49 ll. 9 - 20	4	<p>“Though Larry's shop was on the outskirts of Fulsom, he lived near the community of Amos, just within Silas's jurisdiction. People from larger towns always thought Chabot was small, but it was a metropolis compared to Amos, Mississippi, which used to have a store but even that was closed now. The one paved road and a few dirt ones, a land of sewer ditches and gullies stripped of their timber and houses and single-wides speckled in the clear-cut like moles revealed by a haircut. The train from Meridian used to stop here, but now it just rattled and clanged on past. Amos's population had fallen in the last dozen years, and most people remaining were black folks who lived along Dump Road. Silas's mother had lived there, too, for a while, in the trailer the bank had repossessed. Since her passing the population had declined to eighty-six.”</p>	

P. 36 ll.15 - 28	3	<p>“Larry stole a look at the boy beside him and then pretended to read his book. He was terrified of black kids. The fall after the summer he turned eleven he had entered the seventh grade. Recent redistriction of county schools had removed him from the public school in Fulsom and forced him to go to the Chabot school, where 80 percent of the student population (and a lot of the teachers and the vice principal) were black, mostly kids of the men who worked in the mill or cut trees or drove log trucks. Everything Larry couldn't do – spike a volleyball, throw a football or catch one, field a grounder, fire a dodgeball – these black boys could. Did. [...] None read, though, or understood Larry's love for books.”</p>	
P. 36 ll. 16 - 27	3	<p>“He learned to keep out of sight for most of the day as Cecil Walker, their closest neighbor, and other men began to assemble for what was, to Larry, always a revelation: his father telling stories, something he never did at home. In the late afternoon, as more fellows got off from the mill, they began to arrive in their pickup trucks, [...] sometimes just to listen to Carl at his worktable, the men gathered three, four deep, watching the mechanic [...]. Passing his bottle, Cecil would ask, 'Carl, what was that you's saying other day, about that crazy nigger - ?' And Carl would chuckle”.</p>	
P. 15 ll.1 - 3	2	<p>“He thought of his mother, dead eight years. The time the two of them lived in a hunting cabin on land owned by a white man. No water in the place, no electricity, no gas.”</p>	
P. 32 ll. 34 - 40	3	<p>“Inn Fulsom his father dropped the boys off at school, Alice climbing out and then Silas, Larry aware of how unusual, inappropriate, it was for black people to be getting out of a white man's truck. As he slid across the seat Larry glanced back at his father, who faced the road. Silas had disappeared – probably as aware as Larry of the oddity of their situation – and Larry stepped past the woman called Alice, seeing for the first time, as she smiled at him, how lovely she was.”</p>	

P. 81 ll. 31 - 33	6	“It ain't no motels for a stretch,' the driver said. 'Just nicer hotels [...].' 'Nicer,' she said. 'You mean won't take black folks?’”	
P. 83 ll. 34 - 41	6	The “bus driver who had one hand on the steering wheel and the other flapping, some story his mother was supposed to laugh at. And Silas knew without looking at her that she would, because it was polite and she lived in a world where she had to be polite all the time. It was a world he wanted no part of. He wanted no part of her. He was already up backpack in hand and over the sideboard and gone.”	
P. 86 ll. 20 - 27	6	“The waitress[,a young white girl,] appeared with a second plate, two eggs, over easy, four link sausages, grits, and a cat-head biscuit. She moved Silas's plate to set the new one between them. Alice looked up to the girl's face. 'Miss? This ain't ours.' The steam from this and other food had frizzed the girl's hair. 'Somebody else sent it back, 'she said. '[...] If you don't want it, I'll have to throw it away.’”	
P. 60 ll. 16 - 21	5	“For the past spring, whenever he'd been able to , Larry would race through the woods with his rifle, toward the cabin. Each time Silas would jump out with the .22, a good-natured ambush, Larry understanding that Silas would have been waiting for him no matter how long it took him to get there, the black boy always breaking into his big grin.”	
P. 60 ll. 44 - 45		“At the creek's widest point, he showed Silas how to bait a hook, throw the cork out, catch and clean a fish.”	
P. 39 ll. 18 - 22	3	“Having a black friend was an interesting idea, something he had never considered. Since the redistricting he was around them constantly. The churches were still segregated if the schools weren't and sometimes Larry wondered why grown-ups made the kids mingle when they themselves didn't.”	
P. 104 ll. 21 - 25	7	“Their lives had stopped, frozen, as if in a picture, and the days were nothing more than empty squares on a calendar. In the evening the three of them would find themselves at the table over a quiet meal no one tasted”.	

P. 108 ll. 21 - 38	8	<p>“After all this time, why shoot his self now?”</p> <p>‘Maybe he did take that girl.’</p> <p>Silas was shaking his head. ‘Naw, I can’t see it.[...] I just don’t think he’s got it in him.’</p> <p>‘How do you know?’</p> <p>Silas took a breath. Then he said it. ‘Cause I used to be friends with him.’”</p>	
P. 116 ll. 31 - 38	8	<p>Silas remembered it. He had felt, at that moment, most acutely in his life, the absence of a father. He had walked home that night, through the darkening woods, aware that all this land – over fiver hundred acres, Larry had said – was theirs, which meant it was Larry’s, or would be. And Silas who had nothing, looked up to where the sky had been [...]. He started to run, afraid, not of the darkness, but at the anger scratching in his ribs.”</p>	
P. 35 ll. 24 - 35	3	<p>“Larry was mechanically disinclined, his father’s expression. He could never remember whether counterclockwise loosened a bolt or what socket a nut took, which battery cable was positive. When he was younger, his father had used this disinclination as a reason not to let him visit the shop, saying he might get hurt or ring off a bolt, and so, for all those Sundays, all those years, Larry stayed home. Until his twelfth birthday, when his mother finally convinced Carl to give Larry another chance, and so, anxious, afraid, in old jeans and a stained T-shirt, Larry accompanied Carl to Ottomotive on a warm Saturday. He swept and cleaned and did everything Carl told him to and more.”</p>	
P. 33 ll. 45 - 46		<p>“As Larry dried the plates his mother handed him, he understood that he had betrayed a trust between himself and his father”.</p>	