

## *'Fall of a City'*

*How might the city in the attic be considered a symbol?*

“The Fall of a City” by Alden Nowlan is the story of a young boy named Theodore who, in his loneliness, creates a make-believe kingdom in his attic. This city represents the confidence and respect that he lacks in his life, but wishes he could have. In the story it is evident that he feels powerless and demeaned by his aunt and uncle. He blushes when his aunt “glares” at him for spilling the cream. His uncle threatens to investigate the attic, and threatens Teddy with violence when he objects. Teddy “stared at his plate”, unable to meet his uncle’s eyes, demonstrating a lack of confidence. In the attic, however, he is king and his people need him. They “prayed for the coming of King Theodore” as the outnumbered troops are attacked. But when his uncle finally mocks his “paper dolls”, it completely destroys even the confidence he feels as leader of Upalia, and this is conveyed symbolically as he rips apart his city at the end.

*Describe the atmosphere in the story “The Fall of a City” and explain how this atmosphere is created.*

The atmosphere created in this story is very dark and gloomy. Though Teddy, while playing with his city, is filled with passion and hopeful determination, his reality is much more depressing. In the opening paragraph the reader learns that it is raining violently outside, which creates an immediate sense of gloom. We are reminded of the weather throughout the story with imagery such as, “cloudy white marbles of rain,” and “water still poured from the elms along the street”, which maintains the atmosphere of sadness. The harsh tones of Teddy’s aunt and uncle also contribute to this atmosphere, especially when Teddy is treated with cruelty, “ ‘ An eleven year-old boy’ The man choked, trying to restrain his laughter.” Teddy is a victim of his uncle’s mockery and this cruelty also contributes to the gloom of the setting and story.

*Explain how the story “The Man Who Had No Eyes” uses contrasting characters in order to develop a theme.*

In the story *The Man Who Had No Eyes*, we get a glimpse into the lives of two very different men. Though both of the men were victims of a chemical explosion, and both had lost their sight, each reacted to his disability in opposite ways.

Mr. Parsons is an insurance agent who found success through hard and honest work. He was determined and independent, and was able to see a bright future. ‘And he had done it alone, unaided, struggling beneath handicaps.’ He does not rely on pity; in fact, he is charitable to others, as is illustrated when he offers to buy a lighter from Markwardt despite the fact that he does not smoke.

Markwardt, on the other hand, is dependent and lazy. He spends his time on the street selling his story to passers-by in an attempt to draw pity from them. “His words fell with the bitter and studied drama of a story often told . . .” He is scheming and deceitful, altering the true story to gain more pity. Unlike Parsons, Markwardt is also selfish. His ultimate selfish act, of course, was stepping over Parsons in the explosion and leaving him for dead.

These two contrasting characters clearly develop the theme that people react differently to challenges and hardships and that we should never allow a setback to destroy our lives, but work to overcome obstacles as Parsons did.

*Describe the main conflict in the story "Mr. Know-All" and explain how this conflict develops Mr. Kelada as a dynamic character.*

The main conflict in the story "Mr. Know-All" is internal as Mr. Kelada struggles with a decision. He has announced that he is an expert in pearls and that Mrs. Ramsay's strand is genuine. However, he has been challenged by her husband who maintains the pearls cost a mere eighteen dollars. Mr. Kelada confidently inspects the pearls and is about to announce his victory in the argument when he catches glimpse of Mrs. Ramsay's face. Now he is faced with a conflict. As the title suggests and as we learned throughout the story, Mr. Kelada takes great pride in his superior knowledge of all things. "The possibility that he could be mistaken never occurred to him." To suggest that he was wrong about the pearls would cause him great humiliation. On the other hand, he quickly understands that a truthful answer would reveal Mrs. Ramsay's secret affair. "She was staring at him with wide and terrified eyes." He resolves the conflict and develops as a dynamic character when, with great "effort", he decides to sacrifice his pride for Mrs. Ramsay, showing that there is more depth to his personality than the reader and narrator first believed.