

1. Write the following subtitles in the correct place: SUMMARY / CHARACTERS / SETTING / IMPORTANT QUOTATIONS / THEMES /

The Pieces of Silver is a story about the devastating effects of poverty, and the way in which one group of society can be ruthlessly exploited by another higher group. In the story, Clement, a schoolboy from a very disadvantaged background, is ridiculed and exploited by the ruthless Acting Headmaster, Mr Chase - and all because he didn't have enough money to contribute to the retirement present for Mr Megahey, the old, rich Headmaster. However, with help from his sister, Clement manages to raise the money to save not only himself, but also all the other boys in the same position. The story concludes with a total victory by Clement against the tyranny of Mr Chase.

1

The story is set in Barbados in the mid-20th Century, and takes place either in the school itself or in the home and community in which Clement and his family live. The school is described powerfully as one over which the teachers have complete control. Without the teachers, the children play freely, but as soon as they appear, all the children know they have to be on their best behaviour to avoid being "hauled out of the ranks" and beaten. Clement's home is a "poor, wretched coop of a room", so dilapidated that the walls are "discoloured" and "stained" and the floor "rotting" and "worm-eaten". This contrasts starkly, for example, with the home of Mr Megahey, with its "pretentious front of red brick".

The main characters of this story are Clement, his sister, Evelina, and the Acting Headmaster, Mr Chase. Secondary characters include: Clement's parents; Mr Megahey (the retiring headmaster).

The main themes of this story are:

1. Poverty and Wealth;
2. Family
3. Tyranny and oppression
4. Social hierarchy and 'power games'.
5. Victory

"still making an unnecessary clangour with his bell" - Mr Chase is arrogant, pompous and tyrannical (i.e. he abuses the power he has, and enjoys doing so).

"shun! the boys came to attention" is an example of how terrified the boys were of Mr Chase.

"Wa' threepence boy? Why in de name of de lord must we poor starving people got to find threepence for jim megahny" shows the poverty side of the story.

"His voice struck through the silent school, clear and trilling as a star's light." shows us that Clement has the power now and he humiliated Mr. Chase.