English IV: Good Stories, Great Realities and How to Shape Them

SUMMER READING ASSIGNMENT:

Passing a novella by Nella Larsen

While there’s much to discuss re: masking and passing from this compelling tale (and we will take those topics up in the early fall,) as far as your English IV summer reading for “Good Stories, Great Realities and How to Shape Them” is concerned, we’ll treat our summer writing on this very short novel in the “Who Dun it?” style :--)

In this fast-moving tale set in the height of the Harlem Renaissance’s bounty and beauty, Larsen makes some suggestions regarding safety vs. risk taking and achieving a dream (or goal). One idea she puts forward rather prominently is the tension between risk-taking as an integral component to the pursuit of any dream worth its salt, vs a desire for safety or “security”. If risk taking is necessarily an element of a dream’s pursuit in order for that dream to have any impact or suitable consequence, what happens if one’s “dream” is in fact “safety” or “security”? Does the risk factor still need to surface in the pursuit of this dream (for security, safety)?

Step 1: With this back drop (security vs. the dream) in mind, read Larsen’s novella carefully. Spoiler alert – there’s a death at the end… “Who Dun it?” a person, a suicide, or an accident?

Step 2: Collect a minimum of five different passages/quotations that you believe support your claim as to “Who dun it?” (accident? Suicide? or is there a criminal?). Under each quotation, offer an explanation as to how the ideas or the word choice in that passage suggests a motive for murder, or evidence that the death is pure accident.

Step 3: Counterargument. Find a passage/quotation that suggests a different culprit for this death (so, if you’re arguing the death was suicide, and there’s “that” passage that suggests Irene “did it,” write down that passage, explain how while the ideas there (name them directly) suggest “Irene did it,” develop this explanation to show how the evidence is still more heavy on the side of suicide.

SUBMIT THIS Assignment to www.turnitin.com in time for our first class meeting (5 passages proving your claim, with explanatory for each – some of these may simply establish the character’s tendencies, or a relationship strain, and some may be just plain evidence for your claim re: “Who Dun it?” // Additionally, you’ll have one passage that is arguably in favor of a different reason for the death… with your “management” of that inconvenient evidence to show your claim is still “true” or “more correct”.)

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Enrollment Key: GoodStories!