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English 1A 1001-53

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Close Reading Worksheet – *Crackpot* by Adele Wiseman

This touch of contempt they felt, enabled his board members to allow themselves to respect and even, in some areas, to defer, though only half aware of it themselves, to their Director, without feeling any threat to their own pre-eminence. And they had the satisfaction of knowing that in bringing someone in from the outside who was less green, less freshly from the old country than even they themselves, who had fairly recently ripened to the desirable and negotiate shade of gold to which all aspire and few attain, they had not only impressed the town with the importance of the job to be done, but they had imported a worthy addition to the community, for Limprig, though brought up and educated in America, was not one of the alienated. His Yiddish and Hebrew background was sound, and he could as well bandy works, when necessary, with the Bundists and the Zionists with the Orthodox and the gentile fathers, with whom his job also brought him occasionally into contact. (251)

1. Read the passage to yourself highlighting phrases, which seem significant.
2. What happens in this passage? Does anything happen which might be significant to the plot or the book or poem.

Response – This passage sets up the power relationship between Limprig, the Director of the Jewish Orphanage and the volunteer board that oversees the overall tenet of the orphanage's management. This has significance as to the level of character and status Director Limprig holds both in his position on the board but also within the Jewish community in Winnipeg's North End. He is an outsider, but an educated, North American and considered a righteous Jew, able to navigate between the Jewish community and the goyim city leaders and bureaucrats.

3. List as many visual images as you can find in the passage (eg. If a character is stopped at a red light, the red light is an image and so is the car)

Response – There are no visual images in the passage, but rather the third person accounting for the power relationship between Limprig and the board members directly as well as an indirect reference to Limprig's status within the Jewish community.

4. List other kinds of sensory images (eg. Sound, smell taste and touch images)

Response - This passage portrays the sense of feeling one has of either trying to fit in or the envy of those who can.

5. Of the images you have listed, are there any that are repeated or echoed or similar or otherwise emphasized?

Response – Throughout this passage, Wiseman emphasizes with such subtlety the overwhelming desire of an immigrant community to simply blend in and fit within the new society they have chosen to emigrate to. I think Wiseman is trying to evidence that, try as they may, it will take generations, if ever, for those from away to be accepted as full participants and contributors to the society they settle in.

6. Examine the structure of the passage

- 6a. Are the sentences long or short

Response – The sentence structure is very long, in fact, Wiseman takes almost a half page for this passage but only uses three sentences.

- 6b. Is the language ornate or matter-of-fact? Is it emotional or detached?

Response – The language is very matter-of-fact but with an eloquence that is almost ornate.

- 6c. What is the narrative point of view? (ie. First Person or Third Person)

Response – third person omniscient narrator

7. What do we learn about the characters in this passage?

7a. What are their names, occupations, gender, concerns?

Response – Mr Limprig is the Director of the Jewish Orphanage and male. The board members one can assume as the time period is after 1919, are all male.

7b. What unique qualities do each of them have?

Response – Limprig is an educated Jewish man from United States. This is viewed as an asset and elevates his social status within the Jewish community of North End Winnipeg

7c. What can you tell about them from the way they speak? Do they have unique speaking styles, which indicate age, class, background or other qualities?

Response – The passage indicates there is a hierarchy within the Jewish community and Limprig is considered to possess both the academic and rabbinical knowledge to afford him a place at the upper levels of that social hierarchy.

8. What is the setting of this passage? Why do you think the passage is set here?

Response – The setting of the passage is Winnipeg just after the 1919 General Strike. This setting is important for the intricate story line to work. There is a need to that time period's social structure, social unrest and waves of new immigrants for the tale to have any resonance and historic credibility.

9. Based on what you have observed in this passage alone, what are some possible themes of this text?

Response – The theme of this passage is to establish the divide between the Jewish and Christian communities as well as the social status within the North End Jewish community. It could also be thematically linked to the struggle of all immigrant communities as they try so desperately to maintain a link to their heritage and to fit into their new adopted country.