

## **ENG 243 DISCUSSION QUESTIONS ON “APPENDIX ONE, TWO, AND THREE”**

**Directions:** You will be responding to each assigned reading from the writing by answering the questions and citing passages or specific examples from the reading as supporting evidence. The responses should be typed, double-spaced with one inch margins and be approximately a page (350 words is the minimum, so you will most likely exceed/go beyond this amount.) for each week’s stories/readings when you use a 12 size font. Of course, you can exceed the one page, but you should always include your name, class name and section, the title of the reading, the date, and word count as your heading at the top. (Note: Hand-written responses will not be accepted, and you must respond to all sets of questions assigned to you or your response will not be accepted. Therefore, do not say: I don’t know the answer, but apply those critical thinking skills when answering the questions.)

### **“APPENDIX ONE, TWO, AND THREE” FROM *THE STORY AND ITS WRITER:* *AN INTRODUCTION TO SHORT FICTION BY ANN CHARTERS***

1. In “Appendix One: Reading Short Stories,” summarize the plot of the short story “Samuel” by Grace Paley in three sentences. (a. What happens in the story? b. What’s the conflict? c. How is the conflict resolved or how does it affect everyone in the story?) Also, identify the chief characters, their traits, and the role that they play, and what you think is the central idea or theme of this story.
2. In “Appendix One: Reading Short Stories,” Grace Paley wrote “Samuel” to set you up for the “shiver of recognition” in her final sentence (Reread that sentence). What emotional impact does it leave the reader feeling? We will be considering many short stories throughout the semester, and how an author’s intricate use of language creates a fictional world. Therefore, when reading a story, you will want to consider: a) what significant, concrete details are they using “to show, not just tell” me about a character, their emotions, or even the setting? b) How do they use the direct methods of character presentation with dialogue, appearance, and action that expresses emotion without just telling us but showing us? c) What elements of fiction (i.e. plot, setting, irony, point of view, etc.) are being used to create a believable, original, and engaging story? Answer these questions by considering Paley’s “Samuel” and how is this short story or any narrative prose fiction different from a report about an accident in a newspaper?
3. In “Appendix Two: The Elements of Fiction,” you will summarize in your own words the following terms:  
a) Plot (exposition, rising action, turning point/climax, falling action, & conclusion/resolution/denouement);  
b) Character (protagonist vs. antagonist and static, dynamic, round & flat); c) Setting; d) Point of view (first-person narration and third-person narration: omniscient narrator, limited-omniscient. Impartial omniscience, & objective narration); e) Style (voice, tone, irony, symbol, & allegory); f) Theme. [NOTE: Do not generalize the definitions and do not skip any of the words in parenthesis. You need to clarify the terms, so you understand each one when we discuss stories and refer to these elements of fiction.]
4. In “Appendix Three: A Brief History,” the history of storytelling draws from the oral tradition before the invention of alphabet and the printing press, so what are some of the earliest forms of story? Imaginative stories were distrusted, so why was prose usually reserved for devotional and instructive pieces until the fourteenth century?
5. In “Appendix Three: A Brief History,” it wasn’t until the eighteenth century, after the secularization had gathered in Europe, that fictional narratives were given the opportunity to evolve. New periodicals began printing a variety of prose – character sketches, satires, gothic tales, rogue stories, simply adventure stories, and sentimental sketches with predictable moral outcomes in which the hero or heroine is rewarded and the villain is punished. However, most historians of this genre will agree that the short story did not appear until the nineteenth century, almost a hundred years after the novel began to flourish as a literary form. What is the different kind of short fictional narrative that emerged as an original prose work in which every word chosen in the structure of the plot, and how did every detail of description and characterization contribute to a unified impression? Identify at least three of the successful short stories discussed in the reading and what innovations emerged.

## **ENG 243 DISCUSSION QUESTIONS ON “THE FALL OF HOUSE OF USHER” AND “RAPPACCINI’S DAUGHTER”**

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### **“THE CASK OF AMONTILLADO” BY EDGAR ALLAN POE**

1. First, summarize the plot in three sentences. (a. What happens in the story? b. What’s the conflict? c. How is the conflict resolved or how does it affect everyone in the story?) Second, identify the chief characters, their traits, and the role that they play, and what you think is the central idea or theme of this story. Third, describe at least three interesting facts that you discover about the author’s background/life and how it might have influenced his writing? (Note: You may consult the textbook, read the free author bio links/study guides on my website, do your own research at the library, or use the internet to learn something about the author.)
2. Montressor cites a “thousand injuries” and an “insult” as his motivation for murdering Fortunato. Given what you learn about the two men during the course of the story, what do you suppose the “injuries” and “insult” might be? What is Montressor’s concept of personal honor? What is the significance of Montressor’s family coat of arms and motto? What is the significance of Fortunato’s costume?
3. Does Fortunato ever understand why Montressor hates him? What is Fortunato’s attitude toward Montressor? In what ways does Montressor manipulate Fortunato? What weaknesses does Montressor exploit? Why does Montressor wait for a reply before he puts the last stone in position? What do you think he wants Fortunato to say? Do you find Montressor to be a reliable narrator? If not, what makes you distrust his version of events? Why does Montressor wait fifty years to tell his story? How would the story be different if he had told it the next morning?
4. What is the significance of the setting when Montressor and Fortunato meet and then where Montressor take Fortunato to avenge himself? Also, identify examples of irony and foreshadowing in this story, and why it helps to understand the theme/central idea that Poe conveys in this story.

### **“RAPPACCINI’S DAUGHTER” BY NATHANIEL HAWTHORNE**

1. First, summarize the plot in three sentences. (a. What happens in the story? b. What’s the conflict? c. How is the conflict resolved or how does it affect everyone in the story?) Second, identify the chief characters, their traits, and the role that they play, and what you think is the central idea or theme of this story. Third, describe at least three interesting facts that you discover about the author’s background/life and how it might have influenced his writing? (Note: You may consult the textbook, read the free author bio links/study guides on my website, do your own research at the library, or use the internet to learn something about the author.)
2. Giovanni notices a garden. Who does Lisabetta say it belongs to? What is said about what the doctor does with the plants? Identify three significant details about the garden. What are the characteristics of the one particular shrub? Which other luxurious garden does Hawthorne compare this one to? What happened there that is significant? If Rappaccini’s garden were like the garden of Eden, who would Giovanni and Beatrice be? What kind of life could they live in such a garden if they loved each other? Giovanni thinks she poisoned him on purpose. Do you think she did? Explain. Beatrice is going to drink the antidote. What do antidotes do? What will it do to her? What was Dr. Rappaccini’s dream for his daughter? At the end, what does one learn Beatrice wants more than anything? Who is more responsible for Beatrice’s death and why? What is the moral lesson of this story?
3. Hawthorne describes Rappaccini. What is your first impression of him and why? Do you think Rappaccini is a good botanist? Why or why not? When Dr. Rappaccini works with many of the plants in his garden, he protects his hands with gloves. What does he need for the plant with the purple flowers? Why does Dr. Rappaccini require his daughter’s help? What is Beatrice’s social life like? As we get to know Beatrice more, in what other ways is she a sister, even a twin to the purple

blossomed plant?

4. Giovanni thinks that Baglioni must know and be friends with Dr. Rappaccini. What does Baglioni say about him? Describe the singular (which means odd or peculiar) incident that Giovanni witnesses. What is Beatrice's reaction to the event? What can you infer from her reaction? What is Giovanni's reaction to what he is seeing? What happens to the bouquet Giovanni gives to Beatrice? How does Giovanni now feel about his beautiful neighbor?
5. How has Giovanni changed? What is Baglioni's suspicion about what has happened to Giovanni? What does Baglioni mean when he says, "I may foil you" regarding Dr. Rappaccini? What do you think he is planning to do? Is Giovanni in love with Beatrice? How do you know? One of the qualities of a romantic story is an interest in the supernatural. How does Giovanni's assessment of the plants in the garden, now that he's standing in it, suggest the supernatural? Beatrice says, "This garden is his world," referring to her father's garden. What two ways can we take this statement? Beatrice asks Giovanni to believe nothing of her save (except) what he sees with his own eyes. If you were Giovanni, what would you believe based on what you have seen?
6. Why doesn't Beatrice want Giovanni to touch the special plant? Why does she protect him? What does Baglioni's story reveal about his suspicions about what might be happening to Giovanni? How does Giovanni characterize the story? What does this show about his judgment? What does Baglioni give Giovanni? How does Giovanni plan to test Beatrice? Giovanni thinks, "I am no flower to perish in her grasp." Do you agree with him? Explain. What makes the bouquet of flowers wither? What does this mean? Giovanni finds out the origin of the shrub with the purple flowers. How is that particular detail an example of the supernatural?

## **ENG 243 DISCUSSION QUESTIONS ON "BARTLEBY, THE SCRIVENER" AND *THE DEATH OF IVAN ILYCH***

**Directions:** You will be responding to each assigned reading from the writing by answering the questions and citing passages or specific examples from the reading as supporting evidence. The responses should be typed, double-spaced with one inch margins and be approximately a page (350 words is the minimum, so you will most likely exceed/go beyond this amount.) for each week's stories/readings when you use a 12 size font. Of course, you can exceed the one page, but you should always include your name, class name and section, the title of the reading, the date, and word count as your heading at the top. (Note: Hand-written responses will not be accepted, and you must respond to all sets of questions assigned to you or your response will not be accepted. Therefore, do not say: I don't know the answer, but apply those critical thinking skills when answering the questions.)

### **"BARTLEBY, THE SCRIVENER" BY HERMAN MELVILLE**

1. First, summarize the plot in three sentences. (a. What happens in the story? b. What's the conflict? c. How is the conflict resolved or how does it affect everyone in the story?) Second, identify the chief characters, their traits, and the role that they play, and what you think is the central idea or theme of this story. Third, describe at least three interesting facts that you discover about Herman Melville's background/life and how it might have influenced his writing? (Note: You may consult the textbook, read the free author bio links/study guides on my website, do your own research at the library, or use the internet to learn something about the author.)
2. The narrator is a character in his own right; in fact, this story tells as much about him as it does about Bartleby. What do we learn about him in the first few paragraphs? What does his language (including the use of terms like "imprimis" and constructions like "not insensible" and "hath") tell us about him? Are there any contradictions involved in being an "un-ambitious lawyer" who admires John Jacob Astor? Before introducing Bartleby, the narrator introduces us to three other workers: Turkey, Nippers, and Ginger Nut. What are they like? What is the purpose of introducing them first? How does the narrator's response to them (and his forbearance with their faults) shape the reader's reactions to what follows?
3. What part do the setting and the subtitle ("A Story of Wall Street") play in the story? Why does the narrator so frequently mention walls, screens, windows, and views? Why does Bartleby stare out the window or lurk behind a screen? In what ways does the narrator's characterization of him as a "fixture," a "pillar of salt," or "the last column of a ruined temple" help the reader to see him as a structural object—a piece of furniture or of architecture—rather than as a human being? What kind of person is Bartleby? Why might he say, "I would prefer not to" instead of "I will not"? What kinds of appeals does the narrator make to Bartleby, and how does Bartleby deflect them?
4. As the story progresses, the narrator's views about Bartleby undergo several transformations, and Bartleby begins to have a kind of power over him. How does Bartleby's influence over the office manifest itself? Discuss why and how this occurs. At one point, when the narrator asks Bartleby why he will not write, Bartleby responds, "Do you not see the reason for yourself." What is it that the narrator is supposed to see, and what does he fail to see? Why is Bartleby said to be the one with weak eyesight? In what ways do the ideas of seeing, vision, and understanding work in this story? As a lawyer, the narrator might be expected to use logic to rid himself of Bartleby. Does he? How successful is his attempt? What other kinds of appeals does he use, and how successful are they?
5. The narrator attempts to grapple with the problem of Bartleby through the tenets of religion and philosophy, and the narrator feels he must choose between justice and mercy. Explain the allusions in this part of the story and the contradictory ideas that they represent. One idea that's implicit in the story is that of the social contract: what does Bartleby owe to society, and what does society owe to him in return? To what extent must this social contract be "amended" to allow for what the narrator sees as the Christian tenets of mercy and brotherhood?
6. In the last sections of the story, the "real law" enters the eccentric law office of the narrator—lawyers unmoved by Bartleby's strangeness move in, the police are summoned, and Bartleby is taken to the Tombs. Does the narrator prove himself a true lawyer at the end? Why does Bartleby say, "I know you, and I want nothing to say to you" when the narrator visits him in prison? Shouldn't he be grateful that the narrator is taking an interest in what happens to him?
7. Does the Dead Letter office really explain Bartleby's actions? Or is it simply a device so that the narrator can close the incident in a sentimental, picturesque manner? Critical opinion is divided about the narrator: one side sees him as an appealing eccentric who tries but fails to save a man who has doomed himself; another sees him as a man who, despite his genial manner, is so devoted to the values of Wall Street that he cannot rise to the injunction of loving his neighbor as

himself. What's your opinion?

8. Eating and food imagery is prominent in this story; it might be more accurate to say dysfunctional eating (Nippers's dyspepsia, for example) and the absence of nourishment is prominent. In what ways does this set of images symbolically reinforce the story's themes? Do you sympathize more with Bartleby or the narrator? What would you have done with Bartleby?

### ***THE DEATH OF IVAN ILYCH BY LEO TOLSTOY***

1. First, summarize the plot in three sentences. (a. What happens in the story? b. What's the conflict? c. How is the conflict resolved or how does it affect everyone in the story?) Second, identify the chief characters, their traits, and the role that they play, and what you think is the central idea or theme of this story. Third, describe at least three interesting facts that you discover about Leo Tolstoy's background/life and how it might have influenced his writing? (Note: You may consult the textbook, read the free author bio links/study guides on my website, do your own research at the library, or use the internet to learn something about the author.)
2. How do those "left behind" respond? (i.e. co-workers, friends, widow, children, etc.) What emotions are demonstrated? What gaps exist between internal and external expressions of emotion? Why do you think such gaps exist? What is done to/with the body? How is it laid out? What actions are expected of the various mourners?
3. What are the character qualities of Ivan Ilych as a child and school boy? What characteristics emerge in the young man? How do these traits shape his adult life and behavior? Describe Ivan Ilych's experiences as a young husband and father? How does his personal life affect his professional life and vice versa? What motivates him in making certain decisions about his personal life and about his professional life?
4. How does the change in Ivan Ilych's professional status in midlife (first in terms of being passed over for promotion and then in terms of being granted a new higher position with better pay) affect his sense of self and happiness? How does his personal life alter? How do we as readers react to Ivan Ilych's "bruise?" How does Ivan Ilych? Praskovya Fedorovna? Tolstoy has made a deliberate decision to tell us about the post-death period before he takes us back to Ivan Ilych's earlier life and to the original moment when his injury occurred which will ultimately lead to his death. How does that shape our reaction? How does it help us assess the reaction of the various characters?
5. What are the relatively early symptoms of Ivan Ilych's disorder? How does it affect his personal life and professional life in these early days? What is the attitude of Praskovya Fedorovna to Ivan Ilych's behavior, temper, illness? What emotion does Ivan Ilych experience/exhibit in this period? How does his wife interact with him? How does she feel about his worsening state?
6. How does Ivan Ilych's experience with the medical profession? What kind of information and involvement in his condition is Ivan Ilych permitted? How does Ivan Ilych feel about the medical profession and the treatment of his case? What is the family's reaction to Ivan Ilych's medical news? What role does the brother-in-law play? How do colleagues and friends perceive/react to his condition? At what point does Ivan Ilych acknowledge that he is dying and what is his emotional reaction to that realization?
7. What kinds of medical/physical experiences do we see as Ivan Ilych's condition in these final weeks of Ivan's life? What kinds of emotions does he experience as his suffering increases? What is the response and actions of Ivan Ilych's family (particularly the wife and the daughter) and how does Ivan react to them?
8. What is Geriasim's role and how does he interact with Ivan Ilych? What is the response and actions of Ivan Ilych's family? What role does religion/belief play? Does Ivan Ilych "learn" from his suffering? Grow through it? Transcend it? How does the account of these final weeks, days, and hours shape how we think about what we had read in Chapter 1? How do we see things differently when we reread Ch.1 having finished the text?

## **ENG 243 DISCUSSION QUESTIONS ON “THE YELLOW WALLPAPER” AND “THE STORY OF AN HOUR”**

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### **“THE YELLOW WALLPAPER” BY CHARLOTTE PERKINS GILMAN**

1. First, summarize the plot in three sentences. (a. What happens in the story? b. What's the conflict? c. How is the conflict resolved or how does it affect everyone in the story?) Second, identify the chief characters, their traits, and the role that they play, and what you think is the central idea or theme of this story. Third, describe at least three interesting facts that you discover about Charlotte Perkin Gilman's background/life and how it might have influenced her writing? (Note: You may consult the textbook, read the free author bio links/study guides on my website, do your own research at the library, or use the internet to learn something about the author.)
2. Why are they living in this colonial mansion? What is its history? Does the heroine feel comfortable in the house? What's the narrator's initial reaction and description of the wallpaper? How does her description of the wallpaper change?
3. How about John? Why does the narrator say his profession is "perhaps . . . one reason I do not get well faster"? Who else supports John's diagnosis? What clue does the narrator's repeated lament, "what can one do?" give us about her personality? What conflicting emotions is she having toward her husband, her condition, and the mansion? Who is Jennie? What's her function?
4. By the Fourth of July, what does the narrator admit about the wallpaper? What clues does Gilman give about the narrator's state? How does the narrator try to reach out to her husband? Is this her last contact with sanity? Do you think John has no comprehension of the seriousness of her illness? Why change the point of view from 1<sup>st</sup> person to 2<sup>nd</sup> person? By the final section of the story, what is the narrator's relationship to her husband? To Jennie? To the wallpaper? What is the central irony of the story?

### **“THE STORY OF AN HOUR” BY KATE CHOPIN**

1. First, summarize the plot in three sentences. (a. What happens in the story? b. What's the conflict? c. How is the conflict resolved or how does it affect everyone in the story?) Second, identify the chief characters, their traits, and the role that they play, and what you think is the central idea or theme of this story. Third, describe at least three interesting facts that you discover about Kate Chopin's background/life and how it might have influenced her writing? (Note: You may consult the textbook, read the free author bio links/study guides on my website, do your own research at the library, or use the internet to learn something about the author.)
2. The story's basic exposition is presented in its first two paragraphs. What additional information about character or setting would you like to know? Why do you suppose the writer does not supply this information? It is a very economical story, with little action or dialogue. Is this a strength or weakness? Explain. Was the story's ending unexpected, or were you prepared for it? What elements foreshadowed this ending? Do you find the story's ending satisfying? Believable? Contrived? Then, define the meaning or the significance of the reference to the following terms and phrases from "The Story of an Hour" by Kate Chopin: ELIXIR OF LIFE, JOY THAT KILLS, MALLARD, and "FREE, FREE, FREE." What do they mean or symbolize?
3. When "The Story of an Hour" was first published in *Vogue* magazine in 1894, the magazine's editors titled it "The Dream of an Hour." A film version, echoing the last words of the story, is called *The Joy That Kills*. Which of the three titles do you believe most accurately represents what happens in the story? What emotions does Mrs. Mallard experience during the hour she spends alone in her room? What events do you imagine take place during this same period outside her room? Outside her house?

4. What do you make of Mrs. Mallard's thoughts in paragraph 14? (What sort of relationship did Mrs. Mallard have with her husband? Did she love him? Did he abuse her? Why exactly was she relieved to be rid of him? What sort of man was he? What in the story gives you that impression? What sort of life did she feel she would have with the news of his death? What in the story gives you that impression?) Can you answer any of these questions with certainty?

## **ENG 243 DISCUSSION QUESTIONS ON *HEART OF DARKNESS***

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### ***HEART OF DARKNESS* BY JOSEPH CONRAD**

1. First, summarize the plot in three sentences. (a. What happens in the story? b. What's the conflict? c. How is the conflict resolved or how does it affect everyone in the story?) Second, identify the chief characters, their traits, and the role that they play, and what you think is the central idea or theme of this story. Third, describe at least three interesting facts that you discover about Joseph Conrad's background/life and how it might have influenced his writing? (Note: You may consult the textbook, read the free author bio links/study guides on my website, do your own research at the library, or use the internet to learn something about the author.)
2. What is Marlow's purpose in telling this story to the others? What might he hope to gain? What are the consequences of Marlow's insatiable curiosity? About the jungle? About Kurtz? What is the nature of madness in *Heart of Darkness*? What brings it on? Is it something that every man can fall into or is it simply the environment that instigates it? What is the nature of obsession and ambition? What are some specific examples of certain characters being obsessed with something or having too much ambition? What consequences does it have?
3. The Nigerian writer Chinua Achebe has claimed that *Heart of Darkness* is an "offensive and deplorable book" that "set[s] Africa up as a foil to Europe, as a place of negations at once remote and vaguely familiar, in comparison with which Europe's own state of spiritual grace will be manifest." Achebe says that Conrad does not provide enough of an outside frame of reference to enable the book to be read as ironic or critical of imperialism. Based on the evidence in the text, argue for or against Achebe's assertion. Is Chinua Achebe correct in accusing *Heart of Darkness* of being a racist novel? Does the book present a simple and degrading view of the native Africans? Or are the views of race more complex? How does Conrad depict Africans as different from Europeans? Does this characterization degrade them? How does Conrad complicate the idea of colonization being "good"? What kind of negative effects does it have on both white men and the black men of Africa? Who suffers more?
4. As you read the novel, be aware of how Conrad uses repeated "doubling" patterns of opposition and contrast in *Heart of Darkness*: light and dark, white and black, "savagery" and "civilization," outer and inner? What does Conrad accomplish by this contrast, especially of light and dark?
5. Consider the accountant, the manager, and the brickmaker – all puppets of the Company. What negative concepts or themes might each one represent? How are they different from one another?
6. What's going on with the names, here? The only names we get are "Marlow" and "Kurtz." Everyone else is defined by their occupation, a physical description, or their relation to a named character. Does this demean their importance? Does it level the statuses of white and black individuals?
7. Think about the framing story that structures *Heart of Darkness*. Why is it important to narrate Marlow in the act of telling his story? Why is the framing narrator unnamed? What is the effect of the narrative being told by Marlow first-hand? What is the effect of having this narration as a frame story told by the nameless narrator?
8. Keep track of references to maps. What significance lies in Marlow's references to maps? How, for example, do they represent the novella's frequent opposition between "light" and "darkness"? Also, Marlow describes a map image of the Congo River in Africa as being like a snake. What snake-like qualities does this reference transfer to the River, and how does the transference set us up for the rest of the novella's events?

9. What do women represent in *Heart of Darkness*? There are three significant women in this story: Kurtz's Intended, Marlow's aunt, and the African woman at Kurtz's station. How are they described? Contrast Kurtz's African mistress with his Intended. Are both negative portrayals of women? Describe how each functions in the narrative. Does it make any difference in your interpretation to know that Conrad supported the women's suffrage movement? What does Marlow mean early in Part 1 when he suggests that women are "out of touch with truth" and live in a beautiful world of their own? Marlow meets a pair of women weaving -- to what Classical myths does this scene appeal, and why would such an appeal be significant in the context of the story as a whole?
10. Marlow says that he came to an important realization as he neared Kurtz's Station. What is the realization, and to what extent does it influence or explain his behavior in the rest of the story? Later, Marlow sees the "symbolic" skulls lining Kurtz's hut? What reflections do those skulls lead Marlow to make regarding the nature of Kurtz' downfall in the wilderness?
11. Much of our information of Kurtz comes secondhand or through the grapevine. How does that affect our vision of him when we finally see him in person? Does Kurtz live up to our expectations? How does physical illness relate to madness? How does one's environment relate to one's mental state in this book? Why does *Heart of Darkness* have two competing heroes? Make the case for either Marlow or Kurtz as the true "hero" of the book. How do you define "hero" for this book? Why doesn't Marlow kill Kurtz?
12. What does Kurtz say in his final illness? What, if anything, does Marlow learn from Kurtz? How does he interpret Kurtz's phrase "the horror, the horror"? Kurtz finally passes away, and, at the text's conclusion, Marlow decides to visit Kurtz's "Intended," or fiancée. Why does Marlow lie to her about Kurtz's last words? Does his lie reflect any insight he has gained from his trip up the Congo and to "the Heart of Darkness"? Explain.

## **ENG 243 DISCUSSION QUESTIONS ON “ARABY” AND “HILLS LIKE WHITE ELEPHANTS”**

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### **“ARABY” BY JAMES JOYCE**

1. First, summarize the plot in three sentences. (a. What happens in the story? b. What’s the conflict? c. How is the conflict resolved or how does it affect everyone in the story?) Second, identify the chief characters, their traits, and the role that they play, and what you think is the central idea or theme of this story. Third, describe at least three interesting facts that you discover about James Joyce’s background/life and how it might have influenced his writing? (Note: You may consult the textbook, read the free author bio links/study guides on my website, do your own research at the library, or use the internet to learn something about the author.)
2. The language of “Araby” by James Joyce, reveals both the narrator’s conception of himself as a boy and his adult understanding of his boyhood. Note carefully the descriptions of Mangan’s sister, especially their mixture of erotic and religious details. Consider also the connotations of the first and last paragraphs and the implications of the religious imagery throughout. For example, note the religious language of the fifth paragraph, especially the words “litanies,” “chalice,” “prayers and praises,” and “confused adoration.” What does this language reveal about the boy, about how he sees himself, about how he envisions what he is doing and thinking? Explain how the following sentence from this paragraph is related to the image invoked by his religious language: “But my body was like a harp and her words and gestures were like fingers running upon the wires.”
3. Like an adult on a quest, the boy imagines he carries his love as if it was a sacred object, a chalice (paragraph 5) but is his love pure? What indicates that his attraction is physical rather than spiritual (paragraphs 3 & 9)? Araby to the adolescent represents excitement, a chance to prove the purity of his love, and more abstractly, his hope; however, does Araby fulfill these expectations? Why?
4. “Araby” tells the story of an adolescent boy’s initiation into adulthood. The story is narrated by a mature man reflecting upon his adolescence and the events that forced him to face the disillusioning realities of adulthood. The minor characters play a pivotal role in this initiation process. The boy observes the hypocrisy of the adults in his life. Cite examples of how the priest, Mrs. Mercer, and his uncle are “hypocritical adults.” What fundamental truths does he really learn about adults? In observing the adults and realizing he has been deluding himself, what does he realize has been hypocritical and vain like the adults in his life about himself?
5. Read the dialogue near the end of the story aloud, if possible with a friend or another student. What do you hear? How can you characterize the conversation? What effect does it have on the boy? Why? Reread the first and last paragraphs. Note repetitions and similarities in the language. Relate the use of the word “blind” for a dead-end street to the boy’s situation as expressed at the end of the story. Why do the boy’s “eyes” burn with “anguish” and “anger”? Most people interpret the ending as a moment of profound insight, and the language certainly seems to support this interpretation: “Gazing up into the darkness I saw myself as a creature driven and derided by vanity; and my eyes burned with anguish and anger” (paragraph 37). However, the narrator uses inflated language that suggests an ironic stance. So even in the moment of apparent insight, the boy is still playing a heroic role. Has he discovered his true self or is he just as self-absorbed and blind in the end as he was at the beginning?

### **“HILLS LIKE WHITE ELEPHANTS” BY ERNEST HEMINGWAY**

1. First, summarize the plot in three sentences. (a. What happens in the story? b. What’s the conflict? c. How is the conflict resolved or how does it affect everyone in the story?) Second, identify the chief characters, their traits, and the role that they play, and what you think is the central idea or theme of this story. Third, describe at least three interesting facts that

you discover about Ernest Hemingway's background/life and how it might have influenced his writing? (Note: You may consult the textbook, read the free author bio links/study guides on my website, do your own research at the library, or use the internet to learn something about the author.)

2. Is the male character admirable? What does he want? How do you know? Is the female character admirable? What does she have going for her? Explain with textual evidence. What is the nature of their relationship? Use examples from the text to justify your response. Hemingway once suggested that his purpose in such a story is to tell the reader as little as possible directly yet to reveal characters' motives and their conflict. How does this principle operate in this story? Where would you like to have more information (besides "he said" and "she said")?
3. What is important about what is not being said in the story? What clues/hints are given about the type of procedure/operation that the girl is encouraged to have? Looking back on the story, list the evidence that tells what kind of operation Jig is confronting. How risky is it physically and emotionally? How do the hills in the story spotlight Jig's decision? How does Jig see the setting as symbolic of her choices?
4. Why does she look with fascination at the fields and trees across the plain? Is her comment about the hills being like white elephants silly or profound? Explain. How does the fact that Jig sees the setting symbolically get us to identify with her more readily than if the author had suggested the symbolism to us directly? Note the symbolism of the two different landscapes on either side of the Zaragosa train station, plus the possible symbolism of the curtain, as suggested in the commentary beside the story.
5. The discussion of their relationship brings back the observation that the man can speak Spanish but the "girl" cannot, which leads to further conclusions about the nature of the relationship. Who do you sympathize with more, the boy or the girl? Explain.

## **ENG 243 DISCUSSION QUESTIONS ON THE METAMORPHOSIS AND “THE HUNGER ARTIST”**

**Directions:** You will be responding to each assigned reading from the writing by answering the questions and citing passages or specific examples from the reading as supporting evidence. The responses should be typed, double-spaced with one inch margins and be approximately a page (350 words is the minimum, so you will most likely exceed/go beyond this amount.) for each week’s stories/readings when you use a 12 size font. Of course, you can exceed the one page, but you should always include your name, class name and section, the title of the reading, the date, and word count as your heading at the top. (Note: Hand-written responses will not be accepted, and you must respond to all sets of questions assigned to you or your response will not be accepted. Therefore, do not say: I don’t know the answer, but apply those critical thinking skills when answering the questions.)

### **THE METAMORPHOSIS BY FRANZ KAFKA**

1. First, summarize the plot in three sentences. (a. What happens in the story? b. What’s the conflict? c. How is the conflict resolved or how does it affect everyone in the story?) Second, identify the chief characters, their traits, and the role that they play, and what you think is the central idea or theme of this story. Third, describe at least three interesting facts that you discover about Franz Kafka’s background/life and how it might have influenced his writing? (Note: You may consult the textbook, read the free author bio links/study guides on my website, do your own research at the library, or use the internet to learn something about the author.)
2. Consider Gregor as a person. What was life like for him before his metamorphosis, at home and on the job? In what ways do you think Gregor was like a “bug” even before his metamorphosis? What do you think of Gregor Samsa’s family? How would you describe his father, mother, and sister, and their relationships to Gregor?
3. When Gregor is trying to get out of bed, he considers calling for help but then dismisses the idea. Why? Describe the reaction of Gregor’s parents to their first view of the metamorphosed Gregor. What sort of changes do Gregor and his family endure after Gregor’s transformation? *The Metamorphosis* is an allegorical tale, which means that the events symbolize a more general human condition in modern society. What do you think Gregor’s transformation represents? Please explain your answer.
4. Discuss the conflicting feelings Gregor has about the furniture’s being taken out of his room. Why does he try to save the picture? What might Kafka’s intention be in stressing that it is on this occasion that Grete calls Gregor by his name for the first time since his metamorphosis?
5. Describe the view from Gregor’s window. Contrast it to his living environment inside his home. In what ways do the satisfactions of his life as an insect differ from the satisfactions of his life as a traveling salesman? When Gregor’s father pushes him back into his room at the end of section 1, Kafka calls it “literally a deliverance.” Comment on the possible implications of that description. Describe Grete’s treatment of Gregor in section II. Is Gregor ill? What are Gregor’s hopes for the future? Is there anything wrong with those hopes?
6. For a time, Gregor is ashamed of his condition and tries to hide from everyone. In what way might this be called a step forward for him? When “Gregor’s broken loose,” what does Gregor’s father do? Why? Explain the situation that has developed by the end of section II.
7. How does the charwoman relate to Gregor? Why is she the one who presides over his “funeral”? Compare the role of the lodgers in the family with that of Gregor. Have they supplanted him? Why does Gregor’s father send them away in the morning?
8. Why does Gregor, who previously did not like music, feel so attracted to his sister’s playing? Why change has taken place in his attitude toward himself? What might Kafka mean by “the unknown nourishment he craved”? Does the story end on an optimistic note or pessimistic? Why or why not? Explain.

### **“THE HUNGER ARTIST” BY FRANZ KAFKA**

1. Summarize the plot in three sentences. (a. What happens in the story? b. What’s the conflict? c. How is the conflict resolved or how does it affect everyone in the story?) Also, identify the chief characters, their traits, and the role that they play, and

what you think is the central idea or theme of this story.

2. What's interesting about Kafka using fasting as an art form? What effect does the Impresario (manager) have on the hunger artist's fasting? Explain the attitudes of the hunger artist toward his art, toward "the permanent watchers," toward the impresario, toward his audience. What is the principal motivation of the impresario, and how does it differ from the hunger artist's?
3. What is the hunger artist's relationship to his audiences? Even though his greatest achievements involve a deep inwardness and withdrawal, why does he nevertheless seem to need the audiences? What is the duty of the people who act as the hunger artist's audience? Do they fulfill it or not? What does the contrast between the hunger artist and panther tell us?
4. The hunger artist in this story has been variously interpreted as a symbol for (a) the artist in the modern world—poet, painter, or musician; (b) a religious mystic, priest, or holy man; (c) spirit—i.e., the spiritual element in man. What evidence or details can be found in the story to support one or the other of these readings? Why would Kafka select an expert in fasting rather than someone (say, a singer or a priest) whose profession would make the author's intent clearer?

## **ENG 243 DISCUSSION QUESTIONS ON “A ROSE FOR EMILY” AND “THE USE OF FORCE”**

**Directions:** You will be responding to each assigned reading from the writing by answering the questions and citing passages or specific examples from the reading as supporting evidence. The responses should be typed, double-spaced with one inch margins and be approximately a page (350 words is the minimum, so you will most likely exceed/go beyond this amount.) for each week's stories/readings when you use a 12 size font. Of course, you can exceed the one page, but you should always include your name, class name and section, the title of the reading, the date, and word count as your heading at the top. (Note: Hand-written responses will not be accepted, and you must respond to all sets of questions assigned to you or your response will not be accepted. Therefore, do not say: I don't know the answer, but apply those critical thinking skills when answering the questions.)

### **“A ROSE FOR EMILY” BY WILLIAM FAULKNER**

1. First, summarize the plot in three sentences. (a. What happens in the story? b. What's the conflict? c. How is the conflict resolved or how does it affect everyone in the story?) Second, identify the chief characters, their traits, and the role that they play, and what you think is the central idea or theme of this story. Third, describe at least three interesting facts that you discover about William Faulkner's background/life and how it might have influenced his writing? (Note: You may consult the textbook, read the free author bio links/study guides on my website, do your own research at the library, or use the internet to learn something about the author.)
2. Although “A Rose for Emily” is narrated in the first person, the narrator is not “I” but “we.” The narrator thus represents a communal rather than an individual point of view. How do the narrator and the townsfolk view the young Miss Emily? How does Miss Emily change with time? How does the town? How does the narrator's view of Miss Emily change? How does yours? Find passages that represent more than one view of her, and explain their significance. How does the perception we gain of her through observing her in dialogue and with other characters in action compare with the narrator's view?
3. The way a writer chooses words, arranges them in sentences and longer units of discourse, and exploits their significance determines his or her style. Style is the verbal identity of a writer, and reflecting this individuality, the writers' styles convey their unique way of seeing the world. Faulkner's dense, richly textured prose contrasts with the different styles we will be reading during our fiction section, and if you were to look at the third paragraph as one example or other words and phrases such as “jealousies,” “virulent,” “noblesse oblige,” “valance,” “cuckolded,” “sibilant,” “macabre,” “bier,” and “acrid pall,” what do you think his artfully controlled rhythms and constructions create through balanced phrasing and eloquence? How does it contribute to his tone when he uses repetition of words (ex: “Had loaned money to the town, which the town”) or the heavy reliance on pauses within the first and third sentences of the third paragraph, or finally, how does the play of sound, alliteration and assonance, especially in “dating from that day” and “dispensation dating from the death,” effect your appreciation of language and style as well as understanding of its significance to the story?
4. Part of the effectiveness of “A Rose for Emily” comes from its surprise ending. How effective do you find the ending? Why? What examples of foreshadowing can you cite that hinted at the ending?

### **“THE USE OF FORCE” BY WILLIAM CARLOS WILLIAMS**

1. First, summarize the plot in three sentences. (a. What happens in the story? b. What's the conflict? c. How is the conflict resolved or how does it affect everyone in the story?) Second, identify the chief characters, their traits, and the role that they play, and what you think is the central idea or theme of this story. Third, describe at least three interesting facts that you discover about William Carlos Williams's background/life and how it might have influenced his writing? (Note: You may consult the textbook, read the free author bio links/study guides on my website, do your own research at the library, or use the internet to learn something about the author.)
2. If the parents summoned the doctor to help their daughter, why did they eye him “up and down distrustfully”? What does the doctor mean when he refers to “such cases”? Why does the doctor tell us in the same breath that he had fallen in love with “the savage brat,” while the parents, who are trying to help their daughter, are contemptible to him? Who is responsible for escalating the battle between Mathilda and the doctor? Why does the doctor go “beyond reason” in his vehement attempt to get Mathilda to cooperate?
3. Why aren't the usual reasons for wanting to help a patient and protect others from infection the “operatives” that drive the doctor to use force on Mathilda? What is the “adult shame” that makes him go “on to the end”? Why does the girl fight the

doctor every step of the way? What is she hiding from him? How does the author build tension and escalate the power struggle between them?

4. Who should have the authority to determine when is it justifiable to use force against another to protect someone from his or her "own idiocy"? Who should have the authority to justify the use of force as a case of "social necessity"? How can we reconcile the use of force with the effort to provide help? Who wins at the end? Why?

## **ENG 243 DISCUSSION QUESTIONS ON “BATTLE ROYAL” AND “AUGUST 2026: THERE WILL COME SOFT RAINS”**

**Directions:** You will be responding to each assigned reading from the writing by answering the questions and citing passages or specific examples from the reading as supporting evidence. The responses should be typed, double-spaced with one inch margins and be approximately a page (350 words is the minimum, so you will most likely exceed/go beyond this amount.) for each week’s stories/readings when you use a 12 size font. Of course, you can exceed the one page, but you should always include your name, class name and section, the title of the reading, the date, and word count as your heading at the top. (Note: Hand-written responses will not be accepted, and you must respond to all sets of questions assigned to you or your response will not be accepted. Therefore, do not say: I don’t know the answer, but apply those critical thinking skills when answering the questions.)

### **“BATTLE ROYAL” BY RALPH ELLISON**

1. First, summarize the plot in three sentences. (a. What happens in the story? b. What’s the conflict? c. How is the conflict resolved or how does it affect everyone in the story?) Second, identify the chief characters, their traits, and the role that they play, and what you think is the central idea or theme of this story. Third, describe at least three interesting facts that you discover about Ralph Ellison’s background/life and how it might have influenced his writing? (Note: You may consult the textbook, read the free author bio links/study guides on my website, do your own research at the library, or use the internet to learn something about the author.)
2. What does the narrator mean when he declares at the end of the opening paragraph, “I am an invisible man?” Explain how the events described in the story taught him this painful truth. This story is a powerful, indeed shocking study of racism, but in essays and interviews, Ellison often noted that he intended his stories and his novel *Invisible Man* to illuminate “universal truths” about human experience as well. In your view, does “Battle Royal” achieve this goal? What insights does it offer about the nature of self-knowledge and human identity?
3. What is the significance of the scene involving the naked blonde woman? How is this scene related to the narrator’s discovery that he is invisible? What does the naked blonde woman symbolize? What other symbols can you identify and what do they mean? (i.e. animal and circus imagery)
4. The narrator says of his grandfather’s dying speech, “I could never be sure of what he meant.” What do you think the grandfather meant by calling himself a traitor and a spy in the enemy’s territory? Does he follow his grandfather’s advice to be a traitor? Why or why not? Explain. Also, at the end, he has a dream about his grandfather: What does the dream represent and what does his grandfather’s message in the dream mean for the narrator? Explain.

### **“AUGUST 2026: THERE WILL COME SOFT RAINS” BY RAY BRADBURY**

1. First, summarize the plot in three sentences. (a. What happens in the story? b. What’s the conflict? c. How is the conflict resolved or how does it affect everyone in the story?) Second, identify the chief characters, their traits, and the role that they play, and what you think is the central idea or theme of this story. Third, describe at least three interesting facts that you discover about Ray Bradbury’s background/life and how it might have influenced his writing? (Note: You may consult the textbook, read the free author bio links/study guides on my website, do your own research at the library, or use the internet to learn something about the author.)
2. What seems to have happened in Allendale, California, before this story takes place? What has happened to the human beings? Support your answer with evidence from the text. Describe four ways in which the house is programmed for automated functions. What can you infer about the family based on the way their house is programmed? How does Bradbury use this story to question society’s reliance on technology?
3. What poem does the voice in the house read? Summarize the poem. What is different about the poem and what is happening in Bradbury’s story? Choose an image or scene that was particularly interesting to you. Why did this scene catch your attention? How did this scene show humanity’s complete dependence on technology and how cold, robotic, and/or lacking in humanity is the house?
4. It is often interesting to think about what the future holds. For instance, consider that Bradbury wrote this short story in 1951. The year he chose for this futuristic society was 2026, which is only years away. Now, consider what life would be

like at that time. What would a typical day be like in your life in 2026? For example, what kind of gadgets would be available for preparing breakfast and what kinds of transportation would take you to school or work? What would school look like? What would your clothing look like? What kinds of gadgets would you carry with you all the time? What would your room look like? Then, consider what the possible negatives could be of the new technologies you are suggesting.

**ENG 243 DISCUSSION QUESTIONS ON  
“A VERY OLD MAN WITH ENORMOUS WINGS”  
AND “A GOOD MAN IS HARD TO FIND”**

**Directions:** You will be responding to each assigned reading from the writing by answering the questions and citing passages or specific examples from the reading as supporting evidence. The responses should be typed, double-spaced with one inch margins and be approximately a page (350 words is the minimum, so you will most likely exceed/go beyond this amount.) for each week's stories/readings when you use a 12 size font. Of course, you can exceed the one page, but you should always include your name, class name and section, the title of the reading, the date, and word count as your heading at the top. (Note: Hand-written responses will not be accepted, and you must respond to all sets of questions assigned to you or your response will not be accepted. Therefore, do not say: I don't know the answer, but apply those critical thinking skills when answering the questions.)

**“A VERY OLD MAN WITH ENORMOUS WINGS” BY GABRIEL GARCIA MARQUEZ**

1. First, summarize the plot in three sentences. (a. What happens in the story? b. What's the conflict? c. How is the conflict resolved or how does it affect everyone in the story?) Second, identify the chief characters, their traits, and the role that they play, and what you think is the central idea or theme of this story. Third, describe at least three interesting facts that you discover about Gabriel Garcia Marquez's background/life and how it might have influenced his writing? (Note: You may consult the textbook, read the free author bio links/study guides on my website, do your own research at the library, or use the internet to learn something about the author.)
2. How do the various characters respond to the events of the story? What does their response suggest about human nature and about organized society? Who is the story's narrator and what role or function does he or she serve? What elements of irony and humor does the story contain? What is their purpose? How can the story best be read and understood? as an allegory? as a folk tale or parable? symbolically? as fantasy? Does the story contain an identifiable theme?
3. What do Elisenda and Pelaya decide that the old man is? What does the neighbor woman think he is? What did the neighbor woman think about angels? List the characters in the story. Write one to two sentences on the defining characteristics of each one, providing at least one citation to illustrate your comments. What does Elisenda decide to do with the old man initially? What did they do to the old man when they thought he might be dead? What did Pelayo and Elisenda do with their new money as a result of the Old Man?
4. Why do you think the story is called "A Very Old Man with Enormous Wings" rather than "An Angel"? Provide at least three citations to illustrate your argument. Be sure that your citations illustrate your argument: do not simply quote details that can be summarized. Use your textual evidence to make your argument. How does the priest respond to the man with wings? What do you think his response symbolizes? Why does Father Gonzaga speak to the man in Latin? What does Father Gonzaga think after learning the man doesn't speak Latin? Provide at least two citations to illustrate your argument. Be sure that your citations illustrate your argument: do not simply quote details that can be summarized. Use your textual evidence to make your argument.
5. What are 3 miracles the old man performed incorrectly according to the people of the town? What are two superstitions that Father Gonzaga and the people test to see if the old man is an angel? How do the villagers respond to the spider girl – the new carnival attraction that takes away from the old man? Why are people more drawn to this new “attraction”? What do you think their response symbolizes -- how does it relate to the rest of the story? Provide at least two citations to illustrate your argument.
6. When reading "A Very Old Man with Enormous Wings," think about what Garcia Marquez is saying about how people would react to the (second?) coming. Would people know that it happened, or would they pass it off as nothing? How do the people in the story react when the angel doesn't behave the way they would think an angel would behave? Explain the lesson the angel's visit teaches about human nature.

**“A GOOD MAN IS HARD TO FIND” BY FLANNERY O'CONNOR**

1. First, summarize the plot in three sentences. (a. What happens in the story? b. What's the conflict? c. How is the conflict resolved or how does it affect everyone in the story?) Second, identify the chief characters, their traits, and the role that

they play, and what you think is the central idea or theme of this story. Third, describe at least three interesting facts that you discover about Flannery O'Connor's background/life and how it might have influenced his writing? (Note: You may consult the textbook, read the free author bio links/study guides on my website, do your own research at the library, or use the internet to learn something about the author.)

2. The grandmother thinks of herself as a lady, and a good Christian woman. Is she? How does the grandmother get the family into trouble? Is the Misfit polite? Is he evil? Why does he do the things he does? (Note: Pay close attention to the last paragraph of the introduction to this story; how would those ideas apply to the Misfit and the grandmother?) What conflicting values or concepts become apparent in the contrast between the Misfit and the grandmother?
3. What are the grandmother's main characteristics? What do you think the author is pointing out in her characterization? Why do we see much of the action through her eyes? What might the grandmother represent?
4. Is there any foreshadowing of the ending? Look closely at paragraph 136: Can you explain why the Misfit was suddenly so afraid of the grandmother that he had to shoot her? That is, are there any hints earlier in the story about what might happen to them at the end? How is the line in paragraph 140, ironic? What other aspects of the story are ironic?
5. What values and attitudes does the Misfit have? How does he justify his actions? What is the purpose of the reference to Jesus? What part does religion play in the story's main theme? What is the Misfit's attitude toward religion? The grandmother's? What is the role of the Misfit's companions?
6. What is the tone of this story? How does the dialogue contribute to the overall tone? What sort of symbolism is used? Is it possible to determine exactly what the author intends? What is the significance of the Misfit's last statement, "It's no pleasure in life"? How does this relate to the theme?

## **ENG 243 DISCUSSION QUESTIONS ON “SONNY’S BLUES” AND “HARRISON BERGERON”**

**Directions:** You will be responding to each assigned reading from the writing by answering the questions and citing passages or specific examples from the reading as supporting evidence. The responses should be typed, double-spaced with one inch margins and be approximately a page (350 words is the minimum, so you will most likely exceed/go beyond this amount.) for each week’s stories/readings when you use a 12 size font. Of course, you can exceed the one page, but you should always include your name, class name and section, the title of the reading, the date, and word count as your heading at the top. (Note: Hand-written responses will not be accepted, and you must respond to all sets of questions assigned to you or your response will not be accepted. Therefore, do not say: I don’t know the answer, but apply those critical thinking skills when answering the questions.)

### **“SONNY’S BLUES” BY JAMES BALDWIN**

1. First, summarize the plot in three sentences. (a. What happens in the story? b. What’s the conflict? c. How is the conflict resolved or how does it affect everyone in the story?) Second, identify the chief characters, their traits, and the role that they play, and what you think is the central idea or theme of this story. Third, describe at least three interesting facts that you discover about James Baldwin’s background/life and how it might have influenced his writing? (Note: You may consult the textbook, read the free author bio links/study guides on my website, do your own research at the library, or use the internet to learn something about the author.)
2. Who is the main character in "Sonny's Blues," Sonny or the narrator? Or are they equally important? What are the differences in their points of view? How would the style of narration be different if Sonny told the story? How do the challenges that the two face complement each other? When Sonny insists that "people ought to do what they want to do" and the narrator says that isn't always possible, what contrast between the brothers is revealed? Does the story suggest that one is more right than the other?
3. The narrator describes his shock at his brother's arrest as "a great block of ice" that settled in his belly and "kept melting there slowly all day long." Does the process of melting apply to the narrator's transformation through the story? What other images of water appear? What is the function of the imagery of fire and water in the last scene?
4. What do the references to different types of music mean throughout the story? How do they prepare us for the final scene? What does the word "blues" mean in the title? How does his meeting with Sonny's old school friend affect the narrator? What issues does it raise that are developed later in the story? However, in his letter early in the story, Sonny mentions the death of the narrator's daughter Gracie, but we do not learn the details until much later. What is the function of this episode? What is the purpose of Mama's telling of the death of "Daddy's brother"?
5. How is the mother's relationship with her husband like the narrator's with Sonny? How does the story trace the narrator's growing understanding of his mother's warning that he "may not be able to stop nothing from happening" to Sonny despite his intentions to watch over Sonny? What other ways of coping with pain are illustrated in this story besides Sonny's use of heroin? What do you think of Sonny's explanation for drug use?
6. Isobel's family tolerates Sonny only because he is the narrator's brother, but in the jazz club, the narrator is welcome only because he is Sonny's brother. How do they each react to these situations? Does the narrator want to "belong" in the club? The bass player Creole has an important role in the final scene, as almost a spiritual teacher. How is he a foil or contrast to the narrator? What is the connection between biblical allusion to the "cup of trembling" in the last line and the glass of Scotch and milk?

### **“HARRISON BERGERON” BY KURT VONNEGUT**

1. First, summarize the plot in three sentences. (a. What happens in the story? b. What’s the conflict? c. How is the conflict resolved or how does it affect everyone in the story?) Second, identify the chief characters, their traits, and the role that they play, and what you think is the central idea or theme of this story. Third, describe at least three interesting facts that you discover about Kurt Vonnegut’s background/life and how it might have influenced his writing? (Note: You may consult the textbook, read the free author bio links/study guides on my website, do your own research at the library, or use the internet to learn something about the author.)

2. What has guaranteed equality in the story? How old is Harrison? What has happened to Harrison and why? How has the government made George and Hazel equal? What does George have to wear? And what does this do? What does Hazel say she would do if she were Handicap General? What is the name of the Handicap General?
3. What is the consequence for lessening the weight of the handicap bag? What reason does George give for not trying to cheat? Because of this reason, what can we infer about George's opinion of the current laws? Why wasn't the news bulletin clear at first to the George and Hazel and other viewers?
4. Why did the ballerina apologize about her voice? What is the news bulletin? Describe Harrison Bergeron with all of his handicaps? What does Harrison declare on television? What happens to Harrison? Be specific.
5. What is the author satirizing in this story? What ideas or programs in American society do you think Vonnegut might be ridiculing in "Harrison Bergeron"? In traditional stories, the hero is a superhuman figure, who "saves" people from an enemy. In what passages is Harrison superhuman? How are the results of Harrison's efforts ironic?
6. Have you ever been in a situation when you felt the same way as any of the characters in the story? Are there any events from your personal life or from current events that have affected the way you feel about this story? What do you think of the approach this society has taken to achieving equality, bringing everyone down to the same low level instead of helping to build everyone up to higher levels (of intelligence, strength, grace, beauty, etc.)? Is it wrong or right? Why?

## **ENG 243 DISCUSSION QUESTIONS ON “THE MAN WHO WAS ALMOST A MAN” AND “THE LESSON”**

**Directions:** You will be responding to each assigned reading from the writing by answering the questions and citing passages or specific examples from the reading as supporting evidence. The responses should be typed, double-spaced with one inch margins and be approximately a page (350 words is the minimum, so you will most likely exceed/go beyond this amount.) for each week's stories/readings when you use a 12 size font. Of course, you can exceed the one page, but you should always include your name, class name and section, the title of the reading, the date, and word count as your heading at the top. (Note: Hand-written responses will not be accepted, and you must respond to all sets of questions assigned to you or your response will not be accepted. Therefore, do not say: I don't know the answer, but apply those critical thinking skills when answering the questions.)

### **“THE MAN WHO WAS ALMOST A MAN” BY RICHARD WRIGHT**

1. First, summarize the plot in three sentences. (a. What happens in the story? b. What's the conflict? c. How is the conflict resolved or how does it affect everyone in the story?) Second, identify the chief characters, their traits, and the role that they play, and what you think is the central idea or theme of this story. Third, describe at least three interesting facts that you discover about Richard Wright's background/life and how it might have influenced his writing? (Note: You may consult the textbook, read the free author bio links/study guides on my website, do your own research at the library, or use the internet to learn something about the author.)
2. Why does Dave think he's almost a man? Are his actions those of an adult? Why does he think a gun will make him a man? Explain your answers. Considering the adults' actions in the story, would you consider them respectable role models? Why/Why not?
3. Despite Dave's father not having a gun, should his mother have given Dave the money to purchase one? Should Joe have sold the gun to Dave? Explain your answers.
4. When Dave lies about buying the gun, what recourse does his mother have? Why do you think his father was left out of the decision-making process?
5. What should Dave's immediate reaction have been to shooting the mule? Why is he more concerned for himself than the mule? What do his actions prove? Does the punishment rendered fit the crime? Why/Why not?
6. Do you think Dave's running away is a manly act? Do you think he will be considered a man wherever he ends up? Explain your answers. What adult response to the shooting may have ended in a happier resolution to the story?

### **“THE LESSON” BY TONI CADE BAMBARA**

1. First, summarize the plot in three sentences. (a. What happens in the story? b. What's the conflict? c. How is the conflict resolved or how does it affect everyone in the story?) Second, identify the chief characters, their traits, and the role that they play, and what you think is the central idea or theme of this story. Third, describe at least three interesting facts that you discover about Toni Cade Bambara's background/life and how it might have influenced his writing? (Note: You may consult the textbook, read the free author bio links/study guides on my website, do your own research at the library, or use the internet to learn something about the author.)
2. How does "The Lesson" examine the realization of economic inequity in 1960s America through the eyes of a young girl named Sylvia? What can you draw from your knowledge of the Civil Rights Movement of the 1950s and 1960s and the segregation that was going on at the time in helping you understand the central idea of this story?
3. The story takes place in New York City while the children live in an African-American neighborhood, most likely Harlem and the store that they visit is on Fifth Avenue in midtown, which is a much more expensive part of New York. What does Bambara highlight between the children's neighborhood/living conditions and the setting of the store on Fifth Avenue in order to show the economic inequity?

4. What is the lesson that Miss Moore wants to teach the children on their field trip? What sorts of questions does she ask the children? How do they respond to her? How much do the toys cost? The cab ride, etc.? What are they forced to realize about the world and does she make a difference in educating them?
5. What sort of woman is Miss Moore? Why does she take on the responsibility to educate the children? Why doesn't Sylvia like her? What impression do you have about Sylvia, Mercedes, Q.T., Sugar, Big Butt, Flyboy, and Junebug and their role in the group? For instance, how is Sylvia a born leader? What about the others and their role?
6. What is the policy of resistance against racism inherent in American society that Bambara was advocating through Miss Moore's encouragement of the children to question the world around them? When considering the theme of poverty vs. wealth, do the children understand the value of money by the end of the story?

## **ENG 243 DISCUSSION QUESTIONS ON “CATHEDRAL”**

**Directions:** You will be responding to each assigned reading from the writing by answering the questions and citing passages or specific examples from the reading as supporting evidence. The responses should be typed, double-spaced with one inch margins and be approximately a page (350 words is the minimum, so you will most likely exceed/go beyond this amount.) for each week’s stories/readings when you use a 12 size font. Of course, you can exceed the one page, but you should always include your name, class name and section, the title of the reading, the date, and word count as your heading at the top. (Note: Hand-written responses will not be accepted, and you must respond to all sets of questions assigned to you or your response will not be accepted. Therefore, do not say: I don’t know the answer, but apply those critical thinking skills when answering the questions.)

### **“CATHEDRAL” BY RAYMOND CARVER**

1. First, summarize the plot in three sentences. (a. What happens in the story? b. What’s the conflict? c. How is the conflict resolved or how does it affect everyone in the story?) Second, identify the chief characters, their traits, and the role that they play, and what you think is the central idea or theme of this story. Third, describe at least three interesting facts that you discover about Raymond Carver’s background/life and how it might have influenced his writing? (Note: You may consult the textbook, read the free author bio links/study guides on my website, do your own research at the library, or use the internet to learn something about the author.)
2. Is the narrator a sympathetic protagonist? Does our opinion of him change as the story progresses? Does the narrator develop, change, or grow over the course of the evening? What are the primary emotions displayed by the narrator throughout, and how can we understand them in terms of the life he leads? What are some adjectives you would use to characterize him? What role does alcohol play in his life?
3. What is the narrator’s attitude toward his wife? Describe the narrator’s marriage. What kind of marriage do they have, and what evidence do you find to support your conclusion? Is the narrator’s jealousy of Robert irrational? What is it about Robert that unsettles the narrator? What does Robert do to put the narrator at ease?
4. How does Robert shatter the narrator’s preconceived notions of blind people? How does his appearance and bearing resist every stereotypical image the narrator has about blind people, and why is this so upsetting? What does the narrator learn from his encounter with Robert? Is the ending convincing? Do you believe that there will be a significant change in his outlook from this point on?
5. Contrast the author’s tone and the narrator’s mood at the opening of the story with the tone and mood at the end. How does the change in style reflect the change that has occurred in the narrator? How or why is the cathedral an important image or symbol in the story? What is the significance of Carver’s choice of a cathedral as catalyst for the narrator’s learning experience? What added dimension does this symbol bring to our understanding of the story? Can you tie it to any previous detail?
6. What is important about the two flashbacks (the ones about the narrator's wife's past and Robert's past)? In what ways is this story about communication and connectedness? (Think about the poems, the tapes, the ham radio, etc.) For Carver, salvation lies in human contact and connection, so what does Robert “see” over the course of the evening? And what is learned?