

***Classic Literature for
Christian Homeschoolers***

**Volume 4:
Short Story Classics**

Answer Key to Review Questions

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Week 1, Day 2 – “My Mysterious Foe”

1. How is the strange lodger of the house first described? How do you first picture him?

Standing “at the very foot of the stairway, motionless, as though he had been listening to our conversation.”

2. Why does Mrs. Hone, the landlady, say she wants to keep the encounters between Fanny and her “enemy” lodger quiet? Why does this make more sense later?

Mrs. Hone says she hates nothing more than a “stir” among her boarders, which makes more sense later, because she doesn’t want to admit to them that she has a rat in the house!

3. List some statements that Fanny makes that sound either amusing or clearer after you finish the story.

Answers will vary, but might include: Fanny says she would have fainted if her tormentor had spoken to her; that they were “born to be enemies”; loses the letter and says she is “certain that no other human being had been in the room since I had entered it with the letter” (which Mrs. Hone says was dropped by “that R—,” meaning “rat.”

4. Describe what happens that convinces Fanny she has to leave the boarding house. The first time you read this, what is strange about how the landlady reacts?

Fanny is attacked in the middle of the night, cut and bloodied, and the landlady only makes some mild remarks about having to do something about the problem!

5. At what point do you learn the identity of Fanny’s tormentor?

Answers will vary!

Week 1, Day 4 – “The Celebrated Jumping Frog of Calaveras County”

1. What does the speaker’s friend trick him into doing?

Into asking Simon Wheeler about a man named Leonidas Smiley, when he knows Wheeler will be reminded of Jim Smiley, and go off on a long, boring story about him, trapping the speaker.

2. Describe Wheeler’s storytelling “style.”

It is long and boring, and Wheeler constantly gets sidetracked into other, often ludicrous points and side issues that his own stories remind him of. He can’t stay focused and tell a concise story; he wanders off and makes the story much longer than it needs to be.

3. Name some things that add humor to the story; give some specific examples.

- *Wheeler speaks in long, rambling sentences that seem to go nowhere, and pronounces words wrongly and (unintentionally) humorously.*
- *There is a dog, Andrew Jackson, whose legs were “sawed off with a circular saw.”*
- *Jim Smiley is an obsessive bettor, who bets on random events and ridiculous things.*
- *Wheeler uses colorful phrases to describe things; for example, he portrays “Daniel Webster” the frog as “solid as a gob of mud.”*
- *The story about the stranger filling Daniel Webster with quail shot.*
- *Wheeler gets interrupted, tells the author to stay there until he returns, then starts some crazy story about Jim Smiley’s having a “yeller one-eyed cow” with a stump tail “like a bannanner,” until the author escapes.*

Week 2, Day 2 – “Marjorie Daw”

1. How do the opening letters between Flemming and Delaney compare to their final few exchanges? How does this affect the story?

The first several letters are long and relaxed, and reflect Delaney's attempt to calm Flemming down and reduce his irritation at being cooped up immobile. As the letters continue, they become more rushed and shorter, reflecting Flemming's heated interest in Marjorie Daw, until finally, the rapid telegrams come so quickly the entire affair explodes into its unexpected climax.

2. What hints can you find that point to the story's conclusion about Marjorie Daw?

Delaney says that even though Marjorie Daw is perfectly ideal in every way he doesn't love her (?). Delaney's repeated warnings to Flemming not to come to see her are suspicious, as are his delays in securing a photograph of Marjorie Daw for Flemming to see.

3. Look up the poem “See Saw Margery Daw.” How does it fit into “Marjorie Daw”? (Recall the Longfellow poem referenced in the story, and the other literary references Delaney sprinkles throughout his letters to Flemming.)

Delaney calls the imaginary girl “Marjorie Daw” probably because he just read—or remembers reading—the poem. Delaney references many other names in his letters to Flemming, including another poem about another girl (Longfellow's “There Was a Little Girl”). To anyone familiar with the poem this is a hint that the girl across the street from Delaney is made up.

4. What is Flemming like? When you discover the truth about Marjorie Daw, how do you feel about how Flemming will react? Why?

Answers will vary. Flemming seems short-tempered and impatient with others (throwing books at his servant, driving his sister away in tears, and so on). Many readers will respond with something like, “I know he will be upset, but it's hard to feel too sorry for a man who ‘falls in love’ with a supposedly perfect girl, especially when before he knew about her he behaved so rudely and despicably to those around him, just because he was having to recover from a leg injury.”

Week 2, Day 4 – “The Cop and the Anthem”

1. Why doesn't Soapy want to go to city or private charities for help through the cold of winter?

His pride won't allow him to lower himself, which to him seems a condition of accepting help.

2. List Soapy's attempts to gain accommodations in the Island.

He tries to go to an expensive restaurant and eat without paying, but is thrown out because he looks too shabby to be there; he breaks a store window and tells a policeman he did it, but the policeman does not believe him because most window-breakers run away; he eats a meal in a restaurant and doesn't pay, but the owner throws him out instead of having him arrested; he tries to “mash” a woman, but she unexpectedly accepts his proposal; he yells in front of a policeman, who dismisses the thought of arresting him for disorderly conduct; and he steals an umbrella, and the owner acknowledges it might not be his.

3. Explain the sardonic ending to “The Cop and the Anthem.” Why do you suppose O. Henry titled his story this way?

After repeatedly failing to be arrested, Soapy hears church organ music playing, reminding him of days before he became a bum, and is inspired to start his life afresh and find work. O. Henry titles his short story “The Cop and the Anthem” because the two are in such opposition to each other when it comes to enabling Soapy to start his life over.

4. What is ironic about how Soapy's attitude changes from the story's beginning to its end?

He is proud, even though he's a bum, at the beginning of the story, but no one pays attention to him or treats him like he's worth bothering with; but at the story's end, he humbles himself and sets out to turn over a new leaf—and he's arrested by the first cop who sees him!

Week 3, Day 3 – “The Man on the Train”

1. What is Grandma Sheldon like? What about her reading the newspaper is inconsistent with her personality and appearance?

A little worried, but a pleasant, typical, white-haired and rosy-cheeked grandmother. She revels in stories of gory murders, unlike her gentle, sweet demeanor.

2. Describe the stranger who sits next to Grandma Sheldon on the train.

He looks respectable, black-haired, clean shaven, and with blue eyes (like Grandma Sheldon's late husband).

3. What ideas do Grandma Sheldon and the man on the train exchange about the local murderer?

That his conscience will be bothering him (Grandma Sheldon); that he might have had a reason to commit the murders (the man); that Grandma Sheldon would like to see a murderer's face (at which point the man on the train takes her paper and folds it up in his pocket).

4. In what two ways does the man help Grandma Sheldon? What do you make of these scenes? How does his aiding her to the home help himself?

He pays for her ticket, which she lost, and he walks her in the dark to the home where she is staying. It might be that he is trying to do a good deed to “make up” for his murders. By helping Grandma Sheldon to the home, he escapes his pursuers.

5. How does the encounter on the train change (a) the man, and (b) Grandma Sheldon?

Something about her gentle, trusting spirit reaches him, which is a significant reason why he offers to help her. He also breaks down emotionally when he reads her letter to him in prison. Grandma Sheldon sees the good in everyone now, even a murderer like Hartwell. She writes to and prays for him...and never rides on a train again!

Week 3, Day 4 – “A Literary Nightmare”

1. How does the narrator's refined, courteous character add to the humor of this story?

It makes it even more ridiculous when he says the idiotic words of the jingle.

2. How does the narrator “get rid” of the irritating jingle?

He discharges it by teaching the jingle to the minister, who picks it up, gets the words down, and can't get rid of it.

3. At the story's end, what does the writer claim is the purpose of his writing the story? What is ironic in this claim?

He says it is to warn readers to avoid the “Punch, brothers, punch with care” rhymes, so the words won't get stuck in their heads, which is ironic, since the entire story is filled with examples of the rhymes being repeated over and over, which surely has the opposite effect.

4. What humorous remark does the narrator make about university students?

That the minister is able to get rid of the jingle by passing it on to the brainless, non-thinking students.

5. Bring an example of a song that is catchy, but annoying, that got in your head.

Answers will vary!

Week 6, Day 1 – “The Shed Chamber”

1. What style is “The Shed Chamber” told in?

It is a first-person account, given by Nora as if she were addressing a group of girls, even naming certain friends, including “Lottie” and “Sue.”

2. What is the speaker’s name? When do we finally find this out? What is she like? How can the reader tell?

Nora is the speaker’s name; we find out when Mrs. Bowles tells her husband she feels safe with Nora there when he leaves for business for a few days. Nora is kind, good with children, a hard worker, sensible, and brave, based on how she takes care of the dangerous situation the family faces. Nora is probably in her late teens or very early twenties.

3. Describe the Bowles home and family.

It is a long, “rambling,” yellow house. Mr. Bowles is kind and sensible, the children are shy, and Mrs. Bowles is an invalid, gentle and sweet.

4. What bothers Nora about the shed chamber windows? Why doesn’t she tell Mrs. Bowles?

They don’t fasten properly; Nora doesn’t tell Mrs. Bowles because she doesn’t want her to be afraid.

5. What does Annie want? How does Nora feel about her when she meets her? Explain Annie’s real reason for coming back to the house.

Annie says she left something in the shed chamber; Nora doesn’t like the way she smiles and doesn’t trust her. Annie actually comes to let in a man, hide him in a large trunk, and help him steal from the Bowles family when everyone is asleep.

6. How does Nora bravely—and smartly—address the dangerous situation? What do we find out about George Brett by one of Nora’s offhand comments?

She locks the man in the trunk, and asks Mrs. Bowles if she can take a walk (so she won’t upset her), instead of running for help. George Brett is a young man she asks for help, and at this point of Nora’s telling the story he is her husband.

7. How does Nora change the reader’s perception of Annie? Who do you think are the “two others” mentioned in the last paragraph?

Nora excuses Annie’s part in the shed chamber plot by saying Annie was young and motherless, and that she has repented, becoming friends with Nora. The “two others” is interesting—it could refer to Nora’s husband George and George’s father, both of whom ran back to the house with Nora when the incident occurred; or it could refer to Sue and Lottie, the names of the “girls” to whom Nora is telling her story.

8. How would you describe the story’s tone? How could a different tone have made the story less interesting or less effective?

The tone is light-hearted and exciting, partly because it is told from Nora’s point of view. It could have been told by a third-person narrator, which might have made it less exciting or heavier in tone.

Week 6, Day 2 – “The Mouse”

1. What emotions from the reader are evoked by the way Saki sets up the character of Theodoric Voler?

Voler is described as a prissy momma’s boy who is unprepared for even small inconveniences that come upon him, like having to harness a horse. This makes the appearance of the mouse in his pants even more amusing to the reader, since Theodoric seems to be the last person who able to deal with such a nuisance.

2. How does Theodoric finally get the mouse out of his pants? What disaster occurs as he does?

He is able to set up a makeshift curtain made of a rug, so he can take off his pants and get rid of the mouse, but the rug comes loose and falls to the floor before he has a chance to put his pants back on, and he pulls the rug around himself to hide the fact.

3. How does Theodoric try to explain his situation to the girl passenger? What misunderstanding occurs when he says, “It was getting rid of [the mouse] that brought me to this”?

He claims he has caught a chill, possibly malaria, to explain why he is covering himself with the rug. The girl, who is blind and does not see him wrapped in the rug, thinks he means that the mouse has given him a chill.

4. Why is the revelation of the girl on the train surprising to both Theodoric and the reader?

Saki focuses on Theodoric’s plight so heavily that the reader is (most likely) surprised; certainly Theodoric himself is so focused on his problem that he does not realize the girl is blind.

Week 7, Day 1 – “About Barbers”

1. What kinds of things, according to Mark Twain, “always” happen in barber shops, and always will?

Some other person gets there just before you, getting the best barber, while you’re stuck with the worst; the men waiting to get haircuts are “silent, unsociable, distraught, and looking bored”; the barber doesn’t listen to his requests;

2. In what ways does the barber poorly perform his job?

Among other things...

- *The barber stares at himself in the mirror, inspecting pimples and combing his hair while he should be shaving the author.*
- *The shaving lather, the author says, has stayed on his face so long that it feels like it’s eating into his vital organs.*
- *The barber rakes his fingers roughly across the author’s face, and sticks his mouth in the customer’s mouth to use as a handle (where the author can smell the kerosene lamp gas).*
- *He takes bets instead of finishing shaving his customer.*
- *He keeps “hawking and expectorating” (making a “hawking” sound and spitting).*
- *He cuts the customer with a razor blade.*
- *He slaps him with a towel and throws powder into his face.*
- *He tries to sell the customer “quack nostrums.”*

Week 7, Day 3 – “Bernice Bobs Her Hair”

1. Explain how the opening country club scene sets up the story.

It pits the younger crowd against the older, disapproving dowagers; it suggests that girls are angling for wealthy, unattached men;

2. Give examples of how the reader initially learns that Bernice is a social outcast. What makes her want to change her image?

Marjorie asks Warren to please dance with her, although he doesn't want to; Bernice goes to fix her hair, and Otis jokingly talks about how horrible she is to be with; Bernice can't hold conversations with others, and so on. She hears Marjorie complaining about what a social misfit Bernice is, withstands Marjorie's brutally honest (in her mind, anyway) assessment, and agrees to let Marjorie guide her.

3. What results from Bernice's transformation? How does it affect Marjorie?

She becomes the belle of the party, the most sought-after young lady at social events. Marjorie is upset that Warren begins paying more attention to Bernice than to her, and she angrily confronts Bernice, telling her to forget about Warren.

4. How does Marjorie trick Bernice? What happens to Bernice's social standing as a result? What lesson might the author be expressing?

Marjorie tricks Bernice into bobbing her hair, and when Bernice does, she loses much of her gains in social circles, because she appears too radical, and has lost much of her physical beauty. This seems to express the idea that fickle crowds who claim they like certain things—or who egg on others to go to extreme lengths—often don't actually support those who do.

5. How do Marjorie's and Bernice's ideas of "femininity" differ? What are the flaws in each character's portrayal of the ideal woman?

Bernice is initially more of a Little Women type—demure, shy, reserved, polite, and so on; and Marjorie is brash, outspoken, and blunt—behaving in many ways like her male peers. (Fitzgerald even says that Marjorie "considered girls stupid," and that Bernice has the same trouble talking to her that she has talking to men.) Marjorie has a good point when she says that a typical woman like Bernice really isn't all she pretends to be—that she's putting on an act to try to win male suitors with a weak version of femininity. But Bernice is correct in some areas, too, pointing out that Marjorie is often simply rude and aggressive.

6. What does long hair represent for Marjorie and Bernice? Is Bernice's final act portrayed as positive, negative, or neutral? How does it give another layer to the story's title?

Answers will vary, but long hair could simply represent being a woman, or femininity. When Bernice bobs her hair, and Marjorie's, the reader realizes that something has been lost for both women. Bernice's short hair is a visual sign that the "new Bernice" has strayed too far away from some of the positive feminine ideals she had, and her cutting off Marjorie's braids is a visual reminder that in many ways Marjorie has already begun to "act like a man."

The author portrays Bernice's bobbing Marjorie's hair as something that Marjorie probably deserved, but he also expresses the probability that Bernice will be in trouble for it (it "carried consequences"). It gives another meaning to the title "Bernice Bobs HER Hair"—referring also to Marjorie's braids.

7. What Biblical account does "Bernice Bobs Her Hair" allude to? In what way is it like that story?

It reminds the reader of Samson, who had his hair cut by a woman. It was foolish of Samson to let it be done, and he lost his strength because of it. Similarly, Bernice loses much of her beauty and social standing when she has her hair bobbed.

8. How does the "ideal woman" as advocated by Marjorie, and to a lesser extent, Bernice, compare to the virtuous woman in Proverbs 31?

Answers will vary.

9. Write a short summary of what you think happens to Bernice within a month of the end of the story.

Answers will vary!

Week 11, Day 2 – “How the Widow Won the Deacon”

1. How does the author reveal information about Widow Stimson and Deacon Hawkins? How would it have worked in comparison had their background been told in a story form by an omniscient third-person narrator?

The backgrounds of the Widow Stimson and Deacon Hawkins are revealed by a group of ladies at a sewing club. If this information had been simply told by the narrator, it might not have been as interesting, since we get to hear the ladies' own interest and concerns through their own words.

2. How does the Widow Stimson's mood appear as she tells the sewing society she can't stay because she's riding with Deacon Hawkins?

She sounds excited to be going, although she controls her emotions, and runs off “like a lively schoolgirl.”

3. Why does Deacon Hawkins tell the Widow Stimson he wants to take her out for a ride?

He wants her to judge a horse he has bought, hoping she will confirm that it is good enough to beat in a race with Squire Hopkins, whom Deacon Hawkins has lost to repeatedly over the years.

4. How does the Widow Stimson prove her worth to the deacon more than he hoped? What does her act represent? In light of this, do you think the story's first sentence is true?

During a race with Squire Hopkins that Deacon Hawkins is losing, she hurls herself out of the carriage into a snowbank, lightening Deacon Hawkins's horse's load, so he has a better chance to win.

This act symbolically represents (a) the widow's support of Deacon Hawkins in wanting to help him achieve his goal (which to a bachelor looks a good quality for a prospective wife!) and (b) the realization of Deacon Hawkins that a union between himself and the Widow Stimson will not “weigh him down,” and will be good for him.

Answers will vary on whether students still agree with the first sentence, but it seems like the Widow Stimson did try to win the deacon!

5. Give some examples of humor in the story.

The ladies sewing club members hush themselves quickly when the Widow Stimson comes in late, since they are talking about her; the Widow Stimson resolves never to speak to Squire Hopkins or his wife after he races the deacon when the widow weighs down the carriage; the whole act of Widow Stimson to throw herself out of the carriage; the fact that Deacon Hopkins doesn't even realize she's gone until the race is over; and the sewing society sisters' saying twice about Widow Hopkins that “she must be getting mighty anxious” to get married.

Week 11, Day 3 – “To Build a Fire”

1. Sum up how the author provides the setting and the man's demeanor with the first paragraph.

London describes the day and weather and trail as “cold,” “gray,” “dim,” “little-travelled,” and “dark.” Even in the face of this, the man is not worried, which gives slight concern to the reader, even from the beginning.

2. What is the mentality of the traveling man? How does this differ from the dog's instinct?

Logical, not excitable, “not given much to thinking,” and somewhat lacking a sense of urgency about potential dangers. He regards the extreme cold, for example, not as dangerous, but as something that must be dealt with. The dog, on the other hand, realizes that this extreme cold is not suitable for traveling, and acts discouraged and distressed during the trip.

3. List several concrete examples that demonstrate how incredibly cold it is.

The man spits, and it freezes before it hits the ground; he has to hold his lunch next to his skin to keep it from freezing; his fingers almost immediately go numb if he takes his mittens off; and so on.

4. What changes the man's mindset in regard to the cold? When is he first "keenly aware of his danger"?

The man's awareness of the possibility of danger begins when he takes out his lunch and his hands go immediately numb, and his toes go numb when he sits down to eat. He is "keenly aware of his danger" after he wets his feet after stepping into a creek.

5. What causes the man to fail at his attempts to build the needed fire?

He builds one under a tree, and snow falls from it, putting out his fire; the cold numbs his hands, so he can't use them properly to light a match; when he manages to light a match with his teeth, the smoke goes up his nose, making him cough and put out the fire.

6. What style and tone does Jack London use to tell this story? How does his style and tone compare to nature itself that the man struggles against?

London's style is matter-of-fact and rather cold; he simply tells what happens casually, without fanfare. This indifferent tone mirrors the indifference of nature to the plight of the man who freezes to death.

7. How does the man's relationship to the dog reflect the man's relationship to nature?

The man looks down on the dog, as he (the man) is its master, not giving it much thought. London says at one point after the dog realizes there is danger: "there was no keen intimacy between the dog and the man...so the dog made no effort to communicate its apprehension to the man."

This is similar to the cold, unfeeling quality of nature, which—as an impersonal force—does not regard the survival of man as any importance. At the story's end, the man tries to kill the dog to ensure his survival, but fails, which recalls his basic struggle in the story—to overcome nature during his walk, which also fails.

8. What does Jack London seem to be saying in "To Build a Fire"? Compare his worldview of nature as portrayed in "To Build a Fire" with the God of the Bible. (See for example Psalm 40:5, Psalm 103:8, John 3:14-17, Romans 8:35-39, James 5:10-11, 1 Peter 5:6-7, and 2 Peter 3:9.)

London seems to be saying that nature is an unmatched, heartless force that cares nothing about mankind. His view of life as having been created by an impersonal, unfeeling nature (he was a strong Darwinist/evolutionist) contrasts strongly with the Christian view of a personal God who...

- *can't even number the thoughts toward those who trust in Him (Psalm 40:5),*
- *is merciful, gracious, and slow to anger (Psalm 103:8),*
- *loves the world so much he sent Jesus to die for our sins (John 3:14-17),*
- *will allow nothing to separate Christians from the love of Christ (Romans 8:35-39),*
- *is filled with pity and tenderness toward mankind (James 5:10-11)*
- *cares for those who trust Him, and wants us to cast our cares upon Him (1 Peter 5:6-7), and*
- *is patient, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance (2 Peter 3:9).*

What a difference!

Week 12, Day 2 – "The Nice People"

1. When you first read it, what do you make of the misunderstanding of the number of children at the story's opening? What other misunderstandings and story variances are there? How does it become clear what has happened later in the story?

The reader wonders who is right about what the narrator and his wife have heard from Mr. and Mrs. Brede, whose stories don't match (the number of children they have, who is minding the children while the couple vacations, how Mr. Brede came to climb the Matterhorn without his wife knowing about it, not knowing if their children have had the measles, the whereabouts of the marriage license). But at the end, the reader understands that the couple was just making up stories so they would not be suspected and treated as newlyweds.

2. What does writing this story in the first person accomplish?

It makes it more humorous, since the reader gets into the mind of the narrator and "hears" directly what he thinks about various odd things that happen, and what he thinks about the things his wife says to him.

3. Who are Mrs. Tabb and Miss Hoogencamp? What do you make of their names?

Two "middle-aged gossips," as the narrator puts it. Mrs. Tabb is apparently a nosy person, "keeping tabs" on everyone at the resort, and Miss Hoogencamp's name is so ridiculous that the reader pictures her as the same.

4. Why does the entire company at the resort start to avoid and condemn the Bredes? What does Mr. Jacobus ask the Bredes for? How do they Bredes react?

It is clear after a day or two that their stories don't add up, and everyone suspects them of treachery. Mr. Jacobus wants to make sure they are married while staying under his roof, and Mr. Brede indignantly demands the bill so they can leave. Mrs. Brede goes off and cries.

5. What incident as the Bredes are packing to leave gives them away?

Mrs. Brede opens her umbrella, and a cascade of rice falls out, revealing the couple to be newlyweds.

Week 12, Day 2 – "The Private History of a Campaign That Failed"

1. What is Twain's position on the "value" of the story both at the beginning and end?

That it has value—maybe not as much as stories of "heroes" of the war—but since it tells about doings of a good deal of young men during the war, it should be told.

2. How does Mark Twain's personal example of his friend show the way that war scrambles the rationality of many who experience it? Can you give another example of this phenomenon?

Mark Twain's friend is a New Yorker and angry at him because Twain's father owns one slave; then his friend becomes a "rebel" and is angry at Twain because Twain's father wanted to free his slave; then his friend becomes a Union soldier and refuses to pay a debt he owes Twain, even though up to then he had been a morally upright man.

Answers will vary on the second question.

3. Describe the Marion Rangers? How do they view the war at first? What soon happens to upset this view?

They are a group of rag-tag young men, goofy, not disciplined, rowdy, and irresponsible, although pleasant enough, for the most part. They march around pretending to be soldiers, viewing the war as a fun vacation, until they hear about a group of Union soldiers in the area, and run off like scared rabbits.

4. Give several examples of humorous occurrences and statements in the story.

Answers will vary, but here are a few examples:

- *Dunlap changes his name into something he thinks sounds more elite.*
- *The Marion Rangers wander around like idiots, not knowing what to do.*

- *When the Rangers hear a rumor about Union soldiers, the author says, “We were equal to the occasion. In our response there was no hesitation, no indecision. We said that if Lyman wanted to meddle with those soldiers he could go ahead and do it, but if he waited for us to follow him he would wait a long time.”*
- *The Rangers’ first “military movement” is nothing more than marching around a farmhouse.*
- *The horses the young men ride throw them, bite their legs, and run under low-branched trees, knocking them out.*
- *Two of the Rangers argue about whose rank is greater, and since no one knows, they’re made equal.*
- *The Rangers fall into a river on top of each other while trying to retreat.*
- *Thinking they hear the enemy coming, the Rangers “heard a sound and held our breath and listened, and it seemed to be the enemy coming, though it could have been a cow.”*
- *A dog latches on to the backside of Bowers and won’t let go until scalding water is thrown on the dog, which burns Bowers; and Stevens devises a kind of overall that lets Bowers show his “battle scars.”*

5. Why do you think the author uses so many long, rambling sentences to tell his story?

It sounds more authentic; it makes the story sound as if it were being told by a participant.

6. How does the killing of the man deeply affect the author? What point does he make about war after it happens?

It makes him hate the war and what he has done. He points out that war is really senseless, since it involves the murder of others whom you would otherwise help and be friends with, but don’t, simply because the government tells you they’re the “enemy.”

Week 15, Day 1 – “Papa Panov’s Special Christmas”

1. Leo Tolstoy enlivens “Papa Panov’s Special Christmas” with specific nouns and verbs. List some of these.

Answers will vary.

2. How do Bible passages like Psalm 146:5-9, Isaiah 1:16-17, Matthew 25:31-46, and James 2:14-17 relate to this story?

They all refer to God’s love for the poor and oppressed, like Papa Panov’s love for them. God cares for orphans and widows and blesses those who feed the hungry and help the oppressed (Psalm 146:5-9, Isaiah 1:16-17); Jesus rewards those who feed the hungry, help the sick, visit the prisoners, gave drink to the thirsty, and clothe the naked (Matthew 25:31-46), and this is the main passage referred to in “Papa Panov’s Special Christmas”; James 2:14-17 instructs Christians that their works should include meeting the physical needs of others, to show our faith is genuine.

3. What makes Papa Panov’s actions so praiseworthy?

He gives to the needy, even when he is trying to save his giving until Jesus comes to him. He acts simply and generously, with no expectation of reward.

4. Papa Panov’s work was for Jesus; what does Jesus say a person must do to do “the work of God” in John 6:27-29?

Jesus says in John 6:27-29 that the work of God is to “believe on him [Jesus] whom he [God] hath sent.” Christmas is a great time to put your faith in Jesus Christ and believe on him for salvation!

Week 15, Day 2 – “A Defender of the Faith”

1. How does Dunbar use the first paragraph of “A Defender of the Faith” to (a) set up the story, and (b) personalize it, so the reader is interested in what will happen next?

(a) He tells where the story is happening, that it is near Christmas, and that the inhabitants of “D” Street are by and large

hopeless and poverty-stricken.

(b) *He personalizes the story by making the reader wonder what, exactly, is the “very animated discussion” going on at the specific location on “D” Street.*

2. Why is Tom called an “old man of ten years”? What does he preach to the other boys and girls?

He is a boy wise for his age, with a paper route, who has seen and heard many things; he tells the other children there is no Santa Claus.

3. Why doesn't Arabella write her story immediately after she overhears all she needs for it?

She is too affected by the faith and innocence of the children she has overheard, and decides instead to take the money she was saving for new boots and buy presents for them, and a dress for the mother.

Week 15, Day 4 – “Aunt Cyrilla’s Christmas Basket”

1. Sum up how Lucy Rose’s feelings about the basket progress during the story.

She thinks it’s silly at first at too countrified and old-fashioned, and doesn’t want her aunt to take it with them because it embarrasses her, but by the story’s end Lucy Rose wants to carry it herself, meaning she has learned its value.

2. When Aunt Cyrilla puts herself and the basket on the train, she “looked beamingly around her at her fellow travelers.” What does this show about her? What could the term “fellow travelers” also represent, more than just train travelers?

This shows Aunt Cyrilla’s genuine love and concern for those around her, and her interest in their lives. “Fellow travelers” can also mean in this sense “fellow travelers in life itself.”

3. What do you think the basket represents?

Answers will vary, but many students might say something like “love for others.”

4. Can you think of something your parents did which embarrassed you at the time—something about which you can look back on now and feel foolish that you were embarrassed? Or, is there a similar situation in the present that you think you should trust your parents’ judgment on until you’re a little older?

Answers will vary!

Week 22, Day 1 – “Dr. Heidegger’s Experiment”

1. How does the reader view the “four venerable friends” after the author describes them in the story’s first paragraph?

Answers will vary, but probably somewhat with pity, since they are very old (nearly “in their graves”) and in pitiable conditions, but also with scorn, since all four lived lives of sin and selfishness.

2. What does the description in the third paragraph of Dr. Heidegger and his study suggest?

It sounds like a mad scientist’s lair! (The study is dim, covered in cobwebs, dusty, filled with ancient books, a skeleton, and so on). Dr. Heidegger supposedly holds “consultations” with Hippocrates, and has a book of magic that supposedly brings to life the skeleton and a painting of a young lady in the study.

3. Explain the significance of the rose.

It is 55 years old, dead (of course), and was given to Dr. Heidegger by Sylvia Ward, the woman in the portrait he was to marry (and who killed herself). The rose's revival under the "magic water" of the Fountain of Youth demonstrates the ability of the water to revive anything, including the old people with Dr. Heidegger.

4. Why do Dr. Heidegger's friends laugh at his suggestion that they should "draw up a few general rules for your guidance, in passing a second time through the perils of youth"? How does their laughter prove foolish?

They ridicule the idea that they would ever repeat the same mistakes they made as young persons, but when the elixir takes effect, the three men fight each other for the hand of the Widow Wycherly—while she encourages it—until they spill the water from the Fountain of Youth.

5. What lesson does "Dr. Heidegger's Experiment" teach? Do the four friends of the doctor learn their lesson? What does this say about mankind?

Answers will vary, but the idea is that man has an appointed time for each stage of life, and it would be foolish or impractical to attempt to go back to any previous stage of life; in fact, the experience would probably be disappointing, like the disappointment the four friends' experience.

The four have not learned their lesson, because as soon as the magic elixir of youth wears off, they resolve to go to try to find the Fountain of Youth anyway.

As to the lessons Hawthorne seems to say about mankind, answer will vary, but might include these: First, the common, misplaced belief among many that being young again would solve all of their problems, or make them happy, is untrue. Second, people often say if they had another chance to live their lives over, they would do things differently, not making the same mistakes they made—but they don't.

Week 22, Day 2 – "The Boom in the Calaveras Clarion"

1. Sum up the story's setting and the purpose for the conversation that the temporary editor overhears in the print room.

The setting is California, in a wooded town, where a temporary editor is running a newspaper. He hears the men in the print room discussing the power of the press and violent altercations between newspapermen and the subjects that they criticize in their articles. This threat of violence sets up the initial confrontation between the editor and Mr. Dimmidge, providing a little suspense.

2. Describe Mr. Dimmidge. What contrast is there between his appearance and his behavior? What does he want from the editor?

Dimmidge is a huge, muscular miner who carries a shotgun into the newspaper office, but he seems gentle and speaks intelligently. He wants to put an ad in the paper that says that unless his wife comes home within four weeks, he will not take her back.

3. Why does Dimmidge want a large, full-page ad? What "cut" does he choose to include with it, and why is his choice ironic?

He wants it to look impressive. He includes a woodcut of a runaway slave.

4. What second ad does he want to place privately? How do these ads do for the newspaper and the newspaper employees?

The second ad is place so he can catch a man that he thinks is the reason why his wife left his (Mr. Dimmidge's) home. The ads prove of great interest to the public, the newspapers sell out quickly, and ad rates increase, making the paper more profitable. The temporary editor and printers are treated like celebrities by the public, who endlessly discusses the situation (what caused it, whether the husband or the wife is in the right, and so on); the temporary editor even receives an offer for a job working for a San Francisco paper.

5. How does the ad and the ad by Mrs. Dimmidge eventually backfire?

Some people accuse the newspaper of creating the entire ad up in order to sell more newspapers. Then, when Mrs. Dimmidge places her own ad, people believe it's just another trick—even the paper's own editor and foreman!

6. What is Mrs. Dimmidge's complaint against her husband? Describe her ad and "cut."

Mrs. Dimmidge says that she was treated like a slave by Mr. Dimmidge, and she ran away. Her ad notifies Mr. Dimmidge that unless he is back to his home in Sonora in a week, he'd better watch out! She chooses a woodcut of an arm holding a hammer.

7. How does Mrs. Dimmidge react when she finds out about the second ad placed by Mr. Dimmidge?

She laughs uproariously, because she knows Mr. Dimmidge is jealous—though he has nothing to be jealous of. She then places her own ad, which teasingly tells Mr. Dimmidge to keep following R. B.

8. What happy, long-term effect do the ads have?

They bring Mr. and Mrs. Dimmidge back together!

Week 22, Day 3 – "The Last Leaf"

1. Describe how the characters of Sue and Johnsy are alike and different.

The two are both struggling artists. Sue is stronger than Johnsy, who is from California and not as used to the cold in New York City; consequently, she makes an easier victim for "Mr. Pneumonia." Johnsy is a little dramatic and theatrical about her illness; Sue takes a no-nonsense, but thoughtful, approach to helping Johnsy get over her pneumonia.

2. Why, specifically, does the doctor initially say Johnsy's chances of survival are low? How does he say Sue can help Johnsy increase her odds?

Johnsy, who seems to be playing up the role of a suffering artist, has decided she's not going to live, and has lowered her chances. Sue can help by improving Johnsy's mood, talking about life, getting her interest up in things like fashion, and so on.

3. Explain Johnsy's apparent belief about the leaves. How does Sue respond to her theory?

Johnsy says she will die when the last leaf falls off the vine against a brick wall across the street. Sue pooh-poohs the idea, and tells Johnsy not to look out the window until she gets back, and leaves to go get Behrman to be a model for her.

4. What is Behrman like? What is his "masterpiece"?

He is over 60, a "failure at art," always claiming he is about to paint a masterpiece, but not ambitious enough to actually do it, and a drunk. Behrman's "masterpiece" is the last leaf, which he painted on the vine, to keep Johnsy from willing herself to die.

Week 22, Day 3 – "How I Killed a Bear"

1. Give several examples of humor in "How I Killed a Bear."

Some examples include these:

- *The author's friend could use a shotgun to hit a tree, only if there was no wind, the tree was close, and the tree was large.*
- *The author used a shotgun and incompetently killed a robin.*
- *Cows occasionally walk up to the author while he is berrying and look at him stupidly.*
- *The author thinks of an unintentionally hilarious story about a girl whose father kills a bear who has raised her, with the moral being "be kind to animals."*
- *The bear's manners are said to be "thoroughly disagreeable."*

- *The author's thoughts race through his head while the bear chases him—he writes a book, has it illustrated and published, sells 50,000 copies, and goes to Europe on the money he makes before the bear reaches him. He also thinks of sins he's committed.*
- *The author worries about getting eaten by a bear because his wife will wonder what happened to him, and his children will wonder where their blackberries are.*
- *The author composes mock epitaphs for his tombstone, first in English, then in German.*

2. How does the author initially react to the bear? How does the bear react?

He backs away and gives him the bucket of berries he has picked. The bear gets angry and begins chasing him through the brush.

3. How does repeating the phrase “The bear was coming on” affect the story?

Answers will vary, but it adds to both the humor and suspense.

Week 26, Day 2 – “Journalism in Tennessee”

1. With what comment does Twain begin and end the story?

By remarking that he came to the South for his health, which is ironic, since he has to leave for the same reason.

2. How do the names of the area newspapers hint at what is to happen?

They're named things like Avalanche, War-Whoop, Earthquake, Thunderbolt, Battle-Cry of Freedom, Morning Howl, Dying Shriek for Liberty, and so on, indicating possibly violent or excitable publishers, and giving a clue of the violence that follows.

3. How does the editor of the *War Whoop*'s appearance contrast with his “duties” as editor?

He is neatly dressed and appears cultured, but engages in deadly combat with other editors.

4. Compare the assistant editor's “Spirit of the Tennessee Press” to the editor's version after he rewrites the assistant editor's.

It isn't “mush and milk journalism,” but it goes too far in insulting every person, town, or institution related to the topics the assistant editor writes about in his summaries.

5. Give some examples of how Twain's matter-of-fact tone adds humor.

Answers will vary, but they might include these:

- *A shot “marred the symmetry of the editor's ear.”*
- *“Smith dropped, shot in the thigh.”*
- *“Merely a finger shot off.”*
- *The editor says, “That stove is utterly ruined” (instead of worrying about the assistant editor).*
- *The brick gave the associate editor “a considerable jolt in the middle of the back.”*
- *“The colonel's bullet ended its career in the fleshy part of my thigh.”*

6. What is ironic about the editor's behavior and some of the pieces he writes?

He says that the duty of newspaper editors is to civilize the readers (in between insulting everybody under the sun and shooting at other editors), and while dueling the Colonel, he puts off writing a piece on encouraging the moral development of America.

7. What idea(s) might Mark Twain be suggesting with “Journalism in Tennessee”?

Answers will vary, but might include the ideas that newspaper editors take themselves too seriously, that they are hypocritical, that there are better ways to write than by insulting others, and so on.

Week 26, Day 3 – “The Ransom of Red Chief”

1. Why do Bill and Sam decide to go to a small town, rather than a large city, to put into motion their latest “business venture”?

They think townspeople generally love their children more, and they believe there is less of a chance of many police getting after them.

2. Why do they select the boy? What is he like?

He is an only child, and his father is a wealthy, prominent citizen. The boy is about 10, red-haired, freckled, and a complete nuisance!

3. In what ways are Bill and Sam injured by the boy?

He hits Bill in the eye with a rock, kicks him until he is covered in bruises, he tries to scalp Bill, he puts a hot potato down Bill’s back, he slingshots a rock and hits Bill in the head, and so on.

4. What unexpected reaction do Bill and Sam receive from the boy’s parents and the citizens of the town? What is the reason for this reaction?

They don’t care at all that the boy has been kidnapped, because they can’t stand him!

5. Why does Bill say his favorite Bible character is King Herod?

Because King Herod had many children killed, like Bill wants to do to the Dorset boy.

6. How does the story’s title prove ironic?

The ransom that Bill and Sam ask for “Red Chief” turns out to be a ransom that they pay the boy’s father so they can be rid of him!

Week 30, Day 1 – “Three Questions”

1. List the three questions the king wants to know the answers to.

When is the right time to begin everything? Who are the right people to listen to, and whom should I avoid? What is the most important thing to do?

2. What three questions did you write down that, as a Christian, you believe are even more important than the king’s questions?

Answers will vary.

3. How are the king’s questions answered?

“When is the right time to begin?” is answered when the hermit tells the king that the most important time is “now,” when something important—like digging, or saving a man’s life—needs to be done. The answer to “Who are the right people to listen to?”, the hermit tells the king, is “he with whom you are.” And the answer to “What is the most important thing to do?” is to do good to those who are with you, because that is the reason man was sent into this life.

4. In comparison with what the hermit says is man's purpose in life: What does God say is man's duty and purpose? (See Ecclesiastes 12:13, John 6:27-29, and John 14:1-6.) For what purpose did Jesus come to earth? (See Matthew 5:17, Luke 19:10, and John 12:46.)

Man's duty and purpose is to fear God and keep his commandments" (Ecclesiastes 12:13), and to do the work of God by believing in Jesus Christ (John 6:27-29, John 14:1-6).

Jesus came to fulfill the law and the prophets (Matthew 5:17), to seek and to save lost people (Luke 19:10), and to give light to those who believe on him (John 12:46).

Week 30, Day 1 – "A White Heron"

1. Describe Sylvia's age, personality, background, and feeling for living in the woods. Why do you think the author named her "Sylvia"?

She is nine years old, quiet and shy ("afraid of folks," say her parents), and lived until she was eight in a busy city. She lives with her grandmother in the country because Sylvia's parents gave her up so she could thrive in the country, with so many other children. Sylvia loves living in the woods, thinking that it seemed as if she never had been alive at all before she came to live at the farm," whispering that "this was a beautiful place to live in, and she never should wish to go home," and pitying a former city neighbor of hers that had one paltry geranium too look at.

The author names her "Sylvia" most likely because it sounds like the word "silva," the Latin word for "forest," and the root for English words such as "sylvan" (like or having to do with the forest).

2. What does the young man want? How does Sylvia feel about this? Describe the young man's relationship with Sylvia.

He wants to capture and stuff a snowy egret (little white heron). This makes Sylvia's heart beat fast, because she likes the bird, and doesn't want it captured and shot. Sylvia is fascinated by the young man and has a girlish crush on him, but she is afraid of him at first ("afraid of folks" again). After traveling the woods with him for a day, she becomes more comfortable, to the point where she is pleased about the progress she has made since the previous day when she first heard him whistle in the woods.

3. What decision does Sylvia have to make when the young man asks about the white heron? What guides her in making the decision? What guides a Christian in making a difficult decision like Sylvia's?

Whether or not to please the young man—of whom she is smitten—by showing him where the white heron lives, or to save the heron's life. Her own feelings on loving nature lead Sylvia to decide to keep the white heron's nest secret. A Christian's guide to making difficult decisions comes from following what God has had written for Christians to live by—the Bible—as well as obedience to promptings from the Holy Spirit.

4. Explain the significance or symbolism in (a) the "wretched dry geranium" that belongs to a neighbor Sylvia knew in town, and (b) Sylvia's climb up the pine tree, and (c) the white heron itself.

Answers will vary, but might touch on these ideas: The geranium, which struggled to survive in the crowded town, is like Sylvia, who thrived in the natural setting of the Maine woods. Sylvia's climb up the pine tree represents her passage to maturity, overcoming a difficult obstacle—the climb, or the awkwardness resulting from her decision to keep silent about the heron—to do what she believed was needed to save the bird. The white heron represents nature itself, which Sylvia has grown to love dearly since moving to the country. Sylvia tries to protect the heron/nature from outsiders like the young man who would destroy it only for their own uses (unlike Sylvia's grandmother, who talks about killing birds for food, for example).

Week 30, Day 2 – "For Better or Worse"

1. What kind of man is Ben Davis at the story's opening?

Down on his luck a little, but not too poor to buy a friend a drink. A little shabby, getting old, and having lived a rough sailor's life.

2. Why does George Wotton get confused at Ben's story of how Ben and his wife separated years ago?

Ben claims he walked out on his mean wife, but then says she walked out on him, and can't keep straight whose fault it was.

3. What is the shock Ben receives? Why is Mrs. Smith mistrustful of Ben's motives for wanting to find his wife?

His wife, whom he left 35 years ago, has been living it up as a result of inheriting a great deal of money—and never bothered to look for him!

The "old lady at the door" (Mrs. Davis) thinks Ben wants her back for her money.

4. Why do you think the house goes up for sale?

Mrs. Davis probably just wants to escape being around her husband, to keep him from bothering her, since she thinks he'll never change, and always be mean to her.

5. What about Ben Davis gets through to Mrs. Smith?

He looks so miserable and poor that it touches her, and afterwards he compliments his wife when he thinks the "old lady" is his wife's servant, as well as promises to behave when Mrs. Davis asks him!