

Jordan Stump's translation of *Forever Valley* by Marie Redonnet. University of Nebraska Press : Lincoln (1994)

I marked out the rectangle I am going to dig up, and then I pulled up the weeds so it would be very neat where I dig. It's not a little thing to begin digging a pit, especially for the first time. I started working with the pick, because the pick is easier to handle than the shovel. I had barely started when I heard the father calling me. He is on the alert for any noise, and he recognized the sound of his pick right away. He wanted to know what I was up to in the garden. He can't leave me alone. He wants to be kept informed about everything. He wanted to know what I was doing with his pick. I had to tell him I was digging my first pit. He thought it was a good idea. He doesn't want to stay in the rectory while I look for the dead. I told him it was very hot in the garden because of the bright sunlight. But he didn't want to hear about it. He said he would put on his hat. It is an old gardner's hat which has lost its shape. It's not his size, it falls down over his forehead, it barely stays on. The father says it is a good hat and that he will be well protected from the sun. I pushed his wheelchair over to where I am working. The father says he wants to be where I am digging so he can keep an eye on everything I do. There is nothing I can say, it is his garden. I noticed that he has stopped saying he wants to guide me. He realizes he would not be able to. He wouldn't know how to go about it if he was the one who was looking for the dead. He wanted me to push his wheelchair forward so he would be right by the edge of the pit. It must hurt him to be reduced to watching, when he used to be so good at using a pick and shovel. He must be thinking he didn't make very good use of them, that it would have been better for him to look for the dead instead of only keeping the garden free of weeds.

1. Why does the father want to be outside?
2. What reason does the narrator give the father to explain why he should remain indoors? Do you think that this is the only reason she doesn't want him outside? What makes you say so?
3. What solution does the father propose when the narrator tells him that he should not be outdoors? Does the narrator believe this idea to be a good solution? Why or why not?
4. What kind of work does the narrator undertake? What tools does she use? How does she describe her project? How do you think she feels about her project?
5. Describe the narrator's feelings towards the father. What do you think she means when she says: "I noticed that he has stopped saying he wants to guide me. He realizes he would not be able to"? What kind of relationship exists between these two individuals in your opinion?
6. Describe Marie Redonnet's use of repetition in this passage. Which words repeat? What does this repetition suggest to you? Why do you think the author uses certain

words and structures over and over? Would you say that this text is an example of minimalism? Why or why not?

7. The narrator makes some comparisons between the father and herself. What are these points of contrast and similarity? Why does she draw attention to these particular details?