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THEA 101-04

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Response for *proof: a play*

**Part One:**

**Exposition**

* Intro to Catherine and Robert
* Catherine is only dreaming about her father celebrating her birthday, since he’s recently passed
* Intro to Hal

**Inciting Incident**

* Hal comes over to Catherine’s house to sort through the rest of Robert’s things

**Rising Action**

* Catherine and Hal discover something that her father wrote about her in one of his old notebooks
* Hal gives her the notebook as a birthday present
* Intro to Claire
* Catherine and Hal share their feelings for each other the night after Robert’s funeral
* Their connection seems to have lifted both Hal and Catherine’s spirits
* Catherine gives Hal the key to one of her father’s drawers
* Claire asks Catherine to live with her and her fiancée in New York
* When Catherine declines, Claire tells her that she is selling the house to the university
* Catherine and Claire get into an argument about the timing of Claire’s visit and her absence during their father’s suffering

**Climax**

* Hal discovers a groundbreaking proof that Robert left in one of his notebooks, but it actually turns out to be a proof that Catherine wrote

**Falling Action**

* There is a flashback four years before Robert’s death that recalls how Catherine and Hal first met and Catherine’s twenty first birthday
* Hal had come to drop his dissertation draft off to Robert
* In the present, Catherine confesses when she wrote the proof and why she kept it hidden
* Claire and Hal don’t believe that Catherine wrote the proof because it looks like it could be her father’s
* Hal suggests taking the proof to Robert’s colleagues, to Catherine’s protest
* Catherine tries to destroy the book out of anger, but Claire stops her
* Hal comes back the next day to try to talk to Catherine, but Claire refuses to allow him to speak with Catherine because she thinks he is the source of all of Catherine’s troubles

**Resolution**

* Claire gives Catherine’s proof to Hal for him to analyze

**Dénouement**

* Another flashback begins, this time three and a half years earlier with Robert and Catherine discussing the proof in the midst of a bitter Chicago winter
* In the present, Catherine and Claire prepare to leave for New York
* Hal stops by to tell Catherine that he has verified her proof
* Setting her anger with Hal aside, Catherine reveals to Hal the real reason why she is moving to New York
* Hal gives Catherine the book
* At his request, Catherine begins to explain the proof to Hal

**Part Two:**

1. Catherine: introverted and exhausted (To Robert: “Because in order for your friends to take you out, you generally have to have friends,” page 7)
2. Robert, Catherine's recently deceased father: controlling (To Catherine: “You see? Even your depression is mathematical. Stop moping and get to work,” page 10) and a workaholic (To Catherine: “If I wanted to work a problem all day long, I did it.” page 10)
3. Hal, a former student of Robert’s: persistent (To Catherine: “I’m prepared to look at every page. Are you?” page 15) and somewhat caring (To Catherine: “I run along the lake a couple of mornings a week. It’s not too cold yet. If you wanted to come sometime I could pick you up,” page 21)
4. Claire, Catherine’s sister: overtly optimistic (To Catherine about their father’s death: “I think in some ways it was the ‘right time.’ If there is ever a right time,” page 27) and motherly (To Catherine: “You look tired. I think you could use some downtime,” page 31)
5. It is clear that the story centers around Catherine, so she is the protagonist.
6. While not entirely clear, the antagonist seems to be Catherine’s sister, Claire, who is a consistently opposing force from the moment she is introduced

**Part Three:**

* Proof could refer to a mathematical proof, specifically the proofs that Robert and Catherine wrote (pages 19 and 47)
* It could also refer to proof for Claire that Catherine is not insane and that she wrote her own proof

**Part Four:**

* The play is about the death of a brilliant, yet psychologically unstable mathematician and professor and how his daughters and former student deal with his death and the knowledge that he left behind
* The central dramatic conflict focuses specifically on his daughter, Catherine, who sacrificed everything to take care of her father; she is very similar to her father and fears that she is going crazy just like he did
* The biggest themes/threads that I saw in this play were: loss, love, insanity, family, bitterness, brilliance, and moving forward

**Part Five:**

* Personally, I found the play to be very interesting.
* It did not have the ending that I expected, but it was still a great story
* I related the most to Catherine’s character because, throughout the play, she is very misunderstood by everyone around her and is dealing with her father’s loss with a very “I don’t want to be bothered” attitude that I have my found myself possessing at times of great loss
* All in all, it was different than any other play that I’ve previously read, but it was different in a good way in that it was refreshingly funny and serious at the appropriate times