

What role does illness play in the novel the apprenticeship of duddy kravitz

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Order 545999 Topic: What role does illness play in the novel *The Apprenticeship of Duddy Kravitz*? Introduction With the mention of the word illness one's first reaction is about physical illness and disabilities. The individual with illness suffers directly but his close ones suffer mentally and the prolonged illness may result in intense pressure on the mind, leading to disorders. The illness will cast influence on one's day to day disposition and interactions with others. The novel begins with such an issue. A critical illness provides one with an opportunity to think about one's death or the death of the person affected with illness. The author writes (1991, p. 3) "What with his wife so ill these past few weeks and the prospect of three more days of teaching before the weekend break, Mr. MacPherson felt unusually glum." This indicates his mental condition. He is desperately looking for the weekend, and even three days appear to be a long period for him. He is a teacher by profession. In the initial stages of his career he was a lively person. Even now, he is the man of principles, but the earlier gaiety and enthusiasm has vanished from his life. The conversation between his students provides some hints about his changed perspective in administering them. One of his students remarks, "Mac'll be a breeze," Duddy said, lighting a cigarette. "He never straps or nothing. Mac believes in persuasion." (6) He became a subdued personality and the sickness of his wife affected his mental poise and peace. There is more than one situation, as to how an individual reacts, to challenge the illnesses. Some reveal it openly; some partially and some individuals would like to hide the information, for the reasons best known to them. Take for instance the case of Mel West. The author writes, "He never once spoke about his illness but

there was lots of stories about it. Mel West had printed the one about the insurance policy..." (p. 149) This indicates that he has taken every care about the financial aspect and possible expenses involved in the treatment. But certain changes do happen in the physical body due to the impact of illness. The author further explains this condition, " But the most noticeable and unexplained change was in the flesh of his face." (p. 150) After his illness obviously it had turned for the worse. Aspiring for a good life and the urge to earn money for better lifestyles is perfect so far as fair means are employed to earn it. When wrong procedures are adopted for aggrandizement of wealth, it is a sort of mental illness. Duddy's case fits into the latter category. As a young boy he was innocent and pure. He was a novice. But soon he took to corrupt and immoral ways. He did many things against his conscience and moved in the company of his corrupt friends. This indicated the state of his diseased mind. He derived pleasure in deliberately hurting the people. His values were totally materialistic and pleasure-seeking was his way of life. Duddy's psychological imbalance affected the psyche of other individuals also. All those who respected him did so out of fear and money power and had no genuine respect for him at the heart. Simcha's good examples and moral counseling cast some influence on him but his diseased mind did not care for it seriously. Knowing well that Simcha did not like him, yet Duddy carried on with his negativities without regret with a hope that everything will settle well for him. Duddy's diseased mind continued to rant that one must become the landowner at all costs, even by adopting criminal means. Ultimately, criminality and exploitation of others was a way of life for him. In the novel mention is also made about the health

handicappers. The author's observation, " We health handicappers want legislation to protect us," (319) is one such example. Conclusion: The sequences of humor in the novel seem to convey the author's conviction that humor is the best antidote against physical and mental illnesses. Works Cited. Richler, Mordecai: The Apprenticeship of Duddy Kravitz; Pocket, June 15, 1991.