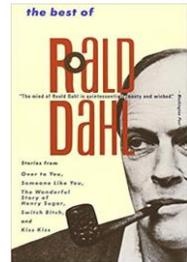


Close Reading Organizer - The Landlady

Directions: Read each summary entry and think about which themes listed in the Themes Key apply to it, then color in those themes in the Theme Tracker. Next, write a few sentences of Analysis to explain how the themes you chose apply to each summary section.

Themes Key

- 1 Appearances and Deception
- 2 Anonymity vs. Community
- 3 Adulthood vs. Innocence



Summary	Theme Tracker			Your Analysis
<p>When Billy Weaver steps off the train—which he has taken from London to Bath—it is nighttime and the weather is harsh: “The air was deadly cold and the wind was like a flat blade of ice on his cheeks.” Billy doesn’t know anybody in Bath so he asks the train porter for directions to a nearby hotel. The porter recommends a pub called “the Bell and Dragon,” which is within walking distance.</p>	1	2	3	
<p>Mr. Greenslade, from “the Head Office in London,” had told seventeen-year-old Billy that Bath was “a splendid town.” Billy looks up to “successful businessmen” like Mr. Greenslade, whom he admires for being “absolutely fantastically brisk all the time.” Having followed Mr. Greenslade’s advice, Billy plans to “report to the Branch Manager” as soon as he has found a place to stay.</p>	1	2	3	
<p>As he walks towards the Bell and Dragon, Billy notices that the once-“swanky” houses that line each side of the street are a little old and decrepit. Even though it is dark, he</p>	1	2	3	

can see that “the handsome white facades [are] cracked and blotchy from neglect.”				
In contrast, Billy notices a “brilliantly illuminated” window that has a sign inside advertising a Bed and Breakfast. Billy sees a “vase of yellow chrysanthemums, tall and beautiful,” and he walks a little closer to inspect the Bed and Breakfast. Through the window, Billy sees a wonderful picture of domesticity: he spots an inviting fire, comfortable furniture, “a pretty little” dog, a parrot, and a piano. He thinks to himself: “Animals were usually a good sign in a place like this.”	1	2	3	
Billy acknowledges that although the Bed and Breakfast “would be more comfortable than the Bell and Dragon,” he is “a tiny bit frightened” of the terrible food and “rapacious landladies” who usually run Bed and Breakfasts. He also wonders whether he might prefer getting to socialize with other people at the pub. Billy decides that he should at least go and look at the pub, in order to compare his options and make an informed decision.	1	2	3	
As Billy turns to leave, the Bed and Breakfast sign seems to grip him and look back towards him “like a large black eye.” Billy feels a strange energy keeping him there, “forcing him to stay where he was and not to walk away from that house.”	1	2	3	
Before he knows what’s happening, Billy finds himself moving towards the Bed and Breakfast and ringing the doorbell. Suddenly, the door swings open, and the landlady ,	1	2	3	

<p>“about forty-five or fifty years old,” appears with a bright smile. She “popped” up out of nowhere, making Billy jump in surprise.</p>				
<p>The kind-looking landlady invites Billy inside, and he finds “the desire to follow after her [...] extraordinarily strong.” The landlady offers him a very reasonable price for a room and discusses his breakfast options for the morning. Billy’s first impressions of her are positive, and he thinks to himself: “She looked exactly like the mother of one’s best school-friend welcoming one into the house to stay for the Christmas holidays.”</p>	1	2	3	
<p>Billy notices that there are no other hats or coats in the hallway, and the landlady explains that she is a fussy host and chooses her guests carefully. It strikes Billy that she is “slightly dotty” but he decides that her cheap prices are well worth it. As they climb the stairs towards Billy’s new bedroom, the landlady looks his body up and down and tells him that he is “<i>exactly</i> right.”</p>	1	2	3	
<p>The landlady shows Billy around the “small but charming front bedroom.” On the way, she inexplicably calls him Mr. Perkins, and he corrects her that he’s actually Mr. Weaver. She has gone to great lengths to make it cozy and comfortable and offers Billy some supper. When he declines, explaining that he needs an early night, she asks him to sign the guest book. She leaves the room hurriedly, before Billy has a chance to refuse.</p>	1	2	3	
<p>To make sense of the landlady’s strange behavior, Billy hypothesizes:</p>	1	2	3	

<p>"She had probably lost a son in the war [...] and had never gotten over it." Billy believes that she is a "kind and generous soul" and he feels very pleased with himself for finding such wonderful lodgings.</p>				
<p>As he signs the visitor's book, Billy notices that there have only been two previous entries. The first name—Christopher Mulholland—"rings a bell," and Billy begins to wonder where he has heard it, thinking maybe he saw it in the newspaper. While he racks his brain, it occurs to Billy that he is also familiar with the other name written there: Gregory W. Temple.</p>	1	2	3	
<p>At this moment, the landlady appears with "a large silver tea-tray in her hands." Billy asks her if Christopher and Gregory were famous athletes, which would explain why their names sound familiar. She says no, but tells Billy that both boys were "tall and young and handsome," and she seems very fond of them.</p>	1	2	3	
<p>Billy begins asking the landlady questions about her Christopher Mulholland and Gregory Temple in order to try and work out why he recognizes their names. He realizes that for some reason, he keeps associating the names with one another, "[a]s though they were both famous for the same sort of thing," citing Churchill and Roosevelt as an example. As he gets closer and closer to determining the answer, he realizes with surprise that Christopher's visit was two years previously, and Gregory's happened three years ago. Meanwhile, the</p>	1	2	3	

<p>landlady continues preparing the tea and biscuits, interrupting Billy and evading his enquires. As she sets the tray down, Billy notices her “small, white, quickly moving hands, and red finger-nails.” Oddly, she also calls him by the wrong name again.</p>				
<p>Billy is sure that he has heard the boys’ names in the newspapers, and he is determined to find out why. He begins to remember the name “Christopher Mulholland” in the context of a news story he read about a schoolboy who went missing during a walking tour. The landlady denies the link, explaining “Oh no, my dear, that can’t possibly be right because <i>my</i> Mr. Mulholland was certainly not an Eton schoolboy.” Changing the subject and diverting Billy’s attention away from Christopher, the landlady invites Billy to sit with her by the “lovely fire” and hands him a cup of tea.</p>	1	2	3	
<p>While sipping their tea in silence, Billy is aware of a “peculiar smell that seemed to emanate directly” from the landlady. Billy was sure that the smell reminded him of something, but isn’t sure what: “Pickled walnuts? New leather? Or was it the corridors of a hospital?” As he sips his tea, Billy becomes increasingly certain that he had read the two boys’ names not just in the newspaper, but in the newspaper headlines.</p>	1	2	3	
<p>As the landlady speaks fondly about Mr. Mulholland, Billy asks if the guest checked out only recently. Confused, the landlady answers that Mr. Mulholland never left. In fact,</p>	1	2	3	

<p>both he and Mr. Temple are “on the fourth floor, both of them together.”</p>				
<p>As Billy sets his teacup down gingerly, the landlady asks him how old he is. She seems very pleased when he tells her that he is seventeen, and she cries out, saying: “Oh, it’s the perfect age!” She explains that Christopher was the same age when she met him, and that Gregory was a little older. She also comments that Billy has lovely teeth, though he says that they’re actually not as nice as they look; he has lots of fillings. Billy is a little confused and surprised when the landlady explains how “there wasn’t a <i>blemish</i> on [Gregory’s] body” and that “his skin was <i>just</i> like a baby’s.”</p>	1	2	3	
<p>Changing the subject, Billy comments that the stuffed parrot had “completely fooled” him when he first arrived, saying: “I could have sworn it was alive.” The landlady then reveals that the dachshund is also dead. Billy is amazed by how life-like the creatures are, and upon learning that the landlady had stuffed them herself, he feels a “deep admiration at the little woman beside him on the sofa.” Billy is very impressed with the landlady’s skill for such a difficult hobby, but she modestly ignores his compliment, saying: “I stuff <i>all</i> my little pets myself when they pass away.”</p>	1	2	3	
<p>Billy realizes that the tea tastes “faintly of bitter almonds,” and his curiosity about the landlady’s previous guests returns. The landlady checks with Billy that he has signed the guest book. When he affirms that he has, she says it will</p>	1	2	3	

<p>be helpful for her “later on,” explaining that if she ever forgets his name, she can just look in the book, as she frequently does with “Mr. Mulholland and Mr. ... Mr. ...” She trails off, and Billy reminds her that the guest was Gregory Temple. When Billy asks her if there have “been <i>any</i> other guests here except them in the last two or three years,” she replies: “No, my dear...Only you.”</p>				
---	--	--	--	--