

(30 minutes) “We can find no scar, / But internal difference,” writes Dickinson, contrasting outer and inner perception. Examine the external and internal connection (or disconnection) in two works. How do the works use the outside world versus the inside? Outside what, and inside where? What is outwardly apparent, and how is it different from an inner reality?

Student O

The Slant Truth

While Emily Dickinson's light from outside slants in, Petina Gappah's "something nice from London" has a hard time getting in. It is not clear whether Dickinson's certain light literally comes in or is only observed through the window but it is clear that this external vision, like the cathedral sounds, have an internal impact "That oppresses" and "Hurt." Dickinson's internal and external worlds are much more interpenetrating than Gappah's. Whether it be at the national level, outside versus inside Zimbabwe, at the family level, outside versus inside the family, or at the personal level, outside versus inside the self, there is difficulty getting in or out. Mary and Jonathan are not even able to get past the consulate officer, let alone to exit Zimbabwe to enter England. There is a clear difference between blood-kin and in-laws in terms of roles in life and even burial in death. And too, often, for Mary, for example, her inner ambitions and emotions are thwarted. While the outside air carrying light and sound is absorbed unhindered into Dickinson's speaker's consciousness, and the external "Landscape" listens, the "laughing sound" from Gappah's narrator's left heart cavity is at odds with the "crying sound" from the right. Gappah's story highlights obstacles to connection, even within oneself, but with humor in a slanted attempt to get at less than happy truths. If it works, then Mr. Chikwiro's pronouncement is on point, that "left was right."