Year of Wonders: Chapter 2 – **Ring of Roses**: Questions and Notes **Jake’s Answers**

1. Read ‘Chapter 2 Analysis.pdf’ = **Done**
2. What time of year does Chapter 2 / the next part of the book begin with? **Spring**  
     
   Extension: why might Brooks have chosen this particular season to start the narrative?  
   **It gives a (false) sense of ‘promise’ – it promises renewal, and with the arrival of George Viccars it seems like there will be a renewal, or second-chance for Anna. However, this helps to BUILD the eventual tragedy. It becomes almost *ironic* – as spring promises hope, and this spring promises only death – especially when missed with the title “Ring of Roses” which is based on the nursery rhyme, which is about people sneezing “a TISSUE” because they have caught the plague and will soon “all fall down” dead.**

**Comparison Quote/Note IDEA: ‘The Devil’ -** In the first paragraph of Chapter 2, in relation to who sent George Viccars: “Later, there were those who would say it had been the Devil.”   
= **similarity** – the people in the societies of both texts are quick to blame the devil for unfortunate happenings.

**Comparison IDEA:** On page 23 Anna complains of being objectified (treated like an object, not a person) by the men in her society “you grow used to those looks, and hard towards the men who give them” = **similar** to The Crucible where the young women have grown ‘hard’ towards how they are treated (by everyone, but particularly the men) – and which leads them to seek their revenge (by accusing them all of witchcraft). Theme = Repressed role of women.

1. How might the distant lands George Viccars tells Anna about foreshadow Anna’s future? (you won’t be able to answer if you haven’t finished the book/read chapter summaries like I asked you to on Monday). **It foreshadows that Anna herself will leave for distant lands at the end of the book.**
2. Comment on how Anna receives George’s sordid/illicit stories of London: is this how we might expect a young woman from this time to act? What is revealed about Anna’s character through these interactions with George? (i.e. what do we learn about Anna). **This is unexpected and encourages readers to view people, and especially women from this era – as more similar to ourselves. Not everyone in old-fashioned times were ‘posh’ – in fact, it was much the same as today: only the rich people are like that.**   
     
   Extension 1**:** why might Brooks have included this part? What might she be trying to challenge? Or: what feminist ideas might she be trying to explore or **communicate** (vvc)?  
   **It also goes to show that Anna is a real person with her own and desires; it also FORESHADOWS that desire and awakening sexuality will be a theme in the text.  
     
   Idea: Brooks is challenging the traditional idea about female passivity.  
     
   It also challenges the PURITAN upbringing that most people in this village have received, and shows that Anna has NOT been fully conditioned/programmed by the Puritans.**

**Motif: symbol:** the colour **green** is used throughout the story as a symbol of **renewal** (just like Spring):   
  
Extension 2: how might the green dress George makes Anna symbolise renewal? (i.e. elaborate)  
**Renewal in her love life – or – her capacity to love** (after her husband’s death).

1. Page 35: Using your own words and short quotes, describe Elinor Mompellion.  
   **I won’t give you the quotes here (that’s something you will have to do) – however, Elinor is an important character – and she is certainly a strong female character. She is intelligent, compassionate, caring, and seems to have a remarkable strength, despite being so calm and quiet. She is an inspiration to Anna and to those around, during the plague year (and of course we learn more interesting details about her later).**
2. In Chapter 1 it is foreshadowed that Elinor is very important to Anna. Read from pages 36 to half way down 38 and write some notes on their relationship: why does she seem to be important to her (so far)?  
   - **Helps to teach her how to read  
   - seems to have taken a mentor role (and later they become friends)  
   - Is trying to guide her to be less superstitious (Anna IS still conditioned to be superstitious about herbs and natural medicine – possibly because of the Puritans, or for fear of being branded a witch.  
   - She was always “trying to better [Anna]” – e.g. help to improve her education, also, as Elinor came from a rich family and so knows how to ‘act properly’.   
   - Anna “hungered to learn” (good quote)  
   -** and more! **Jake’s Question/Note: does anyone else find this passage (and others with these two characters) laced with an element of desire/sensuality? Like there is a suggestion of sexual attraction between Anna and Elinor?**
3. Why does Anna ‘resist’ Elinor Mompellion trying to teach her about herbs? *Page 38.*  
   - **because of the stigma that surrounds natural medicine.**  
   **Compare**: how might this be relevant to The Crucible? **Both societies, being Puritan/influenced by Puritanism, believe that faith in God through prayer is the best way to treat illness; (and that if you are ill, it is probably/possibly because God has made you that way!). Therefore, any alternative form of medicine/healing is viewed with suspicion (and worse), because you are seen to be trying to circumvent (go around) God in order to heal yourself.  
     
   The great IRONY – is that they fail to consider: perhaps God has given us these medicines – growing handily in plants all around us! It is a form of religious belief very particular to specific times and places in history (witch hunts raged across Europe during these times, and in earlier times, and it wasn’t always Puritans who were to blame. It is a symbol of a culture and society that has become incredibly unhealthily masculine and has forgotten how to integrate and be in balance with the feminine.**

Extension 3: **Compare attitudes to witchcraft:** Read Page 38 from “But of her herb knowledge…” until the top of page 39. How is the attitude toward potential witchcraft different in Eyam in the 1660s than it is in Salem in 1692? Is it different? **We are not entirely sure, but my feeling is it is the setting of Salem and that particular group of people, who felt so persecuted that they had to sail to a new land (America) and the fear of the unknown around them, that led to their witch-hunts. That being said, as we find out later, there will be some similarities – when they accuse Anys of witchcraft…   
  
One KEY difference: it seems like the previous Puritan pastor/reverend** (forgot his name) is more considerate than the ministers/reverends in Salem – because we learn that Mem Gowdie was once accused of witchcraft, and after having a conversation with her out in a field alone, he decided she was not a witch.

**Compare Theme note: superstition and witchcraft:** on page 39 we learn that **Aphra** (Anna’s stepmother) is a **superstitious** person (ironically, a bit like the residents of Salem). We also learn about **Anys Gowdie** (who sounds a bit like an apprentice witch!)in the same paragraph, and it is **foreshadowed** that there will be future conflict between the two women in some way.  
**Similarity:** **superstition** will lead to tragic consequences.  
**Difference:** in similar AND different ways (witchcraft is similar; Aphra’s madness at the end is next-level messed up).

1. How does a different side to Michael Mompellion emerge in this chapter?  
   *Most details are at the end of the Chapter. You may use dot-points. Try to* ***include some quotes****.*  
   - **Mompellion is strong and decisive – knowing how to act, and acting. He shows leadership qualities, which foreshadows the role he is going to take in the coming pandemic.**  
   - *you’ll have to get your own quotes.*

**Motif: hands**: pages 44-5: Brooks uses descriptions of characters’ hands to represent their character (what kind of a person they are) – *please read the Chapter 2 Analysis for quotes/examples.*

What do your hands say about you? *No need to write anything.*

**Theme note: female desire:** repressed and unexpressed female desire is prevalent in YoW (similar in some ways to The Crucible). Anna often dreams of visiting other parts of the world, of doing other things, having other jobs, of being with other men; Aphra desires power; there are others.  
  
That Anna is able to ‘live out’ many of these repressed desires by the end of the book, makes this a feminist text (meaning Brooks has structured and written her text in this way deliberately, in order to re-tell/re-imagine a history that may very well have had strong women and female relationships, as evidenced in the text).

**Comparison**: Abigail (and the other girls) also have repressed desires; only, they don’t have a plague that throws the social system and power structures into disarray and allows them to re-invent themselves; instead, they have a very rigid and strict system and little hope for change (hence the tragedies in the play).