

2202235 Reading and Analysis for the Study of English Literature
Semester II, 2013
Monday, November 11, 2013
Weekly 3

Making Character and Destiny

1. How do the actions of Mr. Hundert and Sedgewick in the two Mr. Julius Caesar contests set up your expectations for the coal-miners' campaign scene?
2. Write down four pairs of contradictory things you find in "The Palace Thief" (for example, noise v. quietness, "Mr. Hundert...from forty-five years ago at Richmond Central High School" v. "I taught you at St. Benedict's School in Woodmere, Virginia") then consider whether the four are in fact related. Why and why not?
3. Of all the wrong things Mr. Hundert does in the story, which should he feel most guilty for? Why?
4. How and why does Mr. Hundert's attitude toward Sedgewick Bell change over the course of the story?
5. Consider battle imagery in the story. What is compared to a battle? The battles in this story are fought for what goals and with what weapon? Do the things being fought for and weapons used in fighting change as the story progresses?
6. What similarities or differences do you find in Mr. Hundert's discoveries and decisions during the Mr. Julius Caesar competitions and his other discoveries and reactions to them? For example, his response to Deepak Mehta's "small heart attack": "I let his revelation pass without comment" (210), or his contemplation of the boys' reception of him: "It was then that I noticed that the boys who had paid the most attention to me that day were in fact the ones sitting before me on the stage. How dreadful a thought this was—that they had indulged me to gain advantage—but I put it from my mind" (211).
7. In what ways have the people and the competition changed or remained the same between the first Mr. Julius Caesar and the rematch?
8. In what ways, if at all, are the characters punished for their crimes?
9. How are past, present, and future events connected in the story in terms of cause and effect, and in terms of literary devices?
10. What is simple and what is complicated in the story?
11. How many chances does Mr. Hundert get to redo what he considers a past wrong? How does he fare?
12. How do the ending lines of the story reflect on the beginning declaration that this story is written "only to record certain foretellable incidents in the life of a well-known man"?