**Close Reading Organizer - Prologue: July 1956**

**Directions:** Read each summary entry and think about which themes listed in the Themes Key apply to it, then color in those themes in the Theme Tracker. Next, write a few sentences of Analysis to explain how the themes you chose apply to each summary section.



**Themes Key**

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| 1 | Dignity and Greatness  |
| 2 | History, Retrospection and Regret |
| 3 | Class Difference and Social Change |
| 4 | Politics and Loyalty  |
| 5 | Authenticity, Performance, and Self-Deception |

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| **Summary** | **Theme Tracker** | **Your Analysis** |
| The narrator, **Stevens**, resolves to take an “expedition” by himself. He will borrow his employer **Mr. Farraday’s** car and travel from Darlington Hall, where he works, through the English countryside. In fact, he acknowledges, it was Mr. Farraday’s idea that he take a break while Mr. Farraday returned to his homeland, the United States.  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |  |
| **Stevens** had been taken aback by this suggestion, and also by **Mr. Farraday’s** remark that butlers like Stevens are always cooped up in these houses. Stevens said he’d seen the best of England within the walls of the house, but his employer didn’t seem to understand him.  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |  |
| It was the arrival of a letter from **Miss Kenton**, who used to work at Darlington Hall, that made **Stevens** begin to reconsider. He acknowledges that he’s begun to make a few errors in his duties over the past few months, something that he knows is his fault, even though he’s running short on staff. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |  |
| His errors included one particular incident shortly after **Mr. Farraday** bought Darlington Hall from the Darlington family, who had owned it for two hundred years. Mr. Farraday was eager to keep on the staff of his predecessor, although there was only a skeleton staff of six that remained through the sale; all but **Mrs. Clements** left shortly thereafter. Mr. Farraday enlisted  **Stevens** to hire a full new staff, but Stevens had trouble finding more than two young women. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |  |
| **Mr. Farraday** told **Stevens** to draw up a staff plan, a kind of rota, which he found daunting. He’d once led a team of seventeen at this house, but Stevens admits that there’s no use clinging to tradition for its own sake, given that with electricity and modern heating, there’s no need for such a large staff. Mr. Farraday also planned to hold few large parties and events of the kind that **Lord Darlington** had often hosted. Stevens worked long and diligently on the staff plan, finally coming up with a schedule that would allow the most important parts of the house to remain operable. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |  |
| **Stevens** claims that while he’d still consider the final product a decent plan, it perhaps did not have the greatest margin of error. He was mindful not to let the three other employees take on too much, with the result that he failed to acknowledge his own limitations, leading to several mistakes (which remain, for now, unnamed). When **Miss Kenton** wrote a letter, seeming quite nostalgic for Darlington Hall, it occurred to him that it would be obvious for Miss Kenton, with her professionalism and conduct almost impossible to find today, to return to the estate. He could take advantage of **Mr. Farraday**’s offer to call on Miss Kenton during the trip.  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |  |
| **Stevens** nonetheless continued to muse over the logistics for several days, pondering what the cost might be of accommodation and meals, and what he might wear, as he had no suitable traveling clothes. Finally he calculated that his savings would allow him to afford the trip, and even buy a new suit for the journey: he hopes his reader doesn’t think he’s vain, but he wishes to be worthy of his position. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |  |
| In order to get a sense of **Miss Kenton’s** new home in her married life, **Stevens** perused Mrs. Jane Symon’s volumes on *The Wonder of England*. Though the books were from the 1930s, Stevens considered them to be far from out of date.  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |  |
| **Stevens** was a bit concerned about bringing up the matter of the trip again with **Mr. Farraday**, even though his employer didn’t seem inconsistent. Finally he decided it would be most prudent to approach Mr. Farraday during afternoon tea when he tended not to be engrossed in reading. But Stevens didn’t account for the fact that Mr. Farraday appreciates jocular, lighthearted conversation at that time of day. Stevens began to mention the subject of a former housekeeper whom he might like to visit, but then halted, realizing it would be inappropriate to go further: he hadn’t even mentioned the topic of adding another person to the staff. Mr. Farraday laughed and teased Stevens about his “lady-friend,” deeply embarrassing Stevens.  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |  |
| **Stevens** acknowledges that such banter is perhaps more common between employer and employee in the U.S., and it has certainly characterized **Mr. Farraday’s** attitude toward him, but he’s found himself at a loss for how to respond to it, never knowing exactly what is expected of him. His failure to respond properly, he worries, may well mean a shirking of his duties. Once, though, he tried to make a witty remark in response to one of Mr. Farraday’s joking questions, and his employer had little idea what he was talking about: only belatedly did Stevens realize he missed the mark.  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |  |
| Today, such concerns are a greater issue for **Stevens**, because he cannot hope to confer with fellow professionals as he used to, especially when visitors would come to stay with **Lord Darlington** with their staff in tow. On those occasions, the “finest professionals in England” could be found talking late into the night by a fire. Rather than gossip, they discussed the great political affairs also being discussed upstairs, as well as aspects of their vocation. Stevens lists a number of particularly well-known (at least according to him) valet-butlers and their employers, adding that there was a true camaraderie between them.  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |  |
| Recently **Stevens** learned that Sir James Chambers would be visiting Darlington Hall, and he looked forward to seeing Chambers’s butler, **Mr. Graham**, whose company he always enjoyed. But Chambers arrived alone, and Stevens learned, disappointed, that he no longer employed any staff at all. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |  |
| Returning from his digression, **Stevens** continues recounting his request for travel to **Mr. Farraday**, a request to which the latter promptly agreed. Stevens recognizes that there will be many affairs to attend to before he leaves, but he cannot see any reason why he shouldn’t take the trip.  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |  |