

Name: _____

Date: _____

Deciphering the Meaning of Proverbs

Context: Edwidge Danticat often uses proverbs her novel *Behind the Mountains* in order to explain the motivation behind a character's actions which are often tied to Haitian cultural understandings.

Objective: You will be to apply the meaning of proverbs in order to gain a deeper understanding of character.

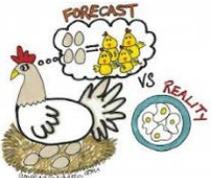
Key Points:

- A proverb is a saying or expression that is generally true.
- Proverbs are a type of figurative language. This means that they require additional thought and analysis.
- Proverbs give insight into cultural values, beliefs, and life lessons. They are often passed down through the generations.
- In literature, proverbs also give insight into a character and motivations.

Steps to Unlocking Meaning:

- 1) SUMMARIZE the context of the proverb (Who? What? When? Where?).
- 2) DRAW a visual representation of the proverb.
- 3) INTERPRET the proverb (What words stick out? What does they mean to you?)
- 4) APPLY your interpretation to the context of the story (how and why does it fit?)

Proverb Example: *Don't count your chickens before they hatch.*

<p>First Thoughts:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1) <i>Context</i>2) <i>draw key images</i> <div style="text-align: center;"></div>	<p>Second Thoughts:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">3) <i>Interpret key "clue" words: count, before</i>4) <i>apply interpretation: how can one count a chicken if it hasn't hatched yet? how can this extend to something larger than chickens?</i> <div style="text-align: center;"></div>
<p>This proverb means...</p> <p>You shouldn't count on something before it actually happens.</p>	

“Manman likes to speak in pictures like that. They are called proverbs. I like proverbs because you have to stop and think to interpret them. They make a picture for you and you must discover for yourself how to interpret it” (8).

Now your turn...

Proverb: “Behind the mountain are more mountains” (5).

First Thoughts:	Second Thoughts:
This proverb means...	

Proverb: “Listen to me, Moy, the head that’s accustomed to wearing a hat will always wear a hat” (8).

First Thoughts:	Second Thoughts:
This proverb means...	

Proverb:

First Thoughts:	Second Thoughts:
This proverb means...	