

Unreeling by kent thompson essay



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Unreeling by Kent Thompson is a very short story, confusing at that. The story starts with the narrator saying that Helen, presumably his wife or partner, has left him and moved back to 1930.

Either this is meant literally or figuratively, but looking at it realistically, the author probably meant that Helen's mind has moved back to 1930. Helen after leaving the narrator, goes on to work in a log cabin along Highway 42. Helen's new lover is the owner of the log cabin where they dance. Kids are the new couple's audience, and they stare in awe, not because of the way they dance but because of their "audacity to live outside their allotted time" (Thompson, 488).

The narrator reveals that he occasionally goes to the log cabin and thinks that he is slowly being forgotten by Helen. An in-depth look at these characters would reveal the probable whole story behind the mystery of this short story. Helen Helen is the first word mentioned in this short short story. "Helen has left me and moved back to 1930.

" (Thompson, 488). She is only the confidant of the short story despite the narration being focused mostly to her. The very first passage is intriguing because if taken literally, readers would think that she can travel through time. What the underlying meaning of this passage might suggest that she is probably suffering from Alzheimer's disease, or any mental illness that made her think that she is in 1930.

This might also mean that her lover during 1930 was the owner, and she just moved back to the lover whom she thought is her current lover. Since she changes, (though not fault of her own) she is a round character, a character

that changes personality as the plot of the story progresses. She could have lived a perfectly normal life before and her disease has made her change. Helen is a performer, at least during 1930, where she has moved back.

“ She is singing in a log cabin roadhouse at old Highway 42. ” (Thompson, 488). This line also suggests that she did not really travel back in time because if she did, the narrator would not imply that Highway 42 is old. Nobody travels there anymore because a new highway has probably been built after 1930.

She also dances: “ Her lover is the owner and sometimes gives ballroom dancing exhibitions with her” (Thompson, 488). Helen’s Lover The owner of the cabin log house appears to be the antagonist in the story since Helen left the narrator for him. The short story’s point of view is from the first person point of view of the narrator which makes the thoughts of the owner a mystery. What we can infer, based on the reading is, he accepts Helen because he allows her to sing and dance with him at the cabin. Either he is suffering too from Alzheimer’s or he really wants to be with Helen again, the latter seems a more probable reason.

The Narrator The narrator is the former lover of Helen and the main protagonists of the story despite, as mentioned earlier, Helen dominating the narration. He does not describe a lot about himself which makes him a mystery. This adds to the detachment he is feeling about Helen forgetting him slowly. He is a flat character—despite being left by Helen, he still makes a conscious effort to visit her at the log cabin. ““ I sometimes go there and contribute to the decor by sitting at a table wearing a fedora” (Thompson,

488). The short story boldly begins with an impression that time travel is possible.

However, by reading between the lines and a closer look at the characters, we could interpret that “ going back to 1930” is not actually possible and is just the author’s figurative way of saying that Helen is suffering from a mental disease.