

Grade Ten – Summer Reading Thought Questions

JANE EYRE
by Charlotte Bronte

1. What obstacles does Jane face at Lowood? What do we learn about her as she responds to unfairness and mistreatment in her early life?
2. Jane is a heroine who breaks with Victorian-era feminine stereotypes. In describing herself, Jane says, “I sometimes regretted that I was not handsomer: I sometimes wished to have rosy cheeks, a straight nose, and small cherry mouth; I desired to be tall, stately and finely developed in figure; I felt it a misfortune that I was so little, so pale, and had features so irregular and so marked.” How does Jane’s lack of traditional beauty influence her development and her actions in the novel?
3. Does Rochester ever actually intend to marry Blanche? If so, when does he change his mind? If not, why does he go to such lengths to make Jane believe he does?
4. When Jane learns about Bertha’s existence, it throws her whole world into a tailspin. Are Jane’s responses to this information logical? Is Bertha more than a plot device? Do your views of Rochester change once this secret is revealed?
5. Jane asserts her equality to Rochester, and St. John. What does Jane mean by equality, and why is it so important to her?
6. Bronte is writing, and Jane is living, at a time when British women had restricted roles in society and very few opportunities for employment. What does work represent to Jane? What does money represent to her? How does she view her inheritance, and how does it permit her a certain degree of freedom?
7. When Jane first appears at Moor House, Hannah assumes she is a prostitute, but St. John and his sisters do not. What distinguishes the characters who misjudge Jane from those who recognize her true nature?
8. How do Jane and Rochester’s roles change from the beginning of their relationship to the end of the novel? Do you think Rochester needs to suffer in order to be worthy of Jane?

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LORD OF THE FLIES

by William Golding

1. Why is the age of the book's characters crucial to the novel's effectiveness? If adults had been stranded on the island, would the situation have turned out differently? What if the castaways were a mixed group of boys and girls? Of girls only?
2. In discussing his work, the author once said that "the shape of a society must depend on the ethical nature of the individual and not on any political system, however apparently logical or respectable." Do you agree with Golding's assessment? Are there moments in the novel where the boys make the right ethical choices? What are the results of these choices?
3. When Simon uncovers the truth of "the beast," he tries to warn the other boys. Why is Simon unprepared for what awaits him? Why do Ralph and Piggy join the dance at Jack's feast, as well as what comes after?
4. Why do the conch shell and the Lord of the Flies itself exert so much influence over the castaways? Do all societies have totems with such symbolic power? Consider the communities of MacDuffie, of home, and of country in your response.
5. In Chapter 2, Piggy questions the boys about their behavior, asking "How can you expect to be rescued if you don't put first things first and act proper?" Describe the ways in which this line illuminates the novel's themes of order versus chaos and man versus society. What irony is exposed in Piggy's words by the end of the novel?
6. This novel addresses the sometimes wide gulf between people's ideals and their actions. How does group mentality affect the boys on the island? Do Ralph, Simon, Piggy, and Jack live up to their respective ideals (whether or not you agree with those beliefs)?

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THE REMAINS OF THE DAY

by Kazuo Ishiguro

1. What is the significance of Stevens' taking a journey to visit Miss Kenton? How does the setting of the English countryside compare and contrast with the description of life inside Darlington Hall?
2. What makes a great butler, in Stevens' opinion? Given your response, does Stevens live up to his own ideals? Does he ever call them into question? Are there any differences between his outlook on the world and that of his father?
3. At the end of the novel, has Stevens experienced any epiphanies? Do you think he is capable of change in the remaining years of his life? Why or why not?
4. What does Miss Kenton mean when she tells Stevens that her marriage to Mr. Benn "was simply another way to annoy you"? Is she being facetious? What is suggested by the fact that Stevens refers to her by her maiden name when not in her presence? When Stevens and Miss Kenton part, why doesn't he admit his true feelings to her?
5. Stevens' holds up Lord Darlington as a man of noble character. We are able to perceive the flaws in this assessment, especially when Darlington tries to stave off conflict with the Germans. Does Stevens ever acknowledge his master's shortcomings? In what ways is Stevens' sense of himself tied up with his sense of Lord Darlington?
6. Why do you think Ishiguro conceived of Mr. Farraday as an American? How does Mr. Farraday contrast with Lord Darlington? What does the relationship with his new master suggest about Stevens' place in the world? To what extent does Stevens symbolize the place of the old social hierarchy in postwar Britain?

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THE DAUGHTER OF TIME

by Josephine Tey

PLEASE NOTE: At first, many students find this novel challenging. Alan Grant's investigation takes place when the novel was written (1951), but the crime he's investigating occurred in the late 1400s. In addition, with all the "Edwards" and "Richards," it may sometimes seem like the ruling classes in Britain only had three or four first names to choose from.

As you read, be patient, ask questions, and take notes. Once you sort out Richard III and Henry VII, the rest of the historical characters should fall into place. The underlying themes are rich and rewarding. And believe it or not, many English 10 students consider this to be a favorite summer reading book!

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The following notes are taken from "Strutting and Fretting His Hour Upon the Stage: An Analysis of the Characterization of Richard in Shakespeare's Richard III and Daviot's Dickon." by Judy R. Weinsont.*

"While we do not know how much Shakespeare believed the Tudor line, we can conclude that he had no objective knowledge of the historical Richard. Shakespeare's indelible portrayal was affected by these powerful constraints and influences:

1) Political Repression

Shakespeare was acutely sensitive to the political climate of his own time. He was a charter member of the Lord Chamberlain's men, whose ultimate patron was Queen Elizabeth, the granddaughter of Henry VII. As U.S. Supreme Court Justice Anthony Kennedy reminds us in a recent opinion, Shakespeare was writing during censorious times. In 1579, one Hugh Singleton so enraged Elizabeth I by printing a certain tract, that he was condemned to lose his right hand as a punishment and impediment to all further printing...

2) Historical and Biographical Truth

The 16th century's view of the historian's task differs from ours. Queen Elizabeth's tutor (not Tudor) instructed that history writing should describe in vivid, affective, dramatic, and lively terms the 'nature of persons, not only for the outward shape of the body, but also for the inward disposition of the mind.' The historian/biographer, then, notes and imagines what occurs in other people's minds. Consequently, what is purported to be biographical truth may, in fact, be fictitious...

3) The Tudor Myth and the Chroniclers

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Sir Thomas More is primarily known to us for his Utopia, his martyrdom during Henry VIII's reign, and his subsequent canonization...[he] is principally responsible for the following portrait of Richard that Shakespeare immortalized on the stage:

'Richard...was in wit and courage equal with either of [his brothers], in body and prowess far under them both; little of stature, ill-featured of limbs, crook-backed, his left shoulder much higher than his right, hard-favoured of visage...He was malicious, wrathful, envious, and from afore his birth ever forward. It is for truth reported...that he came into the world with the feet forward...and, as the fame runs, also not untoothed...He was close and secret, a deep dissembler, lowly of countenance, arrogant of heart, outwardly companionable where he inwardly hated, not hesitating to kiss whom he thought to kill, pitiless and cruel....Friend and foe were to him indifferent; where his advantage grew, he spared no man's death whose life withstood his purpose.'

More, by the way, was only seven when Richard died at Bosworth.” *

THOUGHT QUESTIONS

1. Based on the questions Alan Grant poses to his friends and the hospital staff, how do most people view Richard III (if they have any sense of the man at all)?
2. The painting of Richard from the National Portrait Gallery prompts Grant to start his investigation. Is it fair to judge historical figures based on appearances? Are there parallels to the way we view public figures today?
3. What makes Grant an ideal choice to solve the mystery of the Princes in the Tower? Why is Grant a suitable protagonist for those readers who might be new to the study of British literature and history?
4. Based on your reading of *The Daughter of Time* and the preceding background information, how do you think writers may have shaped their physical descriptions of Richard to fit their understanding of his character?
5. Analyze what Brent Carradine means when he suggests that “[Historical] Truth isn’t in accounts but in account books.”
6. Summarize the reasons why Grant concludes that Richard III was, in fact, innocent of the Princes’ murder.
7. Why does Grant feel, in the end, that there’s unlikely to be any serious change in the common cultural perception of Richard III?

* *Weinsoft, Judy. Lecture presented at the Oregon Shakespeare Festival August 27, 1993.*