

# Universal Themes



Rachel Cooper

I grew up in a small town in South Georgia, with dirt roads and wooden church pews.

“My mother told stories that ran like this one, a story to grow up on”  
(Woman Warrior)

Growing up, people were always critical that my father was at school functions instead of my mother. My mom is a doctor, a pediatrician who saves little lives to be exact.

“There is no such thing as justice in this land for the woman”  
(Japanese Nightingale)

My senior superlative in high school was most athletic. Some people were surprised that I was picked.

“She knows what she wants... and nothing is going to keep her from pursuing it.”

(Hungry Tide)

I graduated high school with 20 of the same kids who had pushed me down  
the slide at recess.

“Hell. Sometimes I feel the days go by too fast. I won’t be young forever,  
and then what?”

(Dogeaters)

My friends all moved on. We were all supposed to do something grand with our lives.

“You’re too old to be a princess”. My childhood best friend? Yeah she’s the best Tinkerbell that Disney World has ever seen.

(Once the Shore)

I moved 13 hours from home to come to Mary Wash, and I called my friends every week that first semester.

“Nothing’s changed, we said to ourselves.”  
(When the Emperor was Divine)

Tennis season is not always an easy time; I hardly have a moment to breathe,  
and yet when I'm at home...

“Did you ever think about staying here and not going back? No”  
(No-No Boy)



I traveled to Rwanda and I heard heartbreaking stories of genocide.

“He had crossed rivers. He had once carried a rifle and saw faces that  
bled.”

(Once the Shore)

My first huge break up was with my best friend. I pretended that it didn't  
break my heart.

“Of course I'll write, Kanai. We're friends aren't we?” I didn't write.  
(Hungry Tide)

I went to Rwanda again, and tried to write my friends' stories.

“You gotta keep the history yourself or lose it forever, boy. That’s the  
mandate of heaven”

(Donald Duk)

Year 3 at Mary Wash: I don't go home a lot anymore, but I do my best to the tell the stories of that place. My southern accent has slowly diminished.

“Now the rumor was she was writing stories. No one had read them and no one had met her. They imagined that her English was very good.”

(The Gangster We're All Looking For)

Yes I'm an English major. No, I don't know what I'm doing with my life. (So please, please don't ask me)

“The world isn't like a clock. Everything doesn't always happen on time.”  
(Hungry Tide)

My little brother just committed to come play tennis here next year. 5 years ago neither of us had heard of Mary Wash.

“Life is funny”

(Night Sky with Exit Wounds)

I went home for Thanksgiving last week, and I felt like I was stuck between two worlds. And one wasn't really mine anymore.

“I have come & come here a thousand times.”

(Soft Science)

Sitting at my little kitchen table in my apartment, my junior of college, at 3am  
studying and exhausted and yet...

“Here. That’s all I wanted to be”  
(Night Sky with Exit Wounds)