

Example of essay on slaves to the past mrs dalloway and charlie wales

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Paying homage to the past is as old as time itself, as literature throughout history reflects. Even in the epic of Gilgamesh, one of the oldest known written works, the hero laments the death of his companion, Enkidu, and goes on a quest to bring back a plant that will grant him eternal life – only to watch a snake devour that plant while Gilgamesh has stopped to take a brief rest from his journey, perhaps symbolizing the immortality that seems to belong to evil. Many of the writings of the Jazz Age are soaked in the past, as characters take great pains to explore their own histories; while many of them do not learn from their mistakes, others do. Mrs. Dalloway, in Woolf’s “Mrs. Dalloway in Bond Street,” and Charlie Wales, in F. Scott Fitzgerald’s “Babylon Revisited,” are both hostage to their past, but in different ways. Mrs. Dalloway lives constantly in the past, as she has reached an age where the events of the past seem much more genuine. Indeed, Mrs. Dalloway’s memories of her past are so prevalent that they cloud her present, keeping her from being able to engage the present fully. Charlie Wales is much younger than Mrs. Dalloway, and yet his past also has a powerful claim on him. Indeed, the consequences of his past are so profound that they prevent him from moving forward to a happy and contented life. Woolf’s proud protagonist is not cognizant of her enslavement to her past; Fitzgerald’s rueful hero is all too aware of his.

Works Cited

Fitzgerald, F. Scott. “Babylon Revisited.” Web. Accessed 11 October 2011 at