**A Summer's Reading**

**Setting:**
Time - summer, the flat, like the entire neighborhood, is very very hot. The only place that affords any relief is the little park (where George spends his evenings dreaming of a better life.

Place: a railroad flat in a poor, immigrant neighborhood of New York City. Each room leads to the next in a straight line (like the cars of a railroad train), providing little privacy.
The park - a symbol of what George would like his life to be: green, leafy trees and flowers. There he dreams of having a good job, money, a nice house, a girl and, above all, respect.

**George** Stoyonovich, A 19 year old boy, lives with his father and sister. George's life isn't easy: dropped out of school, has no job, no friends, no mother, uncommunicative father and a sister away at work. George is lonely, lacks companionship, love and guidance. George feels no connection to the people in his neighborhood as well (immigrants).

Inaction - Although George aspires the American dream, he does nothing to bring his dream come true. He is embarrassed of not finishing school, yet does nothing to finish his studies, only makes excuses. He wants respect, but does nothing to earn it. George seems incapable of setting goals and following through. Everything he does appears to be done on impulse: leaving school, cleaning the flat when it gets on his nerves and telling an impulsive lie that may change his life.

**Respect** - the key to George’s character. He left school because he felt his teachers had not respected him. It is vitally important to him that the neighbors and Mr. Cattanzara respect him. In the end, he actually succeeded in bettering himself because he has been motivated by the need for respect - self respect as well as society's respect.

**Father** - a silent man who works nights in a fish market.

**Sophie**, his older sister, works in a cafeteria in the Bronx.

**Mother** - dead.
Mr. Cattanzara – works as a change maker in the ticket booth of a subway station. Literally, he gives change to those who pay for their tickets. It is a boring job that requires no special skills. Symbolically, change maker may refer to one who affects change in the lives of others. He serves as a catalyst for change in Georg's life. He is different from the other neighbors. He reads The New York Times (intellectuals' newspaper) from cover to cover. Either he has no special interests or everything interests him. He maybe more intelligent than the others, he has not lived up to his potential, which may explain why he seeks to escape from reality by drinking. He is fond of George and wants to save him from the same fate. When he spreads the rumor about George’s reading, it is to give him something to live up to.

Names – symbolic meaning:
- Stoyonovich = Slavic languages = stands still (George is at a standstill).
- Cattanzara = Italian word = chained (to the station in life).
- Title = literal level = may refer to the reading that George does that summer. However, he does not read anything of significance for getting an education. The title has a symbolic meaning. People "read" many things other than books. They can read the future/read between the lines. Therefore, A Summer's Reading can be interpreted to mean that George has read "the writing on the wall", that he has begun to understand his situation and what the future holds for him unless he takes matters into his own hands.

3 meetings – change of moods: Mr. Cattanzara asks George questions about what he has been doing. George lies that he is reading 100 books. He continues with his usual routine, but he begins to notice that people in the neighborhood, his father and sister have started treating him with respect. (1) This appeals to George at first. (2) As time goes on he begins to fear that the truth will be discovered. He knows he doesn't deserve the respect he has been given and is afraid on running into Mr. Cattanzara, avoids any contact. The climax is in the third and fateful meeting with Mr. Cattanzara. When the lie is exposed, George's life seems to fall apart. Having failed both himself and Mr. Cattanzara, George is intensely ashamed. Mr. C. takes pity on George and parts with the words "don't do what I did". He shuts his eyes and only opens them again "years later". Opening one's eyes may be understood both literally and figuratively. This meeting with Mr. C may have been a real eye-opener for George.
(3) After the encounter, George shuts himself in his room and refuses to leave his self imposed prison. One night, he can stand it no longer. As he walks around the neighborhood, he is surprised to discover that the neighbors are still friendly to him. He suspects that Mr. C actually spread a new rumor, that George has finished reading all the books.

(4) In the fall, George goes to the library and starts to read. Being imprisoned in his room is a similar metamorphosis is a butterfly. A caterpillar that emerges from the prison of its cocoon - transformed into a butterfly.

The end of the story - the story is open-ended. We are not told whether George will succeed or fail. George chooses the books impulsively. This may mean that he will never be able to set and attain goals. On the other hand, perhaps he will discover where his interests lie and will move on to read more.

Seasons- autumn symbolizes change. It leads to winter, with all its negative connotations, yet it is still a welcome change from the stifling summer. Autumn is a time of harvest George has been growing up that summer and is now in time to "harvest the fruits" of his newfound maturity.