

Nusrat Raida
Professor Kratka
FIQWS 10115
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SUMMARY RESPONSE-CALL IT SLEEP

Thesis statement: Why doesn't David get along with his father but is close to and protective of his mother?

In "Call It Sleep" Henry Roth depicts the life of David Schearl, a young Jewish kid from Europe, who immigrated to the United States and grew up in the lower east side of New York City. Henry Roth also emphasized the bond between David and his parents. When David first arrived in America, he was 6 years old. Upon David and his mother Genya's arrival in America, David's father Albert went to receive them, but he wasn't as welcoming as any other family there. When Genya and Albert reunited, they act different than any other typical couple. They were being observed by those people who were present there such as old peddler women (p11).

In the beginning, when they arrived Genya continuously approached Albert, but he didn't talk to her properly because Genya didn't recognize him. They also disagreed over David's age. The recurring motif throughout the story is how David was terrified of his father Albert. At first when they were on the ship Albert noticed David was wearing a hat which he did not like, so Albert pulled it from his head and threw it into the water, Because Albert felt ashamed (p15). Additionally, this was David's first encounter with his father, which was far worse than what would be expected for a young kid.

I didn't enjoy this recurring theme after finishing the book since it highlights the fact that his father didn't even consider how his son would feel about his behavior. Another section of the novel where David's father sends him to his previous workplace to get his clothes from the locker and the money they owe him. He raged at David because he was repeating the instructions in Yiddish in a completely unfamiliar atmosphere for him. Then he went there as instructed and discovered his father was about to kill an employee with a hammer (p25). I believe David was traumatized by this event. Since he met his father recently and got to know what his father had done and how violent his father is and understood the main reason why he had lost his job. I assume David was upset as well because no one ever expects to be in a situation where their parents are seen negatively.

The author takes a lot of risks throughout the entire novel. One such risk is addressed in a conversation between Yussie and David. Where Yussie asked "... "W'ea does your fodder woik?" David tried to think. " I don't know." He finally confessed, hoping that yussie would not pursue the subject further. He didn't. Instead "I don' like Brownsville," he said. "I like Brooklyn bedder." David felt relieved...."(p21). This is risky since David has no idea what his father does, which would expose their poor relationship and embarrass David. Another risk was introduced when David's father's friend Luter tried to seduce his mother Genya, and at one time Luter offered David candy and Ice-cream; but he refused and stated he didn't like Ice-cream (p44). This is risky since David's father is so aggressive and if he finds out about Luter's actions, there will be serious consequences. David was aware of this and protected his mother. This demonstrates the close and loving relationship that David has with his mother.

This Novel is relevant to the course on American Jewish literature as it explored the life Of an immigrant boy who had recently immigrated to the United States and knew little or nothing about American culture. Additionally, they speak different languages and were introduced to a new language. Also, this Novel highlighted the struggles of a Jewish immigrant family living in a poor neighborhood and how difficult it was for them to adjust to life in a foreign land.