Key incident context / topic sentences:

In the **build up** to **the key incident** when man and boy come across the plantation house, they watch in the dead trees as a band of cannibals travel the road. In this description, McCarthy **emphasises the contrast** between the man and the cannibals’ values :

Behind them came wagons drawn by slaves in harness and piled with goods of war and after that the women…and lastly… catamites… fitted in dogcollars.

As the **protagonists** continue to travel the road, they come across a large house which McCarthy employs as the **setting** for one of the **key incidents** of the novel:

They came upon a once grand house… the house was tall and stately with white doric columns across the front… its windows strangely intact (111)…

McCarthy then develops characterisation through the events of this **incident.** The main **protagonists** flee when they see cannibals returning to the house, and they hide in a nearby field. At this moment McCarthy’s main character does something which deepens his key source of inner conflict which haunts him almost to the end of the novel:

The **main protagonists** survive the incident at the plantation house, and in McCarthy’s **denouement**, we are relieved to read that he cannot keep his promise. Whilst this develops character and makes the reader sad but relieved, it also conveys the novel’s central concerns:

**Moral or social significance essay main body paragraph topic/context sentences**

McCarthy’s setting alone can be interpreted as having moral or social significance. On two occasions in the first half of the novel, decayed and dead orchards are employed as allusions to an earlier myth of a lost world:

“They followed a stone wall past the remains of an orchard… The wall beyond had a frieze of human heads…”

McCarthy continues to develop his theme of moral significance by highlighting just how fragile nature can be, and through the use of a motif, McCarthy demonstrates this. Throughout much of the novel there is the recurrence of the image of trout:

“once he’d watched trout swaying in the current, tracking their perfect shadows on the stones beneath” p30

“In the deep glens where they lived all things were older than man” p307

McCarthy depicts the symbolism of the setting to be of huge moral significance. In addition to this, one of the main protagonists of the novel – the child – is portrayed to be almost a sacred and religious figure:

Ultimately, the main protagonist sets himself an impossible moral conundrum when he makes a promise not to leave his son alone – which will mean killing him if he is in danger of dying. McCarthy has him make this promise in the first half of the novel, and so it haunts him until his death:

“Just take me with you…

I cant hold my son dead in my arms…

You said you wouldn’t ever leave me.

I know. I’m sorry. You have my whole heart.”