

Read the following passage carefully. Then write an essay showing how the author dramatizes the young heroine's adventure. Consider such literary elements as diction, imagery, narrative pace, and point of view.

1 Half a mile from home, at the farther edge of the
woods, where the land was highest, a great pine-tree
stood, the last of its generation. Whether it was left for
a boundary mark, or for what reason, no one could say;
5 the woodchoppers who had felled its mates were dead
and gone long ago, and a whole forest of sturdy trees,
pines and oaks and maples, had grown again. But the
stately head of this old pine towered above them all
and made a landmark for sea and shore miles and
10 miles away. Sylvia knew it well. She had always
believed that whoever climbed to the top of it could
see the ocean, and the little girl had often laid her hand
on the great rough trunk and looked up wistfully at
those dark boughs that the wind always stirred, no
15 matter how hot and still the air might be below...

There was the huge tree asleep yet in the paling
moonlight, and small and **silly** Silvia began with
utmost bravery to mount to the top of it, with tingling,
eager blood coursing the channels of her whole frame,
20 with her bare feet and fingers, that pinched and held
like a bird's claws to the monstrous ladder reaching up,
up, almost to the sky itself. First she must mount the
white oak tree that grew alongside, where she was
almost lost among the dark branches and the green
25 leaves heavy and wet with dew; a bird fluttered off its
nest, and a red squirrel ran to and fro and scolded
pettishly at the harmless housebreaker. Sylvia felt her
way easily. She had often climbed there, and knew that
higher still one of the oak's upper branches chafed
30 against the pine trunk, just where its lower boughs
were set close together. There, when she made the
dangerous pass from one tree to the other, the great
enterprise would really begin.

She crept out along the swaying oak limb at last,
35 and took the daring step across into the old pine-tree.
The way was harder than she thought; she must reach
far and hold fast, and the sharp dry twigs caught and
held her and scratched her like angry talons, the pitch
made her thin little fingers clumsy and stiff as she
40 went round and round the tree's great stem, higher and
higher upwards. The sparrows and robins in the woods

below were beginning to wake and twitter to the
dawn, yet it seemed much lighter there aloft in the
pine-tree, and the child knew that she must hurry if
her project were to be of any use.

45 The tree seemed to lengthen itself out as she went
up and to reach farther and farther upward. It was like
a great main-mast to the voyaging earth; it must truly
have been amazed that morning through all its
ponderous frame as it felt this determined spark of
50 human spirit creeping and climbing from higher
branch to branch. Who knows how steadily the least
twigs held themselves to advantage this light, weak
creature on her way! The old pine must have loved his
new dependent. More than all the hawks, and bats,
55 and moths, and even the sweet-voiced thrushes, was
the brave, beating heart of the solitary gray-eyed
child. And the tree stood still and held away the
winds that June morning, while the dawn grew bright
in the east.

60 Sylvia's face was like a pale star, if one had seen it
from the ground, when the last thorny bough was past,
and she stood trembling and tired, but wholly
triumphant, high in the tree-top. Yes, there was the sea
with the dawning sun making a golden dazzle over it,
65 and toward that glorious east flew two hawks with
slow-moving pinions. How low they looked in the air
from that height when before one had only seen them
far up, and dark against the blue sky. Their gray
feathers were as soft as moths; they seemed only a
70 little way from the tree, and Sylvia felt as if she too
could go flying away among the cloud. Westward, the
woodlands and farms reached miles and miles into the
distance; here and there were church steeples and
white villages; truly it was a vast and awesome world.

—Adapted from “A White Heron” by Sarah Orne
Jewett **Note: Someone at The College Board changed
this text! It is “small and hopeful Sylvia” --What???**

Jewett, Sarah Orne. “A White Heron.” *The Country of the Pointed Firs and
Other Stories*, edited by Mary Ellen Chase, CNIB, 1985, p. 235.