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Create Your Power

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Samuel David Fogarty

Create Your Power

In Delia Owens' breakthrough novel, *Where the Crawdads Sing*, many different characters with very different personalities and backgrounds are showcased. These characters' unique backgrounds gave them each a different status, or power, in the town of Barkley Cove. Some of these characters used their power of place to help Kya Clark, the infamous Marsh Girl, while many of these characters used their power of place to alienate Kya from society, which forced her to create a place for herself amongst the marsh.

First of all, Chase Andrews, Kya's Pa, and many of the Barkley Cove townsfolk used their power of place to alienate Kya from society. Chase Andrews tricked Kya into thinking he loved her when he did not. Chase held a high place in Barkley Cove, coming from a wealthy, business-owning family. Chase was very powerful, as he was a rich, famous, and white man in the 1960s. While Chase was seeing Kya, he was also seeing another woman and eventually married this woman. He later attempted to rape Kya without any fear of consequences because of his power of place. Next, while Pa was not a rich man like Chase Andrews, he still held more power than Kya, as he was a strong, full-grown man. Pa was an abusive alcoholic, which caused all of his family to leave him except Kya, as she was too young to run away to live on her own. Pa did not take care of Kya, but he did take all of his anger out on her through both physical and mental abuse, which caused Kya to fear men and human contact. Last, many of the townsfolk looked down upon Kya, as they thought themselves better than her due to their place. The townsfolk talked bad about Kya and referred to her as "marsh trash" and "Marsh Girl." They did not want themselves or their children to be around her. It is clear that the people of Barkley Cove, including Kya's father, used their power of place to mistreat and alienate Kya from society.

Second of all, while many characters used their power of place to alienate Kya from society, others used their influences to help Kya. To start, Jumpin' and Mable always helped Kya when she needed it. Being an African-American couple in the 1960s, Jumpin' and Mable had to endure racism from some of the townsfolk of Barkley Cove, as they were considered lower than the white members of the town. However, they still did everything in their power to help Kya when they didn't have to, and Mable says Kya was like a daughter to Jumpin'. Similarly, Tom Milton chose to come out of retirement to be Kya's lawyer when he did not have to. He wanted to defend Kya because he knew how the town had mistreated her. Also, even though Tate abandoned Kya, he still came back for her and never stopped loving her. Tate became a well-educated and well-known research doctor, and he convinced Kya to publish books about her collection of the marsh. Tate always encouraged Kya to be her best, and he was there for her when she needed him most, while she was on trial. Obviously, Kya had many enemies, but she still had people who were willing to help her.

Third of all, Kya used both the hate and help she received from others to empower herself to create a place for herself amongst the marsh. Even though Pa provided Kya with money, she had to learn to become an adult all on her own. She learned to cook for herself, how to find clams on her own, and how to sell clams, creating an income for herself. Similarly, Kya created a collection of objects from the marsh. Tate encouraged Kya to publish her collection; therefore, Kya was inspired to publish them on her own, creating another income for herself. The large income she gained allowed her to fix up her house and enjoy her life. Finally, Kya hated Chase Andrews for wronging her, and she killed him to free herself from any danger he posed. She took justice into her own hands, and she was able to live peacefully and happily in the marsh for the rest of her days. Clearly, Kya used her power to create a good life for herself.

In *Where the Crawdads Sing*, Kya faced many obstacles and was able to overcome them again and again. After all Kya went through, she still fought and overcame her disadvantages. She received hate from some people and help from others, however, Kya used both to fuel herself to create a successful life honing her own power.