

CSN ENG 231: WORLD LITERATURE I
JOURNAL RESPONSE ON DISCUSSION QUESTIONS
INSTRUCTOR: Y. BAILEY-KIRBY

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 journals 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 this amount.) for each story, play, or set of poetry readings for one class session 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 poetry or play, 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 or your journal will not be accepted. Therefore, do not say: I don't know, but apply those critical thinking skills.)

The Epic of Gilgamesh

EVERY GROUP ANSWERS #1:

1. If you had to summarize each section of *The Epic of Gilgamesh*, what are three to five main points/events in each section and who is involved and where do they go?

Group A:

2. What traits/characteristics can you identify about Gilgamesh (2/3 god/ 1/3 man) in juxtaposition to the traits/ characteristics of Enkidu (wild animal man)? Compare the characters of Gilgamesh and Enkidu. Who was more heroic? Why?
3. Then, briefly describe each of the female characters and what their role is? Can you get any general ideas about the roles of women in ancient Sumeria from this story?
4. Enkidu was part animal and part man. How does the harlot transform Enkidu into a human being by first seducing him and then luring him to civilization? Cite specific examples. As he is dying, Enkidu curses the harlot and then revokes his curse and blesses her. Do you think he was better off in his natural, animal state, or as a civilized man? Cite evidence from the story to support your opinion.

Group B:

5. There are a number of dreams in *The Epic of Gilgamesh*. List them and then explain what role they play in the story. Be sure to look at the way Gilgamesh's mother interprets his dreams. How is this different from the way people interpret dreams now?
6. Underworlds are generally places of the dead, and/or of underground divinities. These places are dangerous and difficult for living persons to enter and hard to leave. Why does Gilgamesh go to the underworld, and what does he learn there? Use specific examples to support your main points.
7. Both Gilgamesh and Enkidu slay Humbaba and the Bull of Heaven, yet the gods decide that Enkidu is the one who must die. Why? Support your argument with specific examples (What's the difference between the gods and humans?) Discuss the role of monstrous creatures in Gilgamesh.

Group C:

8. When Enkidu dies, Gilgamesh nearly goes mad with grief. He sits by the body until it begins to decay and puts on the skins of animals, and then, he searches the wilderness and the underworld for the secret of immortality. Do you think this is because of his love for Enkidu and his desire to bring him back or do you think this is because Gilgamesh has finally recognized his own mortality and is terrified? Provide specific support from the story.
9. Review Utnapishtim's story of the flood. What does Gilgamesh learn from this story about the nature of human beings and of the gods? Do you think there is a sense of divine justice for human beings here or not?
10. Although Gilgamesh wants to live forever, he cannot even stay awake for seven days, as Utnapishtim proves by having his wife bake seven loaves of bread while Gilgamesh sleeps. What is the point of this episode? What does Utnapishtim teach Gilgamesh about immortality? Would anyone really want this kind of immortality? Why or why not? What does Gilgamesh learn about a special kind of plant and does he ever get it? What happens to Gilgamesh at the end?

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Hebrew Scriptures

Genesis 1-9, 11, 12, and 21:1-21 & 22: 1-18:

1. What did God create on each day? What is the significance of the order and what does it reveal about God/his plan? How would you describe the setting of the Garden of Eden and what warning/rules and gifts does God give Adam and Eve? What does the snake tempt Adam and Eve with? Why is God angry with them and how does he punish the snake, Adam and Eve?
2. What was wrong with Cain's offering and why did God respect Abel's offering? What was expected of the brothers? Why does Cain kill Abel? How is Cain punished and condemned? Is there a reconciliation or forgiveness? Why or why not?
3. Is the story of Noah and the Flood similar to Utnapishtim's story of the flood in *The Epic of Gilgamesh*? Why or Why not? What warning does Noah receive from God and what steps does he take to obey him and prove his worthiness/faithfulness? What or who does he bring on the ark? What rewards and punishments does God give in the story of Noah? What is the significance of the dove and God's promise or agreement with Noah after the flood?
4. How do the humans disappoint God in "The Tower of Babel" (Genesis 11) and how does he punish them? Is God portrayed as fair/just or simply angry? How is this story used to explain the many languages across the world?
5. How is Abraham tested by God and how does he prove his worthiness/faithfulness? What sort of character can you determine that God is after reading the Genesis stories? What characters does he seem to reward vs. punish? What are 3-5 significant themes that seem to appear throughout Genesis?

Book of Job:

1. How was Job considered before God and what had God blessed Job with? What did Satan/God strike Job with? What was this suffering supposed to prove or demonstrate?
2. What does Eliphaz tell Job about God's justice? What vision did Eliphaz say he received and what was revealed to him? Hence, what does Eliphaz hint is the cause of Job's troubles and what should Job be doing now?
3. How heavy is Job's grief and how does he compare his suffering? What did Job wish from God and what did Job feel that his friends should show before him?
4. What does Job ask God concerning his transgression? What types of characters do Job, God, and Satan seem to be?
5. Read the Epilogue. What does God reward Job with? Is God fair and just? Why or why not? What seems to be the central themes in Job?

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The Odyssey by Homer

EVERY GROUP MUST ANSWER #1:

1. Summarize the plot in three sentences minimum by answering a, b, and c. (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?) Discuss the similarities between the journey of Odysseus and events that have occurred in your own life. Think about the different choices Odysseus is required to make during his journey. 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 when considering journey/quest, justice, revenge, etc. What are the gender roles of the characters? Looking at Circe, Calypso, Nausikaa, Penelope, what are the different roles women seem to play in Greek society? What are the roles of men, especially if we are to look at the sympathetic characters of Odysseus and Telemachus?

Group A:

2. **BOOK ONE:** What do you think is the symbolic meaning of the Greek gods and goddesses? Are they meant to be taken literally? If not, what is it that they represent? Think carefully about the speech of Zeus (lines 48-62). What does it suggest about human behavior and the tragic fate of human individuals? Where is Odysseus at this point in the adventure? What is the relevance of Zeus' speech to Odysseus' plight? Pay attention to the apparition of Athena to Telemakhos (lines 142-149). What are the implications of the use of words like "daydreaming" and "dreamed"? Does Athena appear to Telemakhos as a goddess or does she use a disguise? What does this imply? What is the problem at Odysseus' house that Athena is trying to solve by advising Telemakhos? What is the implication of the description of the suitors as a "wolf pack"? (line 117).
3. **BOOK TWO:** Pay very close attention to the description of the omen of the two eagles that appear to Telemakhos and the assembled Ithakans (lines 155-186). Is the interpretation furnished by the prophet Halitherses the correct one? Why? What exactly do the eagles mean?
4. **BOOK THREE:** Try to determine what it is exactly that Telemakhos learns from the wisdom of Nestor. How does Nestor feel about the Trojan War? (lines 111-125). Pay attention to the disagreements that arose among the victorious Greeks after the fall of Troy (lines 152- 197).
5. **BOOK FOUR:** What does Telemakhos learn from Menelaos? Is it a similar lesson as that learned from Nestor? How does Menelaos feel about the Trojan War? (lines 75-123) Pay close attention to Menelaos' account of his encounter with the god Proteus, "the ancient of the sea" (lines 377-514). What is the symbolic meaning of the use of the seal disguises? What is the meaning of Proteus' ability to change shapes? Do Menelaos and his men in some sense also change shapes by using a disguise? What is the meaning of all these transformations.

Group B:

6. **BOOK FIVE:** Is Odysseus trapped in Kalypso's island against his will? What does Kalypso offer to Odysseus in order to keep him in her island? What is the alternative? Think about the rescue of Odysseus by Ino (Leukothea) after leaving Ogygia Island. Is there symbolic meaning to the use of her veil? Pay very close attention to the description of the shelter that Odysseus finds in Skheria Island under a pair of olive trees. Are those trees symbolic entities?

7. **BOOK SIX:** Think of Odysseus' choice of behavior at the moment when he meets princess Nausicaa. What are his alternatives? How does he act? What does he look like? Does his appearance change during the encounter? Why?
8. **BOOK SEVEN:** What is the significance of the transfiguration of Athena into a small girl who guides Odysseus to Alkinoos' palace? What about the fog that surrounds Odysseus as he walks through the city? Pay attention to Odysseus' behavior in this episode. Is he proud? humble? How does he act toward the Queen Arete? (the name "Arete" can mean "virtue" in Greek). What do you make of Alkinoos' offer to give Odysseus the princess Nausikaa as his bride?
9. **BOOK EIGHT:** Why is the figure of the poet/singer Demodokos important? What or who does he represent? Think about the tears of Odysseus upon hearing the songs of Demodokos. What does the poet sing about? Why does Odysseus cover his tears? Consider very carefully the response of Odysseus to the challenge at the athletic games (lines 161-165). What is the wisdom implicit in this speech? Does Odysseus' subsequent throwing of discus contradict this wisdom? Consider the speech of Odysseus in response to Seareach's insults (lines 175-186). What is the significance of Demodokos' song about the love affair of Ares and Aphrodite? How do the gods react to the revelation of the adultery? Why? Think about Poseidon's reaction to the event. Is it different from the other gods'? How does Odysseus behave toward Demodokos? Why?

Group C:

10. **BOOK NINE:** What is the significance of Odysseus' role as the teller of his own story? What do you think of Odysseus and his men's behavior in the raid of Ismarus (the Kikones episode)? What is the meaning of the Lotos Eaters adventure? Pay special attention to all the details of the Kyklops episode? What does the cannibalistic monster symbolize? Why does he have only one eye? Why does Odysseus call himself "Nohbdy"? Think about the use of the sheep to escape from the monster's cave? What does it symbolize? Why does Odysseus reveal his name to the Kyklops? Is it wise to do so?
11. **BOOK TEN:** What is the meaning of the bag of winds in the Aiolos adventure? Is the adventure with the Laistrygones in some sense similar to that with the Kyklops? Why? Is Kirke successful in turning Odysseus into a pig? (think twice). Why must Odysseus go to the Underworld (Hades) after his stay in Kirke's island? What is the significance of the death of Elpenor?
12. **BOOK ELEVEN:** Pay close attention to the encounters of Odysseus with his mother Antikleia, with the prophet Teiresias, and with Agamemnon and Akhilleus in the Underworld. In particular, what is the lesson that Teiresias teaches Odysseus concerning the problem of avoiding death and safely returning home? (lines 112-127). What does Odysseus learn from Akhilleus and from Agamemnon?
13. **BOOK TWELVE:** Pay attention to Kirke's warnings to Odysseus after he returns from the Underworld (read with particular attention lines 136-142). What do the Seirenes sing about? Why are they so dangerous? What is the meaning of the dangers posed by Skylla and Kharybdis? What do the monsters symbolize? Why must the Greek adventurers refrain from raiding the cows of Helios? Why is Odysseus the only survivor? What saves him?

Group D:

14. **BOOK THIRTEEN:** Pay very close attention to the speech of Poseidon complaining about the success of Odysseus in Phaeacia (lines 165-170). What is the meaning of the transformation of the Phaeacian ship into stone? What is the meaning of Odysseus' meeting with Athena upon his arrival to Ithaka? What does she advise?
15. **BOOK FOURTEEN:** Why must Odysseus go first to the forest and to the swineherd's hut rather than to his own palace? Why does Odysseus conceal his identity? Is there symbolic significance to this situation? Are the false stories Odysseus tells in Ithaka somewhat revealing about the reality of his own life?
16. **BOOK FIFTEEN:** Notice the close proximity of Odysseus and Telemakhos' return home. Can the perils and lessons of Telemakhos' journey be somehow compared to those of Odysseus' travels? What is the significance of the help that Telemakhos gives to the fugitive prophet Theoklymenos?
17. **BOOK SIXTEEN:** What do you think about the fact that Odysseus reveals his identity to his son? What of their plot to kill the suitors? Is it justified? Does it accord well with the principles of justice set forth in the *Odyssey*? What do you think of Athena's eagerness to see the suitors killed? Is that proper in a divinity? Is Athena, the goddess of wisdom, wise?

Group E:

18. **BOOK SEVENTEEN:** Why does Odysseus wish to go to his own palace disguised as a beggar? What does the beggar disguise symbolize? Why is it important for him to show patience and self-restraint, even when hit and insulted? What is the meaning of the death of Argos, Odysseus' old hunting dog? Consider the advice of Athena to Odysseus (lines 470-473). Is that a consistent statement? Does it reveal an internal contradiction?
19. **BOOK EIGHTEEN:** What is the symbolic meaning of Odysseus' confrontation with the beggar Iros? Why does Odysseus warn Amphinomos about the danger of his return and vengeance (lines 157-187)?
20. **BOOK NINETEEN:** Why does Odysseus withhold his identity from Penelope? Does he trust her? Pay extremely close attention to the scenes when Eurykleia recognizes Odysseus? What gives him away? Follow very closely the story of Odysseus' baptism by his grandfather Autolycus and of the boar hunt on the slopes of Mount Parnassus. What is the symbolic significance of these events in reference to the determination and shaping of Odysseus' character while he was still a very young boy? Compare the passages describing the boar's hideout (lines 511-520) to those describing the shelter of Odysseus when he first arrives to Phaeacia (Book 5, lines 500-510). What are the implications of the similarities? Who decides to set up the contest of the bow to find a new husband for Penelope? What does that decision imply about her fidelity to Odysseus?
21. **BOOK TWENTY:** Notice the self-restraint of Odysseus. What is the meaning of his conversation with Athena? Pay attention to the visions and prophecies of Theoklymenos.

Group F:

22. **BOOK TWENTY-ONE:** What does the contest of the bow symbolize? Why can't the suitors string the bow? Can Telemakhos string it? Pay extreme attention to the scenes when Odysseus strings his bow. Why is the bow compared to a harp or lyre (lines 460-469, p. 374)?
23. **BOOK TWENTY-TWO:** What do you think of Odysseus' killing of the suitors? Is it justified? What do you think of his killing of those who embraced his knees and begged for mercy? What is the significance of his slaying of the prophet Leodes? Notice the description of the victorious Odysseus as "spattered and caked with blood like a mountain lion" (line 453). Compare this description to that referring to the Kyklops (Book 9, line 317). What are the implications of this similarity? What do you think of Telemakhos' hanging of the maids and his mutilation of the goatherd Melanthios? Do you see some similarities of character and behavior not only between Odysseus and the Kyklops but also between Odysseus and Telemakhos?
24. **BOOK TWENTY-THREE:** How does Penelope finally recognize Odysseus? What is the symbolic meaning of the connection between the olive tree and the marriage bed? Given the reunion of Odysseus and Penelope, can the *Odyssey* be regarded as a comedy? Why? Why not?
25. **BOOK TWENTY-FOUR:** How does Laertes, Odysseus' father, recognize Odysseus? What is the symbolic significance of the fruit trees? Is the anger of the suitors' relatives justified? How does Odysseus propose to deal with this problem? Is the ending of the *Odyssey* through Athena's intervention a convincing and meaningful way of putting an end to the struggle between the Ithakans? Is it realistic to believe that the suitors' relatives simply dropped their weapons and went back home? What is the problem with this ending? Is it possible to suppose that Homer meant his readers to realize that the true ending of the *Odyssey* is something falling outside the scope of the poem and which the reader himself needs to envision on the basis of the events of the poem? In that case, do you think the *Odyssey* is a tragedy or a comedy?

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***Antigone* by Sophocles**

1. Summarize the plot in three sentences minimum by answering a, b, and c. (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 is Creon's order for Polyneices and Eteocles? Why? Then, why does Antigone bury her brother? How does Sophocles characterize Creon and Antigone? Consider their speeches, actions, and gestures.
3. Describe the central problem of the play. Whose rights should assume priority—Creon's to legislate and punish, or Antigone's to bury her brother? Is there any way to resolve the competing claims of Creon and Antigone?
4. What is Haimon's role in the play? What does Haimon's dialogue with his father reveal about the two characters?
5. What do Ismene and Euridyce contribute to the play? How would Antigone differ if either or both were absent?
6. Describe the structure of the play. How is its plot constructed and developed? Explain the focus of each scene. What is the purpose of the poetic odes that punctuate the dramatic action of the play?
7. What is the chorus's role? Single out two important comments made by the chorus and explain their significance.
8. Compare Antigone's tragedy with Creon's suffering. Which character do you sympathize with the most? Why?
9. Compare Creon's actions at the beginning and end of the play. How does he change?
10. What is Creon's tragic flaw? What is Antigone's? What would you say is an important theme in this tragedy?

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The Bhagavad-Gita

Group A:

1. **CHAPTER ONE: Q1.** Why does Arjuna decide not to fight in the Battle of Kuruksetra? (HINT: 1.21-46)
2. **CHAPTER TWO: Q1.** What does Krsna mean when He tells Arjuna, "While speaking learned words you are mourning for what is not worthy of grief"? (HINT: 2.11)
Q2. What is the nature of the soul as distinct from the body? (HINT: 2.11-30)
Q3. What is transmigration (reincarnation)? (HINT: 2.13, 22)
Q4. How does Krsna describe the person in "transcendental consciousness"? (HINT: 2.54-72)
3. **CHAPTER THREE: Q1.** Can one achieve freedom from karmic reactions by abstaining from activity? (HINT: 3.4-8)
Q2. What is karma-yoga? (HINT: 3.1-3, 9-35)
Q3. What does Krsna call "the destroyer of knowledge and self-realization"? (HINT: 3.36-43)

Group B:

4. **CHAPTER FOUR: Q1.** What is the nature and purpose of Krsna's descending to the material world ? (HINT: 4.4-9)
Q2. How does transcendental knowledge free one from karmic reactions? (HINT: 4.18-24, 36-42)
Q3. Why and how does one approach a spiritual master? What is the criterion of a genuine guru? (HINT: 4.34)
5. **CHAPTER FIVE: Q1.** What are the characteristics of the devotional worker (karma-yogi)? What are his realization, his mode of activity and his ultimate destination? (HINT: 5.7-17)
Q2. What are the characteristics of the self-realized person (the "humble sage," "liberated person," "perfect mystic," Brahman-realized or Krsna conscious person)? (HINT: 5.18-28)
Q3. The self-realized person, Krsna tells Arjuna, is "always busy working for the welfare of all sentient beings." What is the nature of such welfare activity? (HINT: 5.25)
6. **CHAPTER SIX: Q1.** In yoga practice, what is the purpose of controlling the mind? (HINT: 6.5-7, 26, 36)
Q2. What is dhyana-yoga? How is it performed? (HINT: 6.10-19, 31)
Q3. Why does Arjuna reject the meditational system described by Krsna? (HINT: 6.33-36)
Q4. Which yoga system does Krsna recommend to Arjuna as the foremost, at the conclusion of the chapter? Why? (HINT: 6.47)

Group C:

7. **CHAPTER SEVEN: Q1.** What are Krsna's two basic energies, and what is their interrelationship? What is Krsna's relationship with these two energies? (HINT: 7.4-7)
Q2. What are the four kinds of "miscreants" who don't surrender to Krsna and the four kinds of pious men who do? (HINT: 7.15-18)
Q3. Why does Krsna criticize the worshipers of demigods? (HINT: 7.20-23)
8. **CHAPTER EIGHT: Q1.** What is the significance of the time of death for the embodied jiva? (HINT: 8.6)
Q2. What advice does Krsna give Arjuna regarding the time of death? What will be the result of following that advice? (HINT: 8.5, 7-8)
Q3. According to Krsna, how should Arjuna meditate on Him? (HINT: 8.9)
Q4. What is the nature of the spiritual world, and how is it attained? (HINT: 8.17-22)

9. **CHAPTER NINE: Q1.** How does Krsna describe His relationship with His creation (the cosmic universe)? (HINT: 9.4-10)
Q2. Who are "the foolish," and who are "the great souls"? (HINT: 9.11-14)
Q3. How does Krsna advise Arjuna to become free from karmic reaction? (HINT: 9.26-29)

Group D:

10. **CHAPTER TEN: Q1.** Whom does Krsna enlighten? (HINT: 10.8-11)
Q2. What is the lesson Arjuna is to learn from Krsna's revelation of His divine opulences? (HINT: 10.19-41)
Q3. After Krsna reveals His opulences, what is His final teaching to Arjuna? (HINT: 10.42)
11. **CHAPTER ELEVEN: Q1.** What is the universal form (visva-rupa) revealed by Krsna to Arjuna? (HINT: 11.9-49)
Q2. Why does Arjuna request Krsna to reveal His universal form? (HINT: 11.1-3)
Q3. After He returns to His original, two-armed form as Krsna, what qualification does Krsna cite as necessary to see and understand His humanlike form ? (HINT: 11.54-55)
12. **CHAPTER TWELVE: Q1.** What does Krsna say in response to Arjuna's inquiry about the relative positions of the devotee engaged in Krsna's service (bhakti) and those who worship Brahman, the impersonal form of Krsna? (HINT: 12.1-8)
Q2. How does Krsna describe the devotee who is "very dear" to Him? (HINT: 12.13-20)

Group E:

13. **CHAPTER THIRTEEN: Q1.** What are the three subjects discussed in this chapter? What is their relationship? (HINT: 13.1-7, 13-35)
Q2. What is the result of understanding these three items and their relationship ? (HINT: 13.24, 35)
14. **CHAPTER FOURTEEN: Q1.** What are "the modes of material nature"? What are the characteristic effects of each of the three modes on the conditioned jiva? (HINT: 14.6-18)
Q2. How can the conditioned jiva transcend the influence of the modes? (HINT: 14.19, 26)
Q3. What is the "Brahman platform," and what lies beyond it? (HINT: 14.22-27)
15. **CHAPTER FIFTEEN: Q1.** What does Krsna explain about the dynamics of transmigration? (HINT: 15.8-11)
Q2. What is "the most confidential part of the Vedic scriptures"? (HINT: 15.16-20)

Group F:

16. **CHAPTER SIXTEEN: Q1.** What is the difference between those of "divine" qualities and those of "demonic" qualities? (HINT: 16.5, 23-24)
Q2. What are the divine (transcendental) qualities? (HINT: 16.1-3)
Q3. What are the characteristics of those of demonic qualities? What is their fate? (HINT: 16.6-18)
17. **CHAPTER SEVENTEEN: Q1.** What are the three kinds of food, sacrifice, austerity and charity in each of the three modes of material nature (goodness, passion and ignorance)? (HINT: 17. 7-22)
Q2. What is the difference between faith in the lower modes of nature (passion and ignorance) and faith in the mode of goodness? (HINT: 17.23-28)
18. **CHAPTER EIGHTEEN: Q1.** What are the three kinds of knowledge, action, workers, intelligence, determination, and happiness in each of the three modes of material nature? (HINT: 18.19-40)
Q2. What are the four social orders, and what are the qualities of their respective modes of work? How does a person attain perfection by acting in his particular social order? (HINT: 18.41-48)
Q3. What does Krsna tell Arjuna is the only way to understand Him? What is the result of such understanding? (HINT: 18.55)
Q4. What is Krsna's final and conclusive instruction to Arjuna? (HINT: 18.65-66)
Q5. At the conclusion of the dialogue, what does Krsna inquire of Arjuna, and how does Arjuna answer? (HINT: 18.72-73)

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The Qu'ran (The Koran)

Sura 1: Exordium

1. This is the opening section of the Koran. How does it differ in style and genre from the openings of Jewish and Christian works (Genesis: Old Testament and Matthew: New Testament, first chapters)? Overall, does it seem to be more closely linked to the Judaic or the Christian concept of God? Why do you think this might be?
2. What sort of being is "God" defined as and what are his traits or characteristics? How is "God" addressed in this opening prayer, and what does it indicate about his "character" and how he is perceived? Is he a merciful Lord who guides one to the righteous path or a punisher of wrong-doers or both? Should He be feared? Why or Why not?

Sura 4 : Nisaa

3. What guidance is offered on orphans?
4. What guidance is offered on marriage? What are the criteria on who you can and cannot marry?
5. What guidance is offered on money, inheritance, and property?
6. What guidance is offered about men who commit suicide? How does God punish or forgive these sinners?
7. What role do men and women play? Who seems to have more rights? Why?
8. What are the ideal roles, characteristics, or traits of a devout Muslim man?
9. What are the ideal roles, characteristics, or traits of a devout Muslim woman?
10. What connections can you make between their roles and the Christian or Hebrew standards? Are there many similarities or differences that you can identify?

Surah 5: Maida

11. Who are the People of the Book? Who are the Unbelievers?
12. What is the Islamic perspective on Jews and Christians? Should Muslims associate with Jews and Christians? Why or Why not?
13. What does the Koran identify Jesus' role? What does it say about the Virgin Mary?
14. What is the penalty for breaking an oath?

Surah 9: At-Taubah (The Repentance)

15. What is the prevalent theme of this Surah? What problem/issue was the Muslim community facing according to this Surah? Are they condoning the murder of the Mushrikun? Why or why not? Who are the Mushrikun?
16. What should be done to pagans, Jews, and Christians according to this surah? Who was deemed a non-believer or hypocrite? Why?

Surah 56: Al-Waqi'ah (The Event)

17. What phrase is used as a greeting for those who arrive in heaven? Why is this significant?
18. Where do the damned, blessed, and foremost go? What's the fate of each individual group? What happens to those on the left? What happens to those on the right?
19. What rewards awaits those in heaven? What is paradise like? How is their view of heaven different from the Christian or Hebrew version?
20. Who shall eat of the fruit of the Zaqqun tree and who may touch the glorious Koran?

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The Inferno by Dante Alighieri

GROUP A: Inferno from The Divine Comedy

1. When does Dante's journey begin and when does it end? Why is this time frame significant? Who is Dante's guide through Hell and why is this particular shade significant? Who sent this shade to help Dante? What does his guide represent?
2. What is allegorical about Dante's journey? Where does it begin? Who does he first encounter? What do the three wild animals symbolize?
3. The Virgin Mary, St. Lucia, and Dante's beloved Beatrice form a shadow Trinity of sorts (just as the 3 beasts on the hill form a Trinitarian "Axis of Evil"). We shortly meet their fallen sisters in the *Inferno*. How do Dante's categories of women compare with those of Virgil? of Augustine?
4. What is the purpose or goal of his journey? What themes can you identify? Also, when Dante enters Hell proper, through the famously inscribed gate, how do you make sense of the claim that Hell was built by "Justice," "Wisdom," and "Love"?
5. How does Dante grow as a character in the poem? Why does Charon and Minos among several others try to turn Dante and Virgil away? How does Dante's reaction toward sin change? Where does their journey end and what do they see at the end? Why is it significant?
6. Name all the circles of hell and what is the punishment for each type of sin or sinner? If you were to create additional circles of hell, what sin would you put in a certain category? What would be their punishment or retribution? Why?
7. Who are some famous sinners (name five different males and five different females) and what category are they placed in terms of sin? Do you find it surprising? Who are some of the monsters or beasts? What might they symbolize?

GROUP B: Inferno, Cantos 1-4

1. Compare Dante's journey to the journeys taken by characters in *Gilgamesh* and the *Odyssey*. How does Dante's appearance as the central character in the poem make it a different kind of epic?
2. Dante encounters a leopard, a lion, and a she-wolf in Canto 1. What do you think these beasts symbolize, if anything? Which animal seems to pose the greatest problem for Dante?
3. What is the role of classical literature and culture in the *Inferno*? Why does Dante have a pagan, Virgil, guide him through Hell, and not a Christian, like St. Paul or St. Augustine (who certainly has actual experience with many of the sins described in the poem)?
4. Who are the women discussed in Canto 2? What is their historical or symbolic significance? What is their function in the poem?
5. The "neutral angels" (Canto 3) are the product of Dante's poetic imagination, not orthodox Christian theology. Why do you think he created them?
6. Compare Dante's Underworld to Virgil's Underworld. How is Dante's Charon different from Virgil's Charon in *Aeneid* 6?
7. What kind of souls are in Limbo? (Canto 4) What is their defect (*difetto*)?

GROUP C: Inferno, Cantos 5-6, 10, 13

1. Note that the sins encountered at the top of the slope are less grave than the ones at the bottom, and the ones in between are arranged in a corresponding hierarchy in which more grave sins are punished beneath less grave sins. Why do you think Dante makes lust a lesser sin than gluttony? Or, to put it bluntly: Why, for Dante, is having sex with your neighbor's wife or husband a lesser sin than eating an entire pizza and a twelve-pack of beer every week while you watch Monday Night Football?
2. Paolo and Francesca (Canto 5) are some of the most attractive sinners in Hell. What does Dante do, in a very short space, to make them real to us? Why do you think he makes them so sympathetic (they are, after all, sinners)?
3. What is the political theme of Canto 6? How does it relate to Dante's own political experiences?
4. Look up "epicurean" in a good dictionary. What kind of sin is this?

5. Describe the relationship between Farinata and Cavalcante. What do you learn about Florentine politics from the exchange between Farinata and Dante?
6. Why are the Violent against Themselves (suicides) punished the way they are? Remember that in Dante's system the sin itself is a form of punishment.
7. Does Pier della Vigne use language in a way that seems peculiar to you? What does his manner of speaking tell you about him as a person?

GROUP D: *Inferno*, Cantos 14-15, 21-22, 26-27, and 32-34

1. Who is Brunetto Latini and what is his message to Dante?
2. How does Dante depict the Grafters (or "barrators" in the Durling translation) in cantos 21-22? What kind of people are they? What kinds of names do the demons in charge of them have? Is their sin more immediate to modern readers than others discussed by Dante? How do the Grafters affect Dante?
3. How is Dante's Ulysses different from Homer's Odysseus? Guido da Montefeltro is guilty of the same sin as Ulysses--but how is he a different kind of person?
4. What sin is punished in the lowest level of Hell? Why do you think Dante considers this to be the worst sin? How are these sinners punished?
5. Why does the lowest part of Hell look like? Does the landscape surprise you? What did you expect? How is it an appropriate place for punishing the sinners who are found here?
6. Ugolino is one of the last sinners examined in detail in the *Inferno*. What kind of commentary on extreme evil is Dante making in his depiction of Ugolino? What does Dante's description of Ugolino contribute to the poem's political theme?
7. What does Dante's Lucifer look like? How is he placed at the bottom of the slope? Is there anything about Dante's Lucifer that surprises you?

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The Tale of Genji by Lady Shikibu Murasaki

Group A:

1. What do we know about the author of The Tale of Genji? Who are the Genji/Minamoto?
2. If you had to summarize this work, what are three to five main points/events in each section and who is involved and where do they go?
3. Who are the major and minor characters and what role or relationship do they play for each other roles/relationships in this novel?
4. What is the focus of the novel, where is the setting, and what are some of key themes?
5. What is the basis of the rivalry between the Left and the Right at court?

Group B:

6. What role does poetry play in this society?
7. What role does Buddhism play in this society as well as in this novel?
8. What role does social class play in this society?
9. What role does "Shintō" or kami cult play in this society?
10. What characterizes Genji's relationships with the following females: Aoi (Lady of Sanjō), Fujitsubo, and Lavender)?

Group C:

11. What is Genji teaching Murasaki in order to make her his ideal woman?
12. How does Genji's possession of Murasaki affect his relationship with others, such as Aoi, Fujitsubo, and Prince Hyōbu?
13. How does the birth of Fujitsubo's son affect people at court?
14. How do people behave at festivals? What purpose do festivals serve (political, social, religious, etc.)?
15. As Murasaki ages, how does her relationship with Genji change?

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The Prince by Niccolo Machiavelli

Group A:

1. How does Machiavelli view human nature, or in other words, what traits does he explicitly mention as innate among humans? Keeping this in mind, what is the purpose of his political treatise? Who is his supposed to be his audience and what is the purpose behind his advice?
2. *The Prince* has raised controversy for many reasons throughout the years, and some groups consider it evil. A) Is Machiavelli's book "evil"? Why or why not? B) What role does virtue play in Machiavelli's state? C) If Machiavelli argues that the purpose of politics is to promote a "common good," how does this statement relate to his ideas in *The Prince* and what is the common good?
3. Compare and contrast the different ways in which a prince can rise to power. A) For instance, what is the best means of becoming a prince? B) What are the most desirable traits or virtues for a prince to have? Should he actually possess them or appear to possess them? Why? C) Should a prince be stingy or liberal? Why? D) Is it better to be loved or feared? Why?
4. What is Machiavelli's approach to cruelty? What is the mark of the best kind of intellect? What quality in a prince will cause the populace to despise him? Why?
5. Then, he argues that there are two ways to fight, so what does he advise a prince to act? What two animals should a prince be in order to protect himself from traps and other "animals"? Why does those two animals?

Group B:

6. List and describe ten characteristics of a Machiavellian ruler. Then, name three reoccurring themes in *The Prince*. Describe the importance of each within the context.
7. What does he say about nobles and ministers? What is the best defense against conspiracies? Which types of troops should a prince depend on and under what conditions are fortresses most valuable?
8. Why did a number of Italian princes lose their states during Machiavelli's time and how does treatise aim to teach new princes in fortifying their hold over the state?
9. Do you agree with his ideas on securing power as a prince? Why or why not? How do his ideas apply in politics today and how presidents/other political rulers run a country?
10. What modern day political examples do we have of leaders who use fear to motivate others, who eliminate their opposition? Is it effective? Is this beneficial?

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Don Quixote by Miguel de Cervantes

Main Ideas

- Critique of life in a world dominated by greed, pride, and violence.
- Critique of the hypocritical use and manipulation of the Christian religion.
- Author's stance in defense of ideals of goodness, justice, truth, and beauty.
- Don Quixote's insanity is, in part, a form of higher wisdom; in his madness, he sees humble people as noble and elevated and challenges the rich and the powerful, often calling them monsters and villains; ecclesiastics are also targets of the wrath of Don Quixote.
- In his ideals and desire for a better world, Don Quixote mirrors Christ and criticizes a world that lacks a genuine spiritual center.
- Don Quixote's violence and aggressive methods, on the other hand, identify him with the people of his time and with the madness of the historical past (the Crusades, the adventures against the Turks, etc.)
- Don Quixote is blind to the contradictions in his own approach to the correction of the evils of the world; he fights fire with fire and finds himself repeatedly defeated, making things worse for himself and others.
- Through Don Quixote, Cervantes confronts and ridicules an aspect of his own former life as a soldier fighting for Christian Europe.
- Where Don Quixote, the warrior, fails, however, Cervantes, the writer, triumphs. Novel about the idea that "the pen is mightier than the sword."

Group A:

1. Is Don Quixote mad? What drives him to insanity? What is the implied attitude toward literature? Is literature condemned or praised? Why do you think Don Quixote believed all the fantastic tales he read about knighthood?
2. What does Don Quixote want? What does he value? Who does he want to help? Who does he want to attack? Does he accomplish what he desires? Why? Why not? What monsters or armies do they fight and who does Don Quixote try to rescue or save?
3. What is the meaning of Don Quixote's confrontation with the wealthy farmer and the young boy Andres? Who does Don Quixote defend? When the man says, he will not beat the boy and pay him the money he owes him, why is Don Quixote willing to believe him?
4. What is the significance of Don Quixote's attack against the Benedictine friars? Why is he angry with religious people? What criticisms are embedded in this episode?
5. Why is Don Quixote angry at the windmills? Why does he consider them evil giants? Is there any possible symbolic meaning in these images? Maybe the windmills refer to economic and social issues? Which? What then is Cervantes attacking? What may be the meaning of Don Quixote's idea that an evil enchanter is changing the appearances of things in order to fool him? Might there be some sense in this idea?

Group B:

6. What other examples, such as the cloud of sheep, does he assume is an army and about the prisoners? Why do you think Don Quixote sees things that are not there? What line of questioning does he take? Is he fighting for the underdog in the world?
7. Why is Don Quixote angry at the merchants of Toledo? Why is he angry that they refuse to acknowledge the beauty of Dulcinea? What does this suggest about the values and way of life of the merchants? Does this have parallels in the life of Christ?
8. Is there anything noble or admirable in his actions or beliefs? What makes Don Quixote's actions comical? What makes them sublime? What does the novel parody? What values or beliefs are shown as obsolete? What values or beliefs are revitalized and ennobled?
9. Is Cervantes's own idealism earlier in his life (as a fighter for Christianity) in any way connected to the character or actions of Don Quixote? In what ways does Cervantes employ the figure of Don Quixote and other characters and situations in the story to express his criticisms of the world in which he lived?
10. What does Sancho Panza represent? What does he want from Don Quixote? What does he get instead? In Chapter 14, Don Quixote gives Sancho advice about being Governor. Read the chapter again, and stop after each piece of advice to consider: Is it good advice? Does you agree with it? Why or Why not? What does it mean? Why does Sancho decide to leave the "island" he is governing? Do you think this was the right decision? Why or why not?

Group C:

11. How about the lady Dulcinea? What is her role and who is she? Judging by events, figures and situations in the novel, what may have been Cervantes's attitudes toward women and their condition in the society of his time?
12. At the end of Cervantes' sequel, the Knight of the White Moon, Sampson Curasco, forces Don Quixote to give up his fantasies "for his own good." Discuss why people like Curasco feel the need to destroy the illusions and dreams of those who do not subscribe to a practical approach to life.
13. What themes can you identify in Cervante's story? What is the story about and what is its purpose?
14. Don Quixote might be seen as not simply crazy in his refusal to see things as they really are but more like a person who wants to accomplish a greater good and so refuses to compromise his ideals. Examples of such people include Nelson Mandela, Mahatma Gandhi, and Martin Luther King Jr. Do you think Quixote deserves to be put in the company of real-world idealists or is he merely delusional?
15. Were you satisfied with the ending? Were you glad Don Quixote gained his sanity at the end of the book? Why or why not? Is it crazy to want to right the wrongs of the world? Why or why not?