

The Devil & Tom Walker (p. 242) Close Read

INSTRUCTIONS: Read the first section of text in the left column, then answer the questions in right column that go with that section. Then, repeat for each section until complete. **HELPFUL HINT: THIS ASSIGNMENT WILL NOT WORK IF YOU SIMPLY SCAN THE TEXT FOR KEY WORDS...TRUST ME!!!**

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| <p>A few miles from Boston, in Massachusetts, there is a deep inlet winding several miles into the interior of the country from Charles Bay, and terminating in a thickly wooded swamp or morass. On one side of this inlet is a beautiful dark grove; on the opposite side the land rises abruptly from the water's edge into a high ridge, on which grow a few scattered oaks of great age and immense size.</p> <p>Under one of these gigantic trees, according to old stories, there was a great amount of treasure buried by Kidd the pirate. The inlet allowed a facility to bring the money in a boat secretly, and at night, to the very foot of the hill; the elevation of the place permitted a good lookout to be kept that no one was at hand; while the remarkable trees formed good landmarks by which the place might easily be found again. The old stories add, moreover, that the devil presided at the hiding of the money, and took it under his guardianship; but this, it is well known, he always does with buried treasure, particularly when it has been ill-gotten. Be that as it may, Kidd never returned to recover his wealth; being shortly after seized at Boston, sent out to England, and there hanged for a pirate.</p> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. In what city and state does the story take place? 2. What else have we read this semester that takes place in the same state? 3. What is a morass? 4. Explain in your own words the legend of Kidd the pirate. 5. What does it mean to say that the devil "took it under his guardianship"? 6. What is the most likely meaning of ill-gotten? |
| <p>About the year 1727, just at the time that earthquakes were prevalent in New England, and shook many tall sinners down upon their knees, there lived near this place a meagre, miserly fellow, of the name of Tom Walker. He had a wife as miserly as himself; they were so miserly that they even conspired to cheat each other. Whatever the woman could lay hands on she hid away; a hen could not cackle but she was on the alert to secure the new-laid egg. Her husband was continually prying about to detect her secret hoards, and many and fierce were the conflicts that took place about what ought to have been common property.</p> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 7. Describe the relationship between Tom and his wife. 8. Read carefully the description of the Walker's house. What do you think the author means by "an air of starvation"? 9. Explain the simile used to describe the Walker's horse. Why do you think this detail may be important? |

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| <p>They lived in a forlorn-looking house that stood alone and had an air of starvation. A few straggling savin-trees, emblems of sterility, grew near it; no smoke ever curled from its chimney; no traveller stopped at its door. A miserable horse, whose ribs were as articulate as the bars of a gridiron, stalked about a field, where a thin carpet of moss, scarcely covering the ragged beds of pudding-stone, tantalized and balked his hunger; and sometimes he would lean his head over the fence, look piteously at the passer-by, and seem to petition deliverance from this land of famine.</p> | <p>10. Read your answers to questions 7-9. What can you infer about the Walkers, in general?</p> |
| <p>The house and its inmates had altogether a bad name. Tom's wife was a tall termagant¹, fierce of temper, loud of tongue, and strong of arm. Her voice was often heard in wordy warfare with her husband; and his face sometimes showed signs that their conflicts were not confined to words. No one ventured, however, to interfere between them. The lonely wayfarer shrank within himself at the horrid clamor and clapper-clawing; eyed the den of discord askance; and hurried on his way, rejoicing, if a bachelor, in his celibacy.</p> <p>¹ <i>Termagant is a quarrelsome, scolding woman.</i></p> | <p>11. What can be inferred by the author's use of the word "inmates"?</p> <p>12. Describe Tom's wife in your own words. (Read the footnote.)</p> <p>13. What does wordy warfare most likely mean?</p> <p>14. Explain the phrase: "his face sometimes showed signs that their conflicts were not confined to words".</p> |
| <p>One day that Tom Walker had been to a distant part of the neighborhood, he took what he considered a short-cut homeward, through the swamp. Like most short-cuts, it was an ill-chosen route. The swamp was thickly grown with great, gloomy pines and hemlocks, some of them ninety feet high, which made it dark at noonday and a retreat for all the owls of the neighborhood. It was full of pits and quagmires, partly covered with weeds and mosses, where the green surface often betrayed the traveller into a gulf of black, smothering mud; there were also dark and stagnant pools, the abodes of the tadpole, the bull-frog, and the water-snake, where the trunks of pines and hemlocks lay half-drowned, half-rotting, looking like alligators sleeping in the mire.</p> <p>Tom had long been picking his way cautiously through this treacherous forest, stepping from tuft to tuft of rushes and roots, which afforded precarious footholds among deep sloughs, or pacing carefully, like a cat, along the prostrate trunks of trees, startled now and then by</p> | <p>15. Describe the swamp in your own words.</p> <p>16. What simile is used to describe the fallen trees in the swamp?</p> <p>17. What does impregnable most likely mean? Now, read the sentence where this word appears and replace impregnable with your definition. Does it make sense?</p> |

the sudden screaming of the bittern, or the quacking of a wild duck, rising on the wing from some solitary pool. At length he arrived at a firm piece of ground, which ran like a peninsula into the deep bosom of the swamp. It had been one of the strongholds of the Indians during their wars with the first colonists. Here they had thrown up a kind of fort, which they had looked upon as almost **impregnable**, and had used as a place of refuge for their squaws and children. Nothing remained of the old Indian fort but a few embankments, gradually sinking to the level of the surrounding earth, and already overgrown in part by oaks and other forest trees, the foliage of which formed a contrast to the dark pines and hemlocks of the swamps.

It was late in the dusk of evening when Tom Walker reached the old fort, and he paused there awhile to rest himself. Anyone but he would have felt unwilling to linger in this lonely, **melancholy** place, for the common people had a bad opinion of it, from the stories handed down from the times of the Indian wars, when it was asserted that the savages held incantations here and made sacrifices to the Evil Spirit.

Tom Walker, however, was not a man to be troubled with any fears of the kind. He **reposed** himself for some time on the trunk of a fallen hemlock, listening to the boding cry of the tree-toad, and delving with his walking-staff into a mound of black mold at his feet. As he turned up the soil unconsciously, his staff struck against something hard. He raked it out of the vegetable mold, and lo! a cloven skull, with an Indian tomahawk buried deep in it, lay before him. The rust on the weapon showed the time that had elapsed since this death-blow had been given. It was a dreary memento of the fierce struggle that had taken place in this last foothold of the Indian warriors.

"Humph!" said Tom Walker, as he gave it a kick to shake the dirt from it.

"Let that skull alone!" said a gruff voice. Tom lifted up his eyes and beheld a great black man seated directly opposite him, on the stump of a tree. He was exceedingly surprised, having neither heard nor seen any one

18. What does melancholy most likely mean?
19. What does reposed most likely mean?
20. Describe Tom's discovery.

21. How can the reader infer that the character Tom encounters in the swamp is the devil?
22. What does begrimed with soot most likely mean?
23. To whom does the land in question belong?

approach; and he was still more perplexed on observing, as well as the gathering gloom would permit, that the stranger was neither negro nor Indian. It is true he was dressed in a rude Indian garb, and had a red belt or sash swathed round his body; but his face was neither black nor copper-color, but swarthy and dingy, and **begrimed with soot**, as if he had been accustomed to toil among fires and forges. He had a shock of coarse black hair, that stood out from his head in all directions, and bore an axe on his shoulder.

He scowled for a moment at Tom with a pair of great red eyes.

"What are you doing on my grounds?" said the black man, with a hoarse, growling voice.

"Your grounds!" said Tom, with a sneer; "no more your grounds than mine; they belong to Deacon Peabody."

"Deacon Peabody be damned," said the stranger, "as I flatter myself he will be, if he does not **look more to his own sins and less to those of his neighbors**. Look yonder, and see how Deacon Peabody is faring."

Tom looked in the direction that the stranger pointed, and beheld one of the great trees, **fair and flourishing without, but rotten at the core**, and saw that it had been nearly **hewn** through, so that the first high wind was likely to blow it down. On the bark of the tree was scored the name of Deacon Peabody, an eminent man who had waxed² wealthy by driving shrewd bargains with the Indians. He now looked around, and found most of the tall trees marked with the name of some great man of the colony, and all more or less scored by the axe. The one on which he had been seated, and which had evidently just been hewn down, bore the name of Crowninshield; and he recollected a mighty rich man of that name, who made a vulgar display of wealth, which it was whispered he had acquired by buccaneering³.

² Here, waxed means "grown" or "become".

³ Buccaneering is robbing ships at sea (piracy).

24. What does it mean to say that someone should "look more to his own sins and less to those of his neighbors"?

25. If the phrase in #24 is used to describe Deacon Peabody, what type of person can we assume that he is?

26. What does hewn most likely mean?

27. What is unusual about the tree Tom is sitting upon?

28. What is unusual about all of the trees?

29. Who is Crowninshield?

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| <p>He's just ready for burning!" said the black man, with a growl of triumph. "You see I am likely to have a good stock of firewood for winter."</p> <p>"But what right have you," said Tom, "to cut down Deacon Peabody's timber?"</p> <p>"The right of a prior claim," said the other. "This woodland belonged to me long before one of your white-faced race put foot upon the soil."</p> | <p>30. What do you think the devil means by "the right of a prior claim"?</p> <p>31. When the devil says "he's just ready for burning", we assume he is talking about the tree. Why might the author have referred to the tree as "he"? What literary device is this an example of?</p> |

SECTION TWO (NEXT PAGE)

DAY TWO INSTRUCTIONS

1A. Read the left column from top to bottom.

1B. Read the questions and your answers.

1C. Now write a complete paragraph summarizing the story (so far...)

2. Make one prediction about the story.

3. Ask one question you have about the story. (It needs to be your own question, not one from yesterday's assignment.)

4. Complete survey: Did yesterday's close read help you better understand the story? Why or why not?

What is the difference in these two phrases?

There lived near this place a meagre, miserly fellow, of the name of Tom Walker. He had a wife as miserly as himself; they were so miserly that they even conspired to cheat each other.

There lived near this place a meagre, miserly fellow, of the name of Tom Walker. He had a wife as miserly as himself; they were so miserly that they even conspired to cheat on each other.

What the heck does miserly mean?

“There lived near this place a meagre, miserly fellow, of the name of Tom Walker. He had a wife as miserly as himself;” ...

Even if you don't know what miserly means, you can figure out from this statement that whatever the word means can be used to describe both Tom and his wife.

...”they were so miserly that they even conspired to cheat each other.”

Now that we have figured out what “cheat each other” means, we learn something very important about the motivations of Tom and his wife.

Can you now figure out what miserly means?

“Whatever the woman could lay hands on she hid away; a hen could not cackle but she was on the alert to secure the new laid egg. Her husband was continually prying about to detect her secret hoards...”

There lived near this place a meagre, _____ fellow, of the name of Tom Walker. He had a wife as _____ as himself; they were so _____ that they even conspired to cheat on each other.

Is there evidence in the story that the Walker’s were poor?

What is an inmate?

Is there any evidence that any other people live in the Walker’s house?

Why does the author use the phrase “the house and its inmates”?

"And pray, who are you, if I may be so bold?" said Tom.

"Oh, I go by various names. I am the Wild Huntsman in some countries; the Black Miner in others. In this neighbourhood I am known by the name of the Black Woodsman. I am he to whom the red men devoted this spot, and now and then roasted a white man by way of sweet smelling sacrifice. Since the red men have been exterminated by you white savages, I amuse myself by presiding at the persecutions of quakers and anabaptists; I am the great patron and prompter of slave dealers, and the grand master of the Salem witches."

"The upshot of all which is, that, if I mistake not," said Tom, sturdily, "you are he commonly called Old Scratch."

"The same at your service!" replied the black man, with a half civil nod.