

Perry in Prison (the second time) – sample analysis – reading only

Students: the following is an analysis of Perry in prison I found online that I thought gave some good ideas. It also has some quotes in it that you are free to use.

It also tells the time in Chapter 4 leading up to Don Cullivan's letter, so is good to read before doing Close Study 6.

Here 'tis:

Topic: Perry in Prison

Perry is the first man ever to stay in the ladies' cell. He befriends a squirrel he names "Red" whom he teaches tricks. He writes a journal. He contemplates suicide. Are any of these incidents important (or other events not mentioned during his stay in prison)? What do learn about Perry during his incarceration? Does he change? Are we sympathetic toward him?

Answer:

While Perry is in prison, he experiences many important incidents that give the reader a closer look at who he is. In the beginning, Perry is put in the ladies cell while Dick is put in the male cell (252). This holds much significance as it further illustrates that Dick is more masculine while Perry is more feminine. However, it also illustrates that the more dangerous character is Perry because they are isolating him. Perry usually does not come off as a dangerous character but the reader notices a different side of him. Perry also refuses to eat even though Mrs. Meier offers him things. Mrs. Meier says, "Just taste the soup, it's vegetable, and not out of a can. I made it myself" and later returns to find that Perry "Hadn't touched a crumb" (253). This continues to illustrate that Perry is feeling guilty about the murders. However, Perry also reveals that he has a desire for society to like him. The reason he refused to eat is because he was scared about what the mob would do to him. "It scared him so bad his stomach still hurt. Which was why he couldn't eat" (253). Perry was scared that the mob would tear him apart and therefore he would not be accepted by society. Later Perry befriends a "male squirrel with auburn fur" (254). This makes the reader start to feel bad for Perry because he is so alone that his only friend is an animal. Additionally, one sees that "Perry Smith's father nor sister wrote him or came to see him" (259), further demonstrating how alone Perry is. When Perry shows up in court, he is the only one not wearing a suit because "owned neither a jacket nor a tie, seemed sartorially misplaced. Wearing an open-necked shirt (borrowed from Mr. Meier) and blue jeans rolled up at the cuff" (272). The reader again feels bad for Perry as they see that he has nothing, not even clothing to wear, let alone family. Finally, Perry receives a letter from a man named Don Cullivan. He once knew this man and didn't even recognize his name but Perry replied because "here was someone offering help, a sane and respectable man who...signed himself friend" (262). Perry is so alone he is excited at the thought that someone would call Perry his friend.