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IE 3 Core

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When the Phone Rang

I. Mazer, Harry. *When the Phone Rang*. New York: Scholastic Inc., 1985. Print.

II. **If you were a character in the story, what would you have done differently?**

I would have differently done two things in this novel. First of all, Kevin says “Maybe I should stay home...so I will fall behind in school...that is not the end of the world. Only, what we are going to do about money? Somebody’ll work. Me.”(Mazer 49) and finally agrees the idea of living with Billy and Lori. However, I would definitely have said no to do so because it would be absolutely tough that students manage their living by themselves. In my opinion, his decision is emotional, not logical. If Billy and Lori have lived with their uncle, Kevin would not have had to take care of them and would have focused on his studying. Therefore, I would have made them move to Paul’s house.

Second, when Billy questions Lori about whether or not she pickpocketed, he can calm down himself and think, “Listen, don’t start in by shooing off your mouth.”(Mazer 145) Instead, I could not have helped yelling at her, losing my temper. The reason I would have done this is because I had seen Lori pickpocketing clearly and that is always an unacceptable behavior even if Lori was down on herself. I would have got mad at her, while Billy could control his mental state in order to make Lori be in a right way. Therefore, I really respect him. To sum up, I did not agree with one action and the other seems good behavior for me, so I would have done things a bit differently.

III. Literary Terms

Perspective: The teller of this story is the first person, Billy, who is the main character and a high school boy. The events are described from Billy's viewpoint with his feelings, while other characters' are unwritten.

Setting: This story begins on February, during when a sad incident, a airplane crash, occurs, and follows five months. The specific year is not mentioned, but it is probably a recent year because Billy's parents use a plane as transportation. In this story, it has already become common. The main scenes are in a big city of the US. The family of Billy moves from Delmar, California, to an urban area for his father getting a new job.

Conflict: There are many conflicts in this story. The main one is between three siblings. Billy and Lori (the middle and the youngest respectively) receive a phone call to inform them that the plane their parents were on has been crashed and there are no survivors. Kevin, who is the oldest, is away at college and study hard to be a doctor. Now that they are left and Billy and Lori want Kevin to come back home so that they can stay at their own house instead of moving to their uncle Paul's house. At first Kevin refuses this suggestion because he will have to give up some classes and work to earn money. However, at last, Kevin is convinced to come back to the house where Billy and Lori live and fall behind in school.

Climax: The climax is the scene that Lori confesses that she has been pickpocketing accessories such as necklaces, bracelets, earrings, and more, and tells her brothers her real feeling that she has been feeling lonely since her parents died as if she was left alone in the world. One after school, Billy happens to see Lori and her friend steal a lipstick from a shop and questions about it. Then she starts to cry and admits that she

has stolen it. Billy gets shocked to know that actually she tried to kill herself to follow her parents but she cannot. Therefore, she started pickpocketing in order to get rid of her frustration.

Theme: The theme of this story is “survival.” All of a sudden, boys and a girl are left alone and immediately they have to make important decisions of where they live, how they go to school, how they earn money and more. Despite the fact that their parents are no longer alive, they have to survive by themselves. Therefore, the main idea of this story is that people must survive in any difficult situations.

Symbols: In this story, a telephone symbolizes the teller of bad news. Billy gets to know the news that his parents’ airplane, Charter Flight 45 crashed into the Caribbean at four- twenty p.m. After that, whenever he answers a phone call he cannot help but feel scared.

Irony: Although the siblings chose to stay at their house together, five months after their parents’ death Kevin suggests going live with their uncle Paul’s house. The biggest reason is that Lori looks very happy to be with her Grandmother Betty. In addition, a plenty of problems of Kevin getting fired from his part-time job, Lori pickpocketing and so on, makes him think that way and Billy approve of it. They think that Lori will also agree with this, but ironically again, she refuses this because she likes staying there and living with them.

IV. What is something you learned from the story?

Firstly, I learned that “anything unexpected can happen any time.” Before I read this book, I believed that my parents will be delighted when I graduate from university, and later will be happy to have the first grandchild. Moreover, they will live to be at least around 80 like my grandparents. However, unfortunately, this might not come true. Like the Keller’s family, my parents might unexpectedly have an accident or get a serious illness. Something sad can happen tomorrow, and what if it does? What should I do then? When Billy receives the phone call to inform him that the plane his parents have been on has crashed, he refuses to believe this news and says that “What does she know? It was just a phone call. Anybody can call up and say anything they want.”(Mazer 11) This makes sense. I would feel exactly in the same way.

I also learned that “I can be a nice daughter to my parents while they are still alive.” After I read this novel I wanted to thank my parents for raising me and supporting me any time. People tend to be shy to say “thank you” or “I love you” to their parents, but they should do so before it is too late.