The Treasure of Lemon Brown (by Walter Myers)

Summary and Analysis

The story takes place in Harlem in an abandoned (נטוש) tenement building (בניין מגורים). Greg is facing a conflict. His father won't let him play basketball with the Scorpions unless (רק אם) he succeeds in school. Greg's father thinks that getting a good report card (תעודה) is important. Greg doesn't want to hear his father lecture him about his poor grades, and he wants to play basketball no matter what. His perspective changes when he realizes that he should try not to get angry but listen to his father because his father wants what is best for him. Lemon Brown helps Greg come to this realization when he tells him how much it meant to him that his son kept his treasure with him. Brown helps Greg understand how a father feels, and this makes it possible for Greg to understand his own father. At the end of the story Greg smiles because he has evaluated (העריך) the situation and decided that his father is worth listening to and he should not get angry with him. Greg goes home knowing he will have to listen to his father's lecture. However, he is now ready to listen to his father's advice.

In the beginning we think Brown is a homeless who spends his life picking through the trash. By the end of the story our perspective changes when we realize that Brown is a man who cares about his family and a talented musician who had gone through hard times. When Greg meets Brown in the abandoned building, Brown is afraid that Greg wants to steal his treasure. Brown is an old man; he wears rags around his legs where he hides his "treasure". He looks like a homeless but we learn that he used to sing the blues in his early years. Under his legs Brown hides newspaper clippings and a harmonica. When the neighborhood thugs (פרחחי השכונה) come to steal Brown's treasure Greg thinks that the treasure isn't worth fighting for. The thugs are sure the treasure is money.

Brown shows Greg his treasure (newspaper clippings and a harmonica). The two things show how famous he was as a blues singer. Brown had a son who was killed in the war. Before the son was killed he was keeping the treasure. After he was killed Brown took it back. Greg learns that Brown's son always kept his father's treasure with him and treated it like a real treasure.

The message of the story

The story teaches us that young people benefit from the experience of older people because they can learn from them. Older people benefit because they have someone who will listen to their past life experiences.

Bridging Text and Context

From the background (רקע) information about the writer of the story we can understand that he had a hard childhood. Greg is a teenager who is suffering a hard time. He isn't doing well at school and has to give up what he loves – basketball. The writer of the story can describe the challenges and conflicts that a teenager is facing because he understands them from his own experience.

In the story neither Greg nor Brown comes from ideal families. Brown is a homeless who has no wife and his son had been killed in the war. Greg lives in Harlem and has a hard time with his father. The writer of the story is concerned about showing how the characters learn from their life situations and how they deal with the challenges they face. The writer himself didn't come from an "ideal family". He was raised by a foster (חורגת) family and grew up in poor Harlem. His own life experiences probably influenced his choice not to "build ideal families" in his books.