

Week 1 Maryse Condé *Le Coeur à rire ou à pleurer*

A. Reading: Please read at least as far as p. 85.

B. Geographical contexts

1. Draw up a picture of France as it is presented in the early part of the text. Think particularly about:
 - i. Narrative perspective (whose views of France are these?)
 - ii. Veracity of picture presented (attention to social / historical detail, etc)
2. Draw up a similar picture of Guadeloupe. Think particularly about:
 - i. Narrative perspective
 - ii. Differences in tone in the presentation of these two countries.
 - iii. The relevance of binary oppositions in this part of the text.

C. Colonialism / post-colonialism

3. Analyse what this part of the text reveals about the effects of French colonialism on life in the Caribbean? Give as many concrete examples as you can.
4. Compare your understanding with your previous knowledge of French colonialism. Think about the following:
 - i. Do you need a working knowledge of France's colonial past to appreciate this text?
 - ii. Is Condé interested in educating us about colonialism and its consequences? If so, how does she go about this?

D. Telling the truth? Writing and autobiography

5. Prepare pp. 41 - 43 and pp. 84-85 in detail. Think particularly about the following:
 - i. What links these two episodes?
 - ii. What do we learn through the 'child's eye view' that Condé gives us? Analyse how that 'child's eye view' is created.
 - iii. What do the episodes tell us about the way in which the sense of a text can be transformed, or even misconceived, by its readers (ie: the way in which a writer's apparent intentions are betrayed by the reader).
 - iv. Do these episodes suggest to us anything about our own reading habits? About the interplay of truth and fiction in a wider sense?
 - v. Are there other binary pairs like this in the text?