

An analysis of the
blind optimism in
something wicked
this way comes, a
novel by ...



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

While reading this book, I first struggled with the question of how it pertained directly to the class material. It seems almost as if the book is written as one long poem. While I was typing my exam, I began to take notice of similarities between the characters in the book and the over arching theme of optimism that I stressed in my paper. The first fifteen, or so, chapters describes one single day where we get to know the characters. In this section of the book we meet Will and Jim, two 13 year old boys. Jim is the more adventurous of the two boys and will is more reserved. It seems like he always follows Jim at a distance, but either way Jim can persuade him to do almost anything. We also meet Charles Halloway in this first part of the novel. He is Will's father and works in the town library. In this early part of the novel I can relate to the attitudes that were present in America after the first World War. Jim represents America's blind optimism in regards to creating in a utopia. Jim is all of the wall street speculators who believed there was no end to the rising stock prices.

Will can be related to America's more reserved side, he is equally ambitious but. Like I said, follows Jim at a distance. He lets Jim make mistakes but is always there to help him. Will plays a similar role to the presidents during the early half of the 1920's. He doesn't over regulate Jim but is always there to support him. Will's father Charles Halloway is the lessons that we don't learn from history. His demeanor in the first part of the novel is that of sadness. There is a sense that he knows how the world really works and despite this he is still secretly intrigued by the arriving carnival. This is where Will gets his reserved side , similar to how presidents are always studiers of history. Will learns from the mistakes of his father. When the carnival finally

arrives at town, members of the community such as the boys' teacher Miss Foley, Mr. Cougar and the lightning rod salesman are all enticed and seduced by the carnival and the tattooed man that runs it. Mr. Dark has the ability to fulfill their desires but as a result these people will lose themselves to the carnival. This is similar to the theme of selling one's soul to the devil. The role Mr. Dark plays in our history textbooks is that of money. The members of the community are so blinded by the spectacle of the carnival (the stock market in 1921-1928) that all they see is an optimistic future ahead. Jim is one of these people enticed by the carnival. He also follows blindly. As the evil nature of the carnival is revealed, one can relate it to the stock market crash in 1929. As a result of people being over optimistic, they face negative consequences.

Towards the end of the novel while Will and his father attempt to save Jim and end the carnival, they play a role similar to that of Presidents, Hoover and FDR, who attempt to restore America through their economic and social plans after the 1929 crash. At the end of the novel Jim (the optimism of the American people) has ended up confused and close to death. Will and Charles Halloway save Jim by dancing and laughing. Jim's revival symbolizes the country's return to normalcy through the industry that happens during WWII. This brings us into the current day where the people of Green Town and people in modern day America still have the same opportunities to make mistakes or succeed through optimism. As far as a review goes I did not enjoy the book that much. The writing was a little too poetic for my taste. I am more of a non-fiction fan. I was reading it looking for its historical

significance. The book serves the purpose of an allegorical reference to the optimistic and foolish hopes of Americans.