

A Summer's Reading / by Bernard Malamud



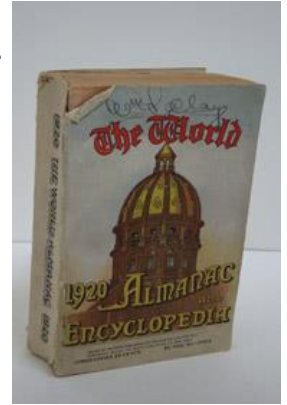
PART A

The Story - Step by step

Part 1:

- Almost 4 years before the story takes place, George quit high school on an impulse at the age of 16 because he ran out of patience. He didn't like school because he felt the teachers didn't respect him.
We can infer it stemmed from the fact that he had difficulties and couldn't cope with the material. It seems that George might have needed special tuition, but as he couldn't get it, he felt frustrated, gave up and left everything behind.
- Now, almost 4 years later, he is almost 20. He is unemployed. On the one hand, he looks for a job and is ashamed to say he hasn't finished school and has no formal education. On the other hand, it doesn't motivate him to complete his education.
- George considers completing his education in the following institutions, but finds excuses why not to:
A summer school – the children will be much younger than he is. He is embarrassed to study with them.
A night high school – he doesn't want the teachers to tell him what to do. He left school because the teachers did not show him respect there.
- George has a lot of free time and has no place special to go. He has no money to spend except for a few cents that are given to him by his older sister, Sophie, every now and then. She is 23 years old and works in a cafeteria in the Bronx.
- His father is poor and works in a fish market. We can infer that the fact that his father works in a fish market is symbolic of the way George feels about him – he “stinks” in his eyes in terms of respect. He doesn't see his father neither as a role model nor as a father figure. George's father is also a very quiet man. This may be because he is sad (his wife is dead – George's mom) or because of depression caused by his tough life as an immigrant living in poor conditions and having a “stinky” job.

- The mother is dead, so Sophie takes care of the house.
- They live in a railroad flat where each room leads to another. It is above a butcher store (and probably suffers from bad smells).
- George spends most of the time in his room.
- During the day George spends his time doing the following:
 - * He cleans the house when it gets on his nerves. He mops the floors and puts things away.
 - * He listens to the ball games on the radio.
 - * He sometimes reads the World Almanac (a mini encyclopedia with a lot of factual information).
 - * He reads magazines and newspapers, like The News and The Mirror that Sophie brings home, popular newspapers for the masses.
- Sophie reads whatever falls into her hands, and sometimes reads good books. She likes to read.
- Sophie asks George if he reads any worthwhile books and he answers "some" although he really doesn't. He lies to Sophie to get her respect.
- He tries to read one of Sophie's books but he isn't in the mood for them because he can't stand made-up stories.
- George likes to go for walks after the sun comes down and it's cooler in the streets. When he wanders in the crowded neighborhood he sees the storekeepers and their wives sit in chairs and fan themselves because it is very hot. He also sees some boys whom he has known for years, but no one talks to the other. He is an outsider.
- Then he leaves his neighborhood and walks for blocks towards the park. The long walk is symbolic because in order to get to the park he has to walk a long distance. Just like the long way he has to go in order to attain his dream and have a better future.
- The park is well kept. It has benches and trees and an iron railing which gives it a feeling of privacy. In addition, the park is darkly lit and maybe the long walk he has to walk in order to get there symbolizes the light at the end of the tunnel.
- George sits on a bench, watches the leafy trees and the flowers blooming, and thinks of a better life. The pleasant surrounding inspires him. While sitting there he thinks of



the jobs he has had since he quit school: a delivery boy, a stock clerk, a runner and a worker in a factory. They are low-level jobs, and George left them rather quickly. This also shows that George has no ability to persevere. George is dissatisfied with them because they are low paying jobs. He believes he can do better and ends up doing nothing.

- George dreams of having a good job and a private house with a porch on a street with trees. He wants to have money in his pockets to buy things, and a girl so he won't be lonely. He wants people to like and respect him. He wants to attain the American Dream. However, he is trapped; on the one hand, without education he is doomed to live a hard life. On the other hand, without a sense of self-worth he is unable to make the necessary change and achieve what he wants.
- Around midnight he goes back to his hot, gray and stony neighborhood.

Part 2:

- One day George meets Mr. Cattanzara coming home late from work.
- Mr. Cattanzara is a stocky, bald-headed man who works in a change booth on an IRT station – NYC subway station. He gives people the right small change (coins) to pay for a ride on a train.
- He lives on the next block after George's, above a shoe repair store.
- At night he sits on his stoop in an undershirt and reads the "The New York Times". He reads it from the first page to the last, while his wife leans out of the window and watches the street. She is a fat lady with loose breasts who can't take her eyes off her husband. She watches him as he reads his newspaper. While his wife seems to admire him, Mr. Cattanzara ignores his wife. They don't communicate.
- Mr. Cattanzara reads the New York Times, a newspaper read by the educated. From this we learn that although he has no formal education (works in a low-level job), he is intelligent and has educated himself.
- Once in a while Mr. Cattanzara comes home drunk, but he never makes any trouble. He looks the same as always.
- George likes Mr. Cattanzara because he feels that he respects him. He used to give him a nickel to buy lemon ice when he was a kid. George likes him for paying him attention.

- Mr. Cattanzara is different from the other people in the neighborhood:
 - He asks different questions and gives George the feeling he is genuinely interested and cares about him.
 - Mr. Cattanzara is updated and knowledgeable. He seems to know what goes in all the newspapers. As a result, George sees him as a figure that he can respect.

The New York Times.



First meeting:

- Mr. Cattanzara asks George what he is doing in the summer, because he sees him walking around at nights. George is embarrassed and answers he likes to walk. He says he isn't doing much right now, but he is waiting for a job (It's a lie. He is too ashamed to say he doesn't work, because he wants Mr. Cattanzara to respect him). Then he says he reads a lot to complete his education. Another lie.
- Mr. Cattanzara is impressed and asks him what he is reading.
- George answers he has got a list of books (around 100) in the library and he is going to read them all this summer. George feels uncomfortable with this lie, but he wants Mr. Cattanzara to respect him.
- Mr. Cattanzara becomes interested and tells him that when he finishes reading some, they can talk about them.
- We can infer that Mr. Cattanzara suspects that George is lying because he nods his head, whistles and tells George that it is a big load for one summer. Perhaps at this point Mr. Cattanzara decides to use George's lie and help him change.

After the first meeting - the first rumor

- After the meeting George does nothing different from usual.
- One evening the shoe maker stops George to say he is a good boy.
- George also sees a couple of people smiling kindly at him.
- George figures that Mr. Cattanzara has told people about reading the books.
- George feels a little better in the neighborhood.



- He finds out that his father and Sophie know all about his reading too. Sophie becomes softer and gives him a dollar a week allowance, to motivate him to continue reading.
- With the money George buys mostly cigarettes, a beer or a movie ticket. In order to keep the façade (ἄποψη) going, George buys books and places them in his room (although he never reads them), so that Sophie will see them and respect him.
- George cleans the house every day as a favor to Sophie
- At night he passes the storekeepers and feels they respect him. As a result, a couple of nights he feels so good he even skips the park.
- Everything has changed. The people don't seem as awful as they have been before, and even the neighborhood seems nicer. (It is a reflection of his inner feelings).
- George starts to avoid Mr. Cattanzara because he feels very uncomfortable with his lie and is afraid of being caught.
- For a few weeks, he talks only once with Mr. Cattanzara, but he doesn't say anything about the books and asks no questions.
- One night, George forgets himself and approaches Mr. Cattanzara's house. Mr. Cattanzara is reading the newspaper and George is scared of the idea of talking to him. Thus, George crosses the street to avoid starting a conversation with him.

Part 3:

- In order to bring himself to a point at which he could meet Mr. Cattanzara and discuss the books with him, George attempts to read the books. However, he does not like them and stops reading altogether (including the magazines and newspapers). George again feels despair and is unable to complete anything that he starts. Although George feels worse than before, his life is not terrible because he still has the respect of the people in the neighborhood. In addition, the money he gets from Sophie allows him to enjoy himself.
- Sophie asks George why he doesn't read the newspapers and magazines she brings home. George lies to her and says he is busy because of all the other reading that he is doing.

- For most of the day George has the radio on, and keeps the house fairly neat.
- Sophie is still kind to him and gives him the dollar, although things aren't the same as before since George is afraid the lie will be revealed.
- One night George sees Mr. Cattanzara coming down the street toward him. George is about to turn and run but he recognizes from Mr. Cattanzara's walk that he is drunk, and if so probably he won't notice him. So George keeps on walking.

Second Meeting:

- George is so stressed that he feels like his heart will pop out to the sky. However, he isn't surprised when Mr. Cattanzara passes him without saying a word and feels relieved at his narrow escape.
- Then, to his horror, George hears his name called.
- Mr. Cattanzara's eyes are sad as he looks at George. He knows George has been lying. George feels very uncomfortable.
- Mr. Cattanzara takes a nickel out of his pocket, hands it to him and says, "Go buy yourself a lemon ice Georgie". George is sure Mr. Cattanzara has made a mistake because he is drunk and tells him that he is a big guy now. However, Mr. Cattanzara answers that George isn't. We can infer that he means that George behaves like a little kid by lying and avoiding him, therefore, Mr. Cattanzara treats him as one.
- Mr. Cattanzara asks how all of his books are coming along. George answers "fine I guess". He asks him "you ain't sure?" and George answers "sure I'm sure". Then he asks for one name of book that he has read from his list because if it's a good book he might want to read it himself.
- George is unable to reply so he shuts his eyes. He opens them "years later" which means that George feels so ashamed and embarrassed that a few seconds seem like eternity. However, when he opens his eyes Mr. Cattanzara isn't there anymore. He has left out of pity.
- Mr. Cattanzara implies that he knows that George isn't reading at all, which is very bad. He challenges him by treating him like a small child and warns George not to make the same mistake he himself made.

- “Don’t do what I did.” This means that Mr. Cattanzara is warning George not to ignore his education and become like him.
- “Like him” means being of a high level of ability on the one hand, but because of a lack of a formal education at an early age, being limited in the type of job he can get, on the other hand. As a result of this frustrating situation, Mr. Cattanzara is stuck and unable to get ahead and succeed in life.



After the meeting:

- George is afraid to leave his room; he is very embarrassed and ashamed of himself so he stays there. He is afraid of the reaction of the public when they find out that he is not reading at all. He feels trapped.
- The summer is hot and his room is stifling. This atmosphere is again a reflection of his inner world. He feels hot, helpless and miserable as if confined in a prison from which he cannot escape.
- Sophie argues with George and asks him where he keeps all of the books he reads, George doesn’t answer. As a result, Sophie realizes that George has been lying the whole time; therefore, she stops giving him a dollar and calls him lazy.
- George stays in his room for a week. He sneaks to the kitchen when nobody is at home. Sophie rails at him, and then begs, but George doesn't come out of the room.
- His passive father cries because he is worried about George, but George keeps staying in his room ashamed and humiliated. George’s situation is now worse than it has ever been. He has lost everyone’s respect and has no source of money.
- One night, unable to stand the heat, he comes out to the street. He leaves the house in a burst of energy – again an impulsive action. The term “heat” also means “pressure”. The “heat” in the apartment is symbolic of the internal pressure that George feels. He can no longer stand hiding from society and finally goes out even though it means dealing with the embarrassment of his lies and having people

disrespect him. He looks very skinny (he hasn't eaten much during this week) hoping to sneak into the park and not meeting anyone.

Unfortunately, there are many people on the streets.

- Surprisingly, a strange thing happens. The reaction of the public is astonishing. They still respect him. At first, George thinks it's because Mr. Cattanzara has forgotten their meeting because he was drunk.
- However, then someone asks him if it's true that he has finished reading the 100 books. George says he has. Consequently, George immediately recovers from his depression, realizing that Mr. Cattanzara has spread that second rumor. Now George realizes how much he needs respect, and he knows that he has to justify his reputation, and do something to maintain this or he will not be able to enjoy life.
- George pulls himself together. One evening in the fall he goes to the library; counts off a hundred books and sits down at a table to read. He trembles. His trembling is either caused by excitement or fear of not being able to complete the task.

A SUMMER'S READING



PART B

Analysis and Interpretation

Setting

The story takes place in the summer in a poor immigrant neighborhood in New York during the Great Depression of the 1930s. The neighborhood has broken sidewalks and no greenery. It is a business district (a butcher store, a shoe repair store, storekeepers sit outside their stores etc.). The family lives in a railroad apartment above a butcher shop (and probably suffers from bad smells). The apartment is simple and allows very limited privacy.

The factors that contribute to George's situation

George himself – He is lazy. He is immature and acts on an impulse. George is a loner. He doesn't fit in anywhere. He avoids hanging out with a gang of guys he has known all his life. He also ignores the neighborhood people until they start smiling at him after the first rumor is spread by Mr. Cattanzara. Clearly, when George likes himself, he is able to like others. The most important thing for him is gaining the respect of others, but he isn't willing to work hard for it.

George allows feelings of shame and guilt to paralyze him instead of motivating him. For example, his lack of education and job push him into telling the big lie: "I'm staying home, but I'm reading a lot to pick up my education". Later on George avoids meeting Mr. Cattanzara because he will then have to either admit the truth (that he isn't reading worthwhile books) or live up to the rumor (and start reading). Since he is unable to do either, he chooses to escape. George makes no real effort to change his life.

George's family - George can find no emotional support there. His mother is dead. His father is not a dominant figure in the house. George doesn't have a warm father-son relationship with his father. The lack of communication between them is made evident when George shuts himself up in his room and all his helpless father can do is cry. Sophie, the older sister, is unable to cope with being a housekeeper, a breadwinner and a substitute mother. She isn't as passive as the father. Yet her tactics of rewarding George with money when she is pleased



with him, or yelling at him when she is not, are ineffective. The family fails to fulfill George's needs – no love, no patience, no understanding, no guidance and no communication.

The society and environment – the neighborhood - The neighborhood's population is mostly made up of immigrant families. These people came to America, the Land of Opportunity, in order to make a better life for themselves. Everyone except for Mr. Cattanzara is indifferent towards George. Most of the people are poor and uneducated. George has no role model. Everywhere he looks, all he can see is poverty and neglect: broken sidewalks in a business area, everything is "hot and stony" (people are sitting outside fanning themselves because of the heat), no trees or gardens except for the park, which is blocks (streets) away.

The school system - It fails to encourage George to complete his studies. George quits out of an impulse – so why doesn't anybody from school try to change his mind? He doesn't drop out because he lacks intelligence, but because he "had lost patience". He wants to "learn different things than they learn there". George doesn't get a feeling of self-worth from his family, neighbors or teachers. Thus, he doesn't believe in himself.

The central themes in the story

One of the central themes of "A Summer's Reading" is George's lack of self-confidence and self-respect. Early in the story, Bernard Malamud says that George believes that teachers do not respect him, but the one who really does not respect him is he himself. He is so ashamed about quitting high school on an impulse that he hesitates to hunt for jobs, feels dissatisfied with the jobs he gets, avoids his old friends, and does not date the neighborhood girls. He is so uncomfortable in his neighborhood that he seeks escape in a park blocks away from where he lives. His lack of self-confidence and self-respect also keep him from returning to school, going to night school, or even beginning to read the hundred books. By telling people that George is reading one hundred books, Mr. Cattanzara helps create a sense of self-confidence and a feeling of self-worth in George. He enjoys being respected by his sister, his father, and the people in his neighborhood. When Mr. Cattanzara discovers that George is doing no reading, he helps George even more by cautioning him not to make the same

mistake that he made, and by not telling anyone that George is not reading. George thinks that Mr. Cattanzara is the one who has spread the rumor that he has finished the hundred books, a rumor that enables him to save his pride and feeling of self-worth and eventually enables him to begin reading. With the support of Mr. Cattanzara and of the neighborhood, George learns that he should try to make his dream come true.

The story also emphasizes the importance of education and reading. Education is the key to success. It is important because without it chances are you'll have an uninspiring job like Mr. Cattanzara. George is uncomfortable with formal education, but Malamud indicates that the alternative of independent reading is available. At first, George feels unable to take advantage of that possibility, but at the end of the story, he begins to work on advancing his education. The story ends on an optimistic note when George finally goes to the library in the fall and starts reading.

Symbolism of the names

The names are symbolic: *Stoyonivich* is Polish for *staying in one place*, *Cattanzara* is Italian for *chained*. The names shed light on the characters. George is standing still because he hasn't completed high school and isn't doing anything to change his life and he literally sits in one place – his room. Likewise, Mr. Cattanzara hasn't completed his formal education and therefore is chained to his wife, job and desperate life. However, Mr. Cattanzara doesn't have a chance of improving his life because he is an old man and it's too late for him. He is chained. In contrast, George is not chained. He is just not moving. For him this is a matter of will power. He is young and can still change his ways.

The American Dream

While sitting in the park at night George dreams about the future. His wishes are simple and materialistic: a job, a house with a porch on a street with trees, spending-money, a girl and respect from people. The park has two things that represent George's American Dream. First, a bench surrounded by a railing – The railing gives a feeling of privacy. One aspect of Georges' American Dream is to have a private home. The "privacy" of the railing represents the private home that George desires. Second, trees since George wants to live in a

“green” neighborhood. This is in contrast with the stony neighborhood he lives in. Green areas are associated in American society with the suburbs in which the educated and well-off (rich) population lives.

Why the story is called "A Summer's Reading"

The story is called A Summer's Reading although George does not read in the summer at all. Nevertheless, what he "reads" or understands is his desperate situation. He reads the book of his life and he doesn't like it. The process of the realization of who he is, what he is looking for and what he has to do in order to achieve his goal, takes place during the summer. It is an inner reading. The summer is very hot and stifling which reflects George's state of mind. In the fall, George pulls himself together and goes to the library to read. Eventually, he takes matters into his hands and makes the necessary change.

The role of Mr. Cattanzara in the story

Mr. Cattanzara has a very important role in the story. He gives George the incentive to read. He is called the change maker because he makes the change in George. He spreads the first rumor which enables George to feel what it is like to be respected. Having felt it, he knows what he may miss if he does not justify his reputation. Mr. Cattanzara also spreads the second rumor because he knows that George must be encouraged to read; otherwise, he may withdraw his attempt to get an education. Mr. Cattanzara knows that the only way to make George fulfill his ambition is to give him the feeling that he is respected. It is no use punishing him for having told lies. Mr. Cattanzara cares about George and he uses reverse psychology to make George read.

The fact that Mr. Cattanzara works as a change maker at a subway station is symbolic. On the literal level, his job is to give change to people who buy tickets. On the figurative level, he is a change-maker – he tries to create a change in George by giving him some insight into his life. He acts as a father figure and role model that George so desperately needs. Through Mr. Cattanzara's words and actions, George faces some very unpleasant truths about himself (*he is childish, immature, a liar and a failure*). Mr. Cattanzara can understand and sympathize with George since he is



an older version of George. He made the same mistakes in life that George is about to make. Mr. Cattanzara settled for second best and has now become a frustrated man. He tries to protect George by giving him both encouragement and warning "*Don't do what I did*".

The park (George) and the beer (Mr. Cattanzara)

The park is a refuge for George. George is dissatisfied with his life because his achievements do not meet his expectations. He does not graduate from high school as he is not competent enough and he has no support from his family. Consequently, he cannot get a decent job and he has to compromise with simple jobs of an unskilled worker. He quits all these jobs because he is looking for respect. George feels ashamed and embarrassed because he is neither studying nor working. He is ashamed to walk in the street, so he stays in his room during the day time. It seems that George has an inferiority complex. At night he sneaks to the park which serves as his refuge from the grim reality and frustration. The park is isolated from the outside world by an iron railing which gives it a feeling of privacy. Outside the park, everything is gray and stony, whereas inside everything is green and blooming. George sits in the park and dreams about a different reality in which he has money, lives in a private house with a porch and has a girlfriend. Sitting there, he forgets himself.



Mr. Cattanzara is very frustrated, too. We learn it from the piece of advice he gives George: not to do what he did. In other words, he does not want George to make the mistake he made, not completing his education. The fact that he considers not having graduated from school as a mistake, and the fact that he reads so much in order to widen his horizons, shows very clearly his attitude to education and knowledge. It seems that Mr. Cattanzara would like to have a job for which a good formal education is needed. Nevertheless, he has to resign himself to a very simple and non-prestigious job as a change maker in the subway. The contrast between his wide reading and the boring job he has must have caused him a lot of frustration, which manifests itself in his drinking. The drinking is his refuge. Only while drunk, can he forget his gloomy reality and get relief for a short while.



PART C

HOGS in the Story



Comparing and Contrasting

- **When we compare George's character to Mr. Cattanzara's character.**

Similarities:

- * Both are intelligent. Mr. Cattanzara reads the *New York Times* and George reads the World Almanac. Both are thirsty for knowledge but haven't completed their formal education.
- * Both find a means of escaping their bitter reality. Mr. Cattanzara gets drunk (to temporarily escape his fat, sickly, suffocating wife and the boredom of an unchallenging job). George goes to the park in the evening where he can forget about everything and fantasize about a better life for himself.
- * Both live in the same poor immigrant neighborhood.

Differences:

- * George is still young and has the opportunity to complete his studies and thus have a better future and fulfill his dreams, unlike Mr. Cattanzara who is too old to make such changes.
 - * George is unemployed, whereas Mr. Cattanzara works as a change maker in an IRT Station.
 - * George is lonely and has no girlfriend to go out with, while Mr. Cattanzara is married (though not happily).
- **When we compare George's character to the other people in the neighborhood.**

The main similarity is that they are all poor immigrants who live in the same neglected neighborhood. Apart from that, there are mainly differences.

 - * George is unemployed while most of the people in the neighborhood have a job.
 - * In the evenings George goes to the park and sits alone on a bench, whereas

the other people in his neighborhood, the shopkeepers, and their wives sit on chairs together. They seem to get along well with each other while George is an outsider and doesn't feel belong.

* It seems that the neighborhood people are underachievers who don't aspire to more than they have. They put up with their lives and accept them. However, George leaves the neighborhood and walks for blocks to the park dreaming of a better future.

- **When we compare the park to George's neighborhood**, we can find only differences.

* The park is isolated from the outside world by an iron railing which gives it a feeling of privacy, whereas the neighborhood is a crowded business district where many people sit, walk and talk.

* In the park there are leafy trees and blooming flowers, while there are none in the neighborhood which is stony and gray.

* Unlike the park where there are benches which people can sit on comfortably, in the neighborhood there are broken sidewalks and people sit on chairs they bring.

- **When we compare the two meetings between George and Mr. Cattanzara.**
Similarities

* The topic of the conversation is the same. Both deal with book reading.

* In both meetings George lies about reading books.

* After both meetings Mr. Cattanzara spreads rumors regarding George's reading.

* After both meetings people show George approval and respect him.

Differences

*After the first meeting George feels quite good with himself.

Nevertheless, after the second meeting George feels terrible and doesn't leave his room for almost a week.

*In the first meeting it is not clear whether Mr. Cattanzara believes George is reading 100 books. However, in the second meeting it is obvious that Mr. Cattanzara knows that George has been lying to him.

- **When we compare George to Sophie.**

Similarities:

* They both live in a poor immigrant neighborhood, with their father. Their mother is dead.

* They resemble each other physically; they are both tall and thin.

* They both like to read newspapers, magazines and worthwhile books.

George reads the World Almanac, while Sophie likes to read whatever falls into her hands and sometimes she reads good books.

Differences:

* Sophie is responsible and hardworking. She takes care of the house and does it as a duty, taking her dead mother's role. However, George does very little, sometimes cleans the house as well, but does it on an impulse when the house gets on his nerves.

* Sophie is practical and independent. She takes the train to the Bronx every morning to work as a waitress and earn money. In contrast, George is lazy. He is unemployed and does nothing to achieve his goals.

Inferring

- We infer that George would like to gain people's respect more than anything else by analyzing his thoughts when he is in the park. We conclude he is unmotivated and feels 'stuck' by looking at the excuses he makes for not going back to school.
- "Go buy yourself a lemon ice, Georgie." Why does Mr. Cattanzara say this to George? (written above).
- We infer that George's father's name is not mentioned because in George's eyes he is not worthy enough. We assume that this lack of respect stems from the fact that the father does not serve as a father figure. He is too weak and it's possible that George sees him as a failure.
- We infer that both George and Mr. Cattanzara frequently escape their reality since George goes to the park and Mr. Cattanzara gets drunk.
- When Mr. Cattanzara says "George, don't do what I did". We infer it has to do with the kind of life he has: his fat, sick wife, his low paying boring job and the neighborhood he lives in.
- We infer that Mr. Cattanzara spreads the second rumor (that George has finished reading all the books) in order to make George feel obligated to

read. We assume that Mr. Cattanzara cares about George and is smart enough to realize that being angry or scolding George will not achieve the desired purpose. Though he is not a psychologist, what he does has the effect "Reverse Psychology" has on people.

- We infer that George will (or will not) finish reading the books in the library at the end, based on his character and the process he has undergone throughout that summer.
- We infer that the author, Malamud, used his life experience to portray characters of immigrants by reading his biography and looking at the family names. We infer the characters share their wish to fulfill "The American Dream" by looking at their hopes and dreams and by getting to know the history of the immigration to America in the 20s and on.

Explaining Cause and Effect

- How does what we learn about George's family and his neighborhood help explain his situation? (written above)
- "George had never exactly disliked the people in it, yet he had never liked them very much either. It was the fault of the neighborhood." The rest of the story makes it clear that the sentence about fault reflects George's ideas rather than reality. Before the story is over, George finds himself liking the people of his neighborhood, largely because they begin showing that they like, support, and respect him. As a result, he begins to respect himself and finally is able to begin the process of reading that may lead to his being worthy of that respect and to his bettering his life.
- George quits school on an impulse. As a result, he doesn't get the respect he has always wanted. Therefore, he doesn't like the people in his neighborhood and likes to spend time alone in the park.
- George quits school on an impulse. As a result he is embarrassed to go back to school. Consequently, he can't get a job and has a lot of time in his hands. However, he stays at home most of the day because he is embarrassed and doesn't want the people in the neighborhood to know that he is not doing anything with himself.
- Mr. Cattanzara wants George to complete his education in order to have a better future than his. Consequently, Mr. Cattanzara spreads the first

rumor (that George is reading a hundred books). As a result people start respecting George.

- Once Mr. Cattanzara realizes that George doesn't read, he decides not to embarrass him but rather spreads the second rumor (that George has finished reading all the books). We infer that Mr. Cattanzara wishes to use Reverse Psychology to motivate George to read (*a persuasion technique which involves telling someone exactly the opposite of what he expects in order to achieve the wanted outcome*). Consequently George gets even more respect than before. This rumor enables him to retain the respect of the people in the neighborhood and, finally, to do something to make himself worthy of that respect. As a result George goes to the library and starts to read.

Explaining Patterns

- Do you think George will finish reading the 100 books?
- How does what we learn about George's family and / or his neighborhood help explain his situation at the beginning of the story?

None of George's role models have made a success of their lives. The pattern of behavior in George's neighborhood is that of people who don't have an education and then go on to low-paying jobs. That is why he gives up easily when faced with the challenge of high school. He knows that no one around him is successful and, therefore, the chance that he will be successful is very small. He gives up before he even tries.

Uncovering Motives

- Why do you think Mr. Cattanzara spread the rumors?
- Why does George lie to people? (Sophie, Mr. Cattanzara etc.)?

Distinguishing Different Perspectives

- How do Sophie and Mr. Cattanzara judge George's behavior?

