

amy tan mother tongue symbolism

amy tan mother tongue symbolism explores the profound use of language as a symbol in Amy Tan's essay "Mother Tongue." This essay delves into the complexities of language, identity, and cultural heritage, illustrating how language shapes personal and social experiences. Amy Tan uses her mother's "broken" English to symbolize the challenges and richness of immigrant life, as well as to challenge societal perceptions of intelligence and credibility. The symbolism in "Mother Tongue" highlights the power dynamics embedded in language and the intimate connection between language and identity. This article will analyze the key symbols Amy Tan employs, the role of language in shaping identity, and the broader implications of linguistic prejudice. The discussion will provide a comprehensive understanding of amy tan mother tongue symbolism and its relevance in literary and cultural studies.

- Understanding Amy Tan's Use of Language as Symbolism
- The Symbolism of "Broken" English
- Language and Identity in Amy Tan's Work
- Symbolism and Cultural Heritage
- The Impact of Linguistic Prejudice
- Symbolism's Role in Challenging Stereotypes

Understanding Amy Tan's Use of Language as Symbolism

Amy Tan's "Mother Tongue" employs language as a central symbol to convey deeper meanings about identity and culture. Language in this context is not merely a means of communication but a representation of personal history and social experience. Tan's portrayal of her mother's English highlights how language reflects cultural background and individual struggles. The symbolic use of language also reveals the complexities of navigating between different cultural worlds.

Language as a Reflection of Identity

Language in "Mother Tongue" symbolizes the author's connection to her Chinese heritage and her American upbringing. Tan illustrates how language shapes self-perception and how others perceive her and her family. The essay reflects on the duality of identity experienced by immigrants and their descendants.

Language as a Cultural Bridge

Through Amy Tan's mother tongue symbolism, language is depicted as a bridge between generations and cultures. It connects Tan to her mother's experiences and to the broader Chinese-American community. This symbolism emphasizes the importance of preserving cultural identity amid assimilation pressures.

The Symbolism of “Broken” English

One of the most prominent symbols in "Mother Tongue" is the concept of “broken” English, used to describe Tan's mother's unconventional command of English. This “broken” English symbolizes both the limitations imposed by societal attitudes and the richness of cultural identity.

Challenges and Strengths in “Broken” English

Tan's depiction of her mother's English challenges the stereotype that non-standard English equates to lack of intelligence. Instead, the essay reveals the strength and resilience behind this form of expression. The “broken” English symbolizes the mother's unique perspective and wisdom.

Perceptions of Language in Society

The symbolism of “broken” English also highlights societal prejudices that affect immigrants and non-native speakers. Tan critiques how language proficiency is often unfairly linked to credibility and competence. This symbolism exposes the bias embedded in linguistic judgments.

Language and Identity in Amy Tan's Work

Language is a key symbol in Amy Tan's exploration of identity, particularly in immigrant narratives. "Mother Tongue" uses language to illustrate the complex relationship between self-identity and cultural belonging.

Dual Identity Through Language

Amy Tan's use of language symbolism reveals the tension between her American identity and her Chinese heritage. The essay captures the experience of navigating two linguistic and cultural worlds, reflecting the dual identity of many immigrants.

Language as Empowerment

The essay also presents language as a source of empowerment. Tan's embrace of her mother's English symbolizes acceptance and pride in her heritage. Language becomes a tool for reclaiming identity and challenging societal norms.

Symbolism and Cultural Heritage

In "Mother Tongue," Amy Tan mother tongue symbolism connects language to cultural heritage, emphasizing the importance of preserving linguistic traditions. Language symbolizes the transmission of culture and familial bonds.

Preserving Heritage through Language

The essay illustrates how language serves as a vessel for cultural values and history. Tan's mother's English represents the legacy of immigrant experiences and the preservation of cultural identity across generations.

Language as a Link to Ancestry

Language symbolizes a tangible connection to ancestry and roots. Tan's reflections reveal how mother tongue is intertwined with memory and tradition, reinforcing the significance of linguistic heritage.

The Impact of Linguistic Prejudice

Amy Tan's essay highlights the symbolic role of language in exposing linguistic prejudice and discrimination. The portrayal of her mother's English brings attention to the social consequences of such biases.

Social Barriers and Language

"Broken" English symbolizes the barriers faced by immigrants in social, professional, and legal contexts. Tan's narrative underscores how linguistic prejudice can limit opportunities and marginalize individuals.

Challenging Stereotypes through Symbolism

Amy Tan uses symbolism to challenge stereotypes associated with non-standard English speakers. The essay promotes understanding and respect for linguistic diversity, advocating for a broader definition of intelligence and worth.

Symbolism's Role in Challenging Stereotypes

The amy tan mother tongue symbolism is instrumental in confronting and deconstructing stereotypes about language and intelligence. Tan's essay uses language as a lens to examine and critique cultural assumptions.

Redefining Intelligence and Communication

Tan's portrayal of her mother's English redefines traditional ideas of intelligence and communication. The symbolism questions the validity of judging individuals solely on language proficiency.

Promoting Linguistic Inclusivity

Through symbolism, "Mother Tongue" advocates for linguistic inclusivity and respect. The essay encourages readers to appreciate the diversity of language forms and the cultural richness they represent.

- Language as Identity and Culture
- "Broken" English as Strength and Symbol
- Preserving Heritage through Linguistic Expression
- Exposing and Challenging Linguistic Prejudice
- Redefining Social Perceptions of Language

Frequently Asked Questions

What does 'mother tongue' symbolize in Amy Tan's essay?

'Mother tongue' symbolizes the intimate connection between language and identity, reflecting the complexities of cultural heritage and communication within families.

How does Amy Tan use symbolism to portray her mother's English in the essay?

Amy Tan uses her mother's limited English as a symbol to highlight issues of linguistic prejudice and the strength found in non-standard forms of communication.

What is the significance of the title 'Mother Tongue' in relation to symbolism?

The title 'Mother Tongue' symbolizes the personal and emotional language that connects Tan to her mother, emphasizing the importance of one's native language in shaping identity.

How does Amy Tan symbolize the challenges faced by non-native English speakers?

Through anecdotes about her mother's experiences, Tan symbolizes these challenges as barriers to respect and understanding in society.

In what way does Amy Tan use symbolism to explore cultural identity?

Tan uses the symbolism of language to explore how cultural identity is preserved and expressed through the way people speak and communicate.

What role does symbolism play in Amy Tan's message about language and communication?

Symbolism in Tan's essay underscores the idea that language is more than words; it carries emotional weight and cultural significance.

How is the concept of 'mother tongue' used symbolically to discuss empowerment?

The 'mother tongue' symbolizes empowerment by showing how embracing one's native language and cultural background can strengthen self-confidence and familial bonds.

Why is Amy Tan's depiction of her mother's English considered symbolic?

It is symbolic because it challenges societal norms about language proficiency, illustrating that intelligence and worth are not determined by linguistic ability alone.

Additional Resources

1. *The Joy Luck Club* by Amy Tan

This novel explores the complex relationships between Chinese-American mothers and their daughters, highlighting themes of language, identity, and cultural heritage. The symbolism of language in the book reflects the struggles and misunderstandings that arise from cultural differences. Amy Tan uses mother tongue and communication as a way to illustrate the bond and tension between generations.

2. *The Kitchen God's Wife* by Amy Tan

In this book, language symbolizes the cultural divide between immigrant mothers and their American-born children. The story delves into the secrets and stories passed down through generations, often communicated through nuanced and symbolic language. Tan uses mother tongue to emphasize the importance of understanding one's roots and personal history.

3. *Mother Tongue: The Language of Self in Amy Tan's Work* by Shirley Geok-lin Lim

This critical analysis examines how Amy Tan uses mother tongue as a symbolic element in her writing. The book explores how language shapes identity, self-expression, and the immigrant experience. It provides insight into Tan's literary techniques and thematic focus on mother-daughter relationships.

4. *Language and Identity in Amy Tan's "Mother Tongue"* by Elaine H. Kim

This scholarly work analyzes the symbolism of language in Tan's essay "Mother Tongue," focusing on how English proficiency and linguistic diversity affect identity formation. It discusses the societal implications of "broken" English and how language barriers impact personal and cultural identity.

5. *Between Two Languages: Amy Tan's Symbolism of Mother Tongue and Cultural Identity* by Maria T. Garcia

This book explores the duality of language as both a barrier and a bridge in Amy Tan's narratives. It highlights how mother tongue serves as a symbol of cultural heritage and personal identity amidst the challenges of assimilation. The work underscores the emotional and psychological significance of language in immigrant families.

6. *The Language of Silence: Symbolism in Amy Tan's Mother Tongue* by Laura Chen

This study focuses on the symbolism of silence and unspoken communication in Tan's "Mother Tongue." It argues that silence often conveys deeper meanings and emotions within mother-daughter relationships. The book provides a nuanced understanding of how language extends beyond words.

7. *Bridging Worlds: The Role of Mother Tongue in Amy Tan's Fiction* by David Lee

David Lee explores how Amy Tan uses mother tongue to bridge the gap between different cultural worlds. The symbolism of language in her stories reveals the struggles and reconciliations of immigrant families. This book offers a comprehensive look at the linguistic and cultural themes in Tan's work.

8. *Echoes of the Past: Symbolism and Memory in Amy Tan's Mother Tongue* by Sarah K. Matthews

This book examines how mother tongue symbolizes memory and the preservation of cultural identity in Amy Tan's writing. It discusses how language serves as a vessel for storytelling and the transmission of family history. The work highlights the emotional resonance of linguistic symbolism in immigrant narratives.

9. *Words Between Mothers and Daughters: The Symbolic Power of Language in Amy Tan's Stories* by Jennifer Huang

Jennifer Huang's analysis focuses on the symbolic power of language in shaping mother-daughter dynamics in Amy Tan's literature. The book explores how differing language abilities influence relationships and self-perception. It underscores the theme of communication as central to understanding and empathy in Tan's work.

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amy tan mother tongue symbolism: Reading Amy Tan Lan Dong, 2009-06-08 This essential discussion of Amy Tan's life and works is a necessity for high school students and an enriching supplement for book club members. A tour-de-force in Asian American writing, Amy Tan has created works that are essential to high school and undergraduate literature classes and are often book club selections. Reading Amy Tan is a handy resource that offers both groups plot summaries of five of Tan's novels, as well as character and thematic analysis. The handbook also provides an overview of Tan's life and discusses how she emerged onto the scene as a novelist. Tan's typical themes, including Asian American issues and mother-daughter relationships, are examined in relation to today's current events and pop culture. Readers will also discover how and where they can find Tan on the Internet, and how the media has received her works. The What Do I Read Next chapter will help readers find other authors and works that deal with similar subjects. This handbook is an indispensable tool for both high school and public libraries.

amy tan mother tongue symbolism: Bloom's how to Write about Amy Tan Kim Becnel, 2010 With the publication of her first novel, *The Joy Luck Club*, in 1989, Amy Tan was immediately recognized as a major contemporary novelist. Her work has received a great deal of attention and acclaim from feminist critics for its focus on issues of matrilineage and the ultimate triumph over female victimization. Her classic debut and the many novels that followed are unlocked and explored in this valuable resource, which provides helpful suggestions for students writing about Amy Tan.

amy tan mother tongue symbolism: Mother Tongue Theologies Darren J. N. Middleton, 2010-01-01 Recognizing that one-third of the world's Christians practice their faith outside Europe and North America, the fourteen essays in *Mother Tongue Theologies* explore how international fiction depicts Christianity's dramatic movement South and East of Jerusalem as well as North and West. Structured by geographical region, this collection captures the many ways in which people around the globe receive Christianity. It also celebrates postcolonial literature's diversity. And it highlights non-Western authors' biblical literacy, addressing how and why locally rooted Christians invoke Scripture in their pursuit of personal as well as social transformation. Featured authors include Fyodor Dostoevsky, Constantine Cavafy, Scott Cairns, Chinua Achebe, Madam Afua Kuma, Earl Lovelace, V. S. Reid, Ernesto Cardenal, Helena Parente Cunha, Arundhati Roy, Mary Martha Sherwood, Marguerite Butler, R. M. Ballantyne, Rudyard Kipling, Nora Okja Keller, Amy Tan, Albert Wendt, and Louise Erdrich. Individual essayists rightly come to different conclusions about Christianity's global character. Some connect missionary work with colonialism as well as cultural imperialism, for example, and yet others accentuate how indigenous cultures amalgamate with Christianity's foreignness to produce mesmerizing, multiple identities. Differences notwithstanding, *Mother Tongue Theologies* delves into the moral and spiritual issues that arise out of the cut and thrust of native responses to Western Christian presence and pressure. Ultimately, this anthology suggests the reward of listening for and to such responses, particularly in literary art, will be a wider and deeper discernment of the merits and demerits of post-Western Christianity, especially for Christians living in the so-called post-Christian West.

amy tan mother tongue symbolism: The Bedford Guide for College Writers with Reader, Research Manual, and Handbook with 2009 MLA and 2010 APA Updates X. J. Kennedy,

Dorothy M. Kennedy, Marcia F. Muth, 2010-04 When it was first published twenty years ago, *The Bedford Guide for College Writers* brought a lively and innovative new approach to the teaching of writing. Since that time, authors X. J. and Dorothy M. Kennedy have won praise for their friendly tone and their view, apparent on every page of the text, that writing is the usually surprising, often rewarding art of thinking while working with language. More recently, experienced teacher and writer Marcia F. Muth joined the author team, adding more practical advice to help all students — even those underprepared for college work — become successful academic writers. While retaining the highly praised Kennedy touch, *The Bedford Guide* continues to evolve to meet classroom needs. The new edition does even more to build essential academic writing skills, with expanded coverage of audience analysis, source-based writing, argumentation and reasoning, and more.

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amy tan mother tongue symbolism: Encyclopedia of Women in the American West Gordon Moris Bakken, Brenda Farrington, 2003-06-26 Click 'Additional Materials' for downloadable samples This is a sound purchase for college and university libraries with women's studies or American West programs as well as for large public libraries. --BOOKLIST This is the first encyclopedia to focus on this neglected group. . . . There is a clear need for this encyclopedia . . . recommended for academic and public libraries and all libraries with a special interest in the western region and women's studies. --LIBRARY JOURNAL A highly educational and enlightening resource, the *Encyclopedia of Women in the American West* is a core recommendation for academic and public library American Western History Studies and Women's Studies reference collections, as well as an invaluable resource for writers and non-specialist general readers with an interest in studying women's experiences and contributions to American society and culture. --THE MIDWEST BOOK REVIEW Unites the American West and Women's History American women have followed their manifest destiny since the 1800's, moving West to homestead, found businesses, author novels and write poetry, practice medicine and law, preach and perform missionary work, become educators, artists, judges, civil rights activists, and many other important roles spurred on by their strength, spirit, and determination. *Encyclopedia of Women of the American West* captures the lives of more than 150 women who made their mark from the mid-1800s to the present, contextualizing their experiences and contributions to American society. Including many women profiled for the first time, the encyclopedia offers immense value and interest to practicing historians as well as students and the lay public. Multidisciplinary and Multicultural Cowgirls, ranchers, authors, poets, artists, judges, doctors, educators, and reformers--although these women took many different paths, they are united in their role in history, fighting not only for women's rights, but equal rights for all in this rich and promised land. The *Encyclopedia of Women in the American West* chronicles the work of Native American activists such as Mildred Imach Cleghorn, and Sarah Winnemucca, the champion of rights of indigenous peoples who established Nevada's first school for Native Americans in 1884. The encyclopedia also explores the stories of early ranchers. Among them is Freda Ehmann, who founded the California Ripe Olive Association where, according to her grandson, science and chemical exactness failed, the experience and care of a skillful and conscientious housewife succeeded. Women in the American West have long thrived in the arts. This is evidenced by the work of authors such as Pulitzer Prize winner Willa Cather, Amy Tan, and Linda Hasselstrom, poets such as Hildegard Flanner, and journalist Molly Ivins. All are profiled in this comprehensive work. The arts are used to address both aesthetic and serious societal issues such as Maxine Hong Kingston's *The Woman Warrior*, the story of a woman's struggle with identity as a minority in American culture. Academics will appreciate a study of Ruth Underhill's *Autobiography of a Papago Woman*, which deals with the role of feminist ideology in changing the discipline of anthropology during the first part of the twentieth century. Women in the American West have also achieved many firsts such as Utah's Ivy Baker Priest, the first woman to hold the office of Treasurer of the United States, and

Georgia Bullock, the first woman judge in the State of California. The Many Roles of Women in the American West The Encyclopedia of Women in the American West covers nine diverse topical categories: Agriculture/Ranching Arts and Letters Education Entrepreneurs Law Pioneers Public Performance Religion Women's organizations The West is often portrayed as a rough and tumble man's world, but behind these men--and often independently--were women with the dreams, strength, and determination to make a difference. The Encyclopedia of Women in the American West is a tribute to their independence, intelligence, courage, spirit, perseverance, and daring. Key Features Authoritative and in-depth articles on a wide range of salient issues in women's history Suggested readings and interpretive materials for every entry Bridges two perennially popular areas of academic and lay interest: the American West and women's history Developed and priced to appeal to high school and public libraries as well as academic libraries Recommended Libraries Public, school, academic, special, and private/corporate

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amy tan mother tongue symbolism: Literary Fantasy in Contemporary Chinese Diasporic Women's Literature Fang Tang, 2019-12-03 This book explores the use of literary fantasy in the construction of identity and 'home' in contemporary diasporic Chinese women's literature. It argues that the use of fantasy acts as a way of undermining the power of patriarchy and unsettling fixed notions of home. The idea of home explored in this book relates to complicated struggles to gain a sense of belonging, as experienced by marginalized subjects in constructing their diasporic identities — which can best be understood as unstable, shifting, and shaped by historical conditions and power relations. Fantasy is seen to operate in the corpus of this book as a literary mode, as defined by Rosemary Jackson. Literary fantasy offers a way to rework ancient myths, fairy tales, ghost stories and legends; it also subverts conventional narratives and challenges the power of patriarchy and other dominant ideologies. Through a critical reading of four diasporic Chinese women authors, namely, Maxine Hong Kingston, Adeline Yen Mah, Ying Chen and Larissa Lai, this book aims to offer critical insights into how their works re-imagine a 'home' through literary fantasy which leads beyond nationalist and Orientalist stereotypes; and how essentialist conceptions of diasporic culture are challenged by global geopolitics and cultural interactions.

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amy tan mother tongue symbolism: Toward Translingual Realities in Composition Nancy Bou

Ayash, 2019-09-26 *Toward Translingual Realities in Composition* is a multiyear critical ethnographic study of first-year writing programs in Lebanon and Washington State—a country where English is not the sole language of instruction and a state in which English is entirely dominant—to examine the multiple and often contradictory natures, forces, and manifestations of language ideologies. The book is a practical, useful way of seriously engaging with alternative ways of thinking, doing, and learning academic English literacies. Translingualism work has concentrated on critiquing monolingual and multilingual notions of language, but it is only beginning to examine translingual enactments in writing programs and classrooms. Focusing on language representations and practices at both the macro and micro levels, author Nancy Bou Ayash places the study and teaching of university-level writing in the context of the globalization and pluralization of English(es) and other languages. Individual chapters feature various studies that Bou Ayash brings together to address how students act as agents in marshaling their language practices and resources and shows a deliberate translingual intervention that complicates and enriches students' assumptions about language and writing. Her findings about writing programs, instructors, and students are detailed, multidimensional, and complex. A substantial contribution to growing translingual scholarship in the field of composition studies, *Toward Translingual Realities in Composition* offers insights into how writing teacher-scholars and writing program administrators can more productively intervene in local postmonolingual tensions and contradictions at the level of language representations and practices through actively and persistently reworking the design and enactment of their curricula, pedagogies, assessments, teacher training programs, and campus-wide partnerships.

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amy tan mother tongue symbolism: Linguistic Justice on Campus Brooke R. Schreiber, Eunjeong Lee, Jennifer T. Johnson, Norah Fahim, 2021-12-06 This book supports writing educators on college campuses to work towards linguistic equity and social justice for multilingual students. It demonstrates how recent advances in theories on language, literacy, and race can be translated into pedagogical and administrative practice in a variety of contexts within US higher educational institutions. The chapters are split across three thematic sections: translingual and anti-discriminatory pedagogy and practices; professional development and administrative work; and advocacy in the writing center. The book offers practice-based examples which aim to counter linguistic racism and promote language pluralism in and out of classrooms, including: teacher training, creating pedagogical spaces for multilingual students to negotiate language standards, and enacting anti-racist and translingual pedagogies across disciplines and in writing centers.

amy tan mother tongue symbolism: Voice of the Oppressed in the Language of the Oppressor Patsy J. Daniels, 2013-05-13 This book examines works from twelve authors from colonized cultures who write in English: William Butler Yeats, James Joyce, Joseph Conrad, Chinua Achebe, Maxine Hong Kingston, Amy Tan, Toni Morrison, Alice Walker, Sandra Cisneros, Ana Castillo, Louise Erdrich, and Leslie Marmon Silko. The book finds connection among these writers and their respective works. Patsy Daniels argues that the thinkers and writers of colonized culture must learn the language of the colonizer and take it back to their own community thus making themselves translators who occupy a manufactured, hybrid space between two cultures.

amy tan mother tongue symbolism: Amy Tan Bella Adams, 2005-07-22 This is the most

comprehensive study to date of Amy Tan's work, offering close readings of her texts in the context of broader debates about the representation of identity, history and reality. In contrast with Tan's own American-born narrator, and mainstream critics, Bella Adams looks beyond the stereotypes which appear in Tan's books, and explores the ways in which Chinese immigrants and their American relatives struggle to understand each other's best qualities via the Chinese tradition of the talk story. She emphasizes Tan's American narrators' process of becoming Chinese and discovering real China, and the significance of the ironic staging of these moments.

amy tan mother tongue symbolism: Untold Narratives Shawn Anthony Robinson, 2018-02-01 This edited book reflects a much needed area of scholarship as the voices of African American (AA) or Black students defined by various labels such as learning disability, blindness/visual impairment, cognitive development, speech or language impairment, and hearing impairment are rare within the scholarly literature. Students tagged with those identifiers within the Pk-20 academic system have not only been ignored, and discounted, but have also had their learning framed from a deficit perspective rather than a strength-based perspective. Moreover, it was uncommon to hear first person narratives about how AA students have understood their positions within the general education and special education systems. Therefore, with a pervasive lack of knowledge when it comes to understanding the experiences of AA with disabilities, this book describes personal experiences, and challenges the idea that AA students with disabilities are substandard. While this book will emphasize successful narratives, it will also provide counter-narratives to demystify the myth that those with disabilities cannot succeed or obtain terminal degrees. Overall, this edited book is a much needed contribution to the scholarly literature and may help teachers across a wide array of academic disciplines in meeting the academic and social needs of AA students with disabilities. ENDORSEMENTS: Dr. Shawn Robinson's collection of personal narratives raises critical questions about the U. S. public education system. Written by African Americans compartmentalized in special education programs because of actual or perceived disabilities, these stories will impel readers even tangentially affiliated with educational institutions to consider testing, placement, mainstreaming, retention and promotion, and other assessment policies that determine grade-level readiness. Thanks to Robinson, the perspectives of these graduates who surmounted barriers to more positive and accommodating learning environments now receive proper attention. ~ John Pruitt, University of Wisconsin-Rock County With a bold vision, Dr. Shawn Anthony Robinson enters the discussion of Special Education with a collection of narratives that highlight the struggles and triumphs of marginalized students. In America, we have a long, contested history of "inclusion" of students of color and difference in our public, mainstream institutions. When these students are invited to the education table, they still must overcome persistent and pernicious barriers to true and equal educational opportunities. Consequently, students are left to "sink or swim" in oceans disparity and inequity. This collection of narratives and counter-narratives, confront the absence of adequate research and other empirical evidence of pedagogy and practice that would be essential to 21st Century progress in educational praxis. This volume represents one, important step towards adding new voices to the continuing struggle of meaningful inclusion. How might students of color and difference succeed in an education system that provides "no room to bloom? The authors address this challenge by exploring topics such as Aspirational Capital, Linguistic Capital, Familial Capital, Social Capital, Navigational Capital and Resistance Capital. The reader will be exposed to ideas that will help students "make a way out of no way" by working both within and against educational systems full of barriers and opportunities. Congratulations to Dr. Robinson and his colleagues as the content of this volume represents an important contribution to the extant literature. ~ Gregory A. Diggs , Denver, Colorado

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