

English 197: Writing Link with Comp. Lit. 270

Compiled *Royal Tenenbaums* Plot Segmentation

C. Opening titles presented as book, *The Royal Tenenbaums*, checked out from library.

1. Prologue

- a. Voiceover story of Royal purchasing house "in 35th year" and having three children with Etheline "over the next ten years."
- b. Royal tells the children that Etheline has asked him to leave. The children question whether the separation is their fault, and Royal replies that the senior Tenenbaums "have made certain sacrifices" for their offspring.
- c. Etheline focuses on raising the children; she writes a book titled *Family of Geniuses*.
- d. Chas's history related, with highlights of breeding Dalmatian mice in 6th grade and brokering real estate deals in early teens, including purchase of Royal's home. In cutaway shot to Royal's house, we see Royal shoot Chas with a BB gun during a game in which he and his eldest son are supposedly "on the same team."
- e. Margot's history related, with highlights of being adopted at age 2, receiving a grant in the 9th grade, running away to Natural History Museum "one winter" and disappearing "four years later," only to return with a finger missing.
- f. Richie's history related, with highlights of becoming tennis player in 3rd grade, turning professional at age 17, and winning US Nationals three years in a row.
- g. Eli and his close relationship to the Tenenbaum family introduced.
- h. Voiceover narrator remarks upon loss of Tenenbaums' early promise.

2. Cast of Characters

- a. Gene Hackman as Royal Tenenbaum, who has mask peeled from his face.
- b. Angelica Huston as Etheline Tenenbaum, who finishes makeup and arranges hair.
- c. Ben Stiller as Chas Tenenbaum, who shaves, his boys flanking him.
- d. Gwyneth Paltrow as Margot Tenenbaum, who gets hair colored and nails manicured.
- e. Owen Wilson as Eli Cash, who dons cowboy hat and takes bite from sandwich offered to him.
- f. Bill Murray as Raleigh St. Clair, who brushes his teeth, stopping to dictate into a mini tape recorder.
- g. Danny Glover as Henry Sherman, who arranges his tie.
- h. Luke Wilson as Richie Tenenbaum, who takes photo.

3. Chapter 1

- a. Royal at hotel, learns of his financial ruin; was disbarred years ago
- b. Richie on ocean liner, as been traveling for several years, having ended tennis career with a big loss
- c. Eli at podium, is an assistant professor of English, recent novel published, earned literary celebrity status. Calls Margot from a signing.
- d. Margot talks to Eli from her bathroom; she is married to "writer and neurologist" Raleigh St. Clair; known for extreme secrecy and suffering from writer's block. Raleigh is working on a book, in which he studies "Dudley" and his rare disorder.

- e. Chas conducts a fire drill; he lost his wife in plane crash the previous year, but he—along with his two sons Ari and Uzi and their dog Buckley, survived.
- f. Etheline becomes archeologist. Teaches bridge class with her friend, Henry Sherman, who wants to marry her.
- g. Pagoda calls Royal at hotel to tell him of the marriage proposal.

4. Chapter 2

- a. Chas arrives at the Tenenbaum house with his two children, telling his mother that they are staying because he claims his house is unsafe.
- b. Royal is seen talking to a doctor.
- c. Margot's house and her arrival at the Tenenbaum house: Ethel goes to visit Margot, who has locked herself in the bathroom; when Margot learns that Chas has moved home, Margot decides to move as well. At the Tenenbaum home, Margot goes into her room and calls out Eli, who had been hiding in the closet.
- d. Royal surprises Ethel on the street and tells her he is dying.
- e. Word begins to spread about Royal's impending death and Ritchie heads home as well; Margot meets him at the pier.
- f. Richie frees Mordecai.

5. Chapter 3 and Maddox Hill Cemetery

- a. Tenenbaum House, where Royal confronts the adult children about his "pretty bad case of cancer"; Chas exits the room and Richie hugs his father while Margot looks on. On the stairway, Royal asks Chas to meet his grandchildren. Outside T. house-Royal sees wife with Henry.
- b. Margot in car with Eli, who tells her about Richie's letter.
- c. Etheline's archeological dig site, where Henry apologizes to for his proposal, Ethel confesses that she hasn't been with a man for 18 yrs., and the pair kiss.
- d. Play area, where Royal meets his grandchildren and devises a plan for the children to convince their father to allow Royal to see them.
- e. Maddox Hill Cemetery, where Royal, Chas and the children visit Royal's mother's grave.
 - i. FIRST FLASHBACK: Margot reveals how she lost a finger while visiting her real family in Indiana
 - ii. SECOND FLASHBACK: Royal confronts Richie about his loss at the tennis match, and we see a television broadcast of Richie melting down on the court
 - iii. THIRD FLASHBACK: Chas asks Royal about the BB gun shooting incident during his childhood; we see a flashback of Chas suing Royal. Royal asks for forgiveness as he continues his conversation with Chas
 - iv. Margot and Richie walk together, and secrets are revealed (she admits to knowing about the letter and he learns that she smokes)
- f. Eli's apartment, where Richie confronts Eli about revealing the secret letter and Eli admits to being on mescaline.

6. Chapter Four

- a. Royal is evicted from the hotel and makes a telephone call.
- b. Ethel and the children argue about Royal staying at the house, and Richie reveals that his father is already upstairs in his room.
- c. Chas goes upstairs and attempts to evict Royal, who falls when he attempts to leave his bed; the family calls a doctor, who says that Royal cannot be moved and consequently must stay in the house.

- d. Royal professes his continuing love for Etheline while Henry looks in through doorway. Later, Henry sees Royal eating a hamburger, and grows suspicious about his "stomach cancer."
- e. Chas plays dad to Royal and turns the light off on him while he's reading.
- f. Richie reads one of Margot's plays in his tent; Chas enters and the pair converse.
- g. The next morning, Royal looks out his window and sees Eli sneaking out of Margot's bedroom window.
- h. Etheline tells Margot that Eli has been sending her his grades and newspaper clippings since college; Margot is disgusted.
- i. Margot's husband Raleigh arrives and speaks with her in the garden about when she's coming home. She doesn't know what she wants; when Margot enters the house, she is then confronted by her father about how she treats Raleigh. On the roof, Raleigh asks Richie if he thinks that Margot is having an affair; Richie punches out a window.
- j. Royal's becomes closer to his grandchildren.
 - i. Royal sees the boys crunching numbers for Chas, who won't let him take them out.
 - ii. Royal discusses his philosophy of raising boys with Etheline.
 - iii. Royal takes Uzi and Ari out to raise hell; they run at a swimming pool, cross the road on the red, throw water balloons at passing cars, ride a dumpster truck, steal at a convenience store, and to go watch dog fights.
 - iv. Royal tells the boys the story of how Pagoda tried to kill him before saving his life.
- k. Chas yells at Royal when the trio return and he finds out what Royal did with his kids.

7. Chapter Five

- a. Day: Royal and Etheline walk outside and talk; Royal flirts and Henry follows the couple.
- b. Night: Henry asks Etheline to tell Royal about them; he doesn't believe Royal is dying. Etheline declines to go out with Henry. Royal laughs with Pagoda in the games closet and believes he "has the sucker on the ropes."
- c. Day: Royal race baits Henry; the ensuing argument brings Etheline into kitchen. Henry takes medication bottle, calls about Royal's treatment, and confronts Pagoda.
- d. Same day: Margot and Royal watch television interview of Eli. Richie enters with bandaged hand. Henry enters, asks Etheline to come up, and reveals Royal's ruse.
- e. Later same day: Royal leaves, speaking with Etheline, Chas, Margot, and Richie as he walks down the stairs and out of the house. Outside, Pagoda stabs Royal, who directs the cab to take them to the YMCA.

8. Chapter Six

- a. YMCA, where Pagoda and Royal discuss their fate.
- b. Bridge, where Margot and Eli end their relationship while private investigator records their conversation from a roof opposite.
- c. PI office, where Richie, Raleigh, and Dudley hear his report
 - i. Montage review of file that reveals a pattern of multiple affairs with woman and inappropriate men.
- d. Hotel, where Royal and Pagoda try to get a jobs as elevator operators.
- e. Raleigh and Margot's apartment, where Richie talking to Raleigh before entering the bathroom, cutting his hair, and attempting to kill himself. Dudley finds him.
- f. Hospital room, where the family listens to Richie describe writing suicide note after regaining consciousness, a note he refuses to let Chas to see.
- g. Hotel room, where Royal learns of Richie's suicide attempt.

- h. Hospital, where Margot and Raleigh discuss her affairs and smoking habit. Henry arrives to offer help to grateful Etheline. Royal and Pagoda attempt to visit and see Richie getting on Green Line bus. Royal and Pagoda in travel to house in cab; Richie travels by bus.
- i. House, where Richie goes to his room and finds Margot in his tent. The pair discuss their feelings, and Margot concludes that they will have to be "secretly in love with each other and leave it at that."

9. Chapter Seven

- a. The Lindbergh Palace Hotel, where Ritchie speaks with Royal about his love for Margot; Ritchie's falcon Mordecai flies back to him.
- b. Eli's apartment, where Ritchie—with Royal and Pagoda in tow—confronts Eli about his affair with Margot and tries to convince him to get help for his drug addiction; Eli agrees to go at first, but then flees the apartment instead.
- c. Ice cream parlor, where Royal takes Margot out for ice cream in an attempt to repair their relationship. He asks her about her feelings for Ritchie; Margot asks Royal what her middle name is, but he cannot remember.
- d. Outside the Tenenbaum house, where Royal invites Ari and Uzi to the cemetery; Chas closes the window on his father, and Royal ends up going alone and visiting his son's wife's grave.
- e. Outside Henry's building, where Royal presents Etheline with divorce papers, which she happily signs.

10. Chapter Eight

- a. Etheline, Margot, Chas, Richie, Henry, his son, and Royal prepare for a wedding at the Tenenbaum house; Margot sits with her mom, who asks about her nicotine inhaler; as the men prepare, Chas tells Henry that he, too, is a widower..
- b. Eli, who wears face paint, crashes his car into the front of the house; although Royal saves Ari and Uzi from being hit, the accident kills Buckley.
- c. Chas chases Eli through the house and into the neighboring yard, where both men realize that they have a problem.
- d. Royal buys a Dalmatian from firefighters who have come to the crash site; when he gives the dog to Chas, Chas finally opens up to his father, telling Royal that he's had a bad year.
- e. Voiceover narrator returns and describes events taking place after the crash.
 - i. Royal helps dig a hole for Buckley and buries him.
 - ii. Henry and Etheline get married 48 hours later
 - iii. Margot's play is presented and runs for two weeks with mixed reviews; Royal laughs at a scene depicting a father introducing his "adopted daughter."
 - iv. Raleigh and Dudley go on tour for Raleigh's new book
 - v. Eli checks himself into rehab.
 - vi. Richie starts a program teaching competitive tennis to youth at a YMCA.
 - vii. Royal rides a dump truck with Ari, Uzi, and Chas; Royal has a heart attack at 68 and Chas is riding with him in the ambulance when he dies.

11. Epilogue

- a. At the Tenenbaum family plot, the extended family gathers around Royal's grave as Chas, Ritchie, Dusty, Eli, Raleigh, Henry, and Pagoda lower the casket into the ground.
- b. Ari and Uzi fire a BB gun salute.

- c. Everyone solemnly looks on without saying a word and then exit past Royal's headstone, which bears the inscription "Died tragically rescuing his family from the wreckage of a destroyed sinking battleship."

End Credits