

American Literature for Christian Homeschoolers

Volume 2: Short Stories

Answer Key to Review Questions

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Week 1, Day 3: Rip Van Winkle

1. What details about the story's *setting* (time and place) are established in the first few paragraphs?

It is in the Catskill Mountains in New York, and it is set in the American colonial times when America was under British rule.

2. Describe Rip Van Winkle's character traits, his relationship with his wife, and how he gets along with the villagers.

He is a willing worker; he gets along with everyone (even dogs!), but his relationship with his wife suffers because he neglects the needs of his own house, mostly his farm, which is in terrible shape. His wife acts like a "shrew," constantly nagging him because of this. In response to her nagging, Rip just shrugs his shoulders and avoids arguing with her.

3. How does Rip Van Winkle typically escape his wife?

He goes off to the inn and discusses issues with other men, or goes hunting in the woods.

4. Describe the hunting trip that sets in motion the story's main plot device, and give details on what happens when Rip awakens. How is his arrival back at the village unsettling?

Rip goes hunting, hears thunder in the sky, and then hears a voice call his name and sees someone. It is an older, short man who seems somewhat familiar to Rip, carrying a keg of beer, who leads him to an open spot in the woods surrounded by high cliffs and trees, and where a number of others—dressed like the old man and somewhat odd-looking—are playing games, although their faces are grave and they don't speak. The only sound is the sound of their bowling game, which sounds like thunder. They sit and stare at Rip for a little while, then return to their games and drinking. Rip then joins them in drinking, and he falls asleep.

He sees his gun rusted, Wolf is gone, his joints are stiff, the dry mountain gully now has water flowing in it, and he feels hungry for breakfast. Rip doesn't recognize any of the villagers, which is strange, because he knew almost everyone. The villagers' dress is different. When they all stroke their chins, he feels that he has a long beard. Children don't run to him, and dogs bark at him. There are many new people.

5. Describe Rip's arrival at his house and his exploration of the village. What shocking news does he learn when he asks about his friends? How do the villagers respond when he asks if anybody knows Rip Van Winkle?

It is broken down and dilapidated, empty, his wife is not there. The village inn is gone, and a new building is in its place, with a new owner. The tree has been replaced by a flagpole with an American flag. The picture of King George has been replaced with a picture of George Washington. Politicians ask him about his political beliefs, and he is accused of being a "tory" when he says, "God bless King George." Rip learns that many of his friends have been dead for years, or missing, or have had other drastic changes to their lives. The villagers point to Rip's son when Rip asks if anyone knows his name.

6. What relative does Rip see who fills him in on what has happened? How does Peter Vanderdonk help?

His daughter Judith tells him that Rip Van Winkle went missing 20 years ago, and that his wife has died, from blowing a blood vessel while screaming at a merchant! Peter Vanderdonk assures the villagers that it is indeed Rip Van Winkle returned. He says that it must have been Hendrick Hudson's spirit that Rip had seen in the opening, corroborating the nine-pins game and the sound of thunder.

7. Explain the story's conclusion.

Rip goes home to live with his daughter's family. His son follows in his steps, lazily living out his life around the village. Rip makes new friends and discovers that since he is old, he can get away with being lazy without criticism. He learns about the American Revolution and other events he missed while asleep, and retells his story until practically everyone in the village knows it by heart.

8. What does the sentence "there was one species of despotism under which he had long groaned, and that was—petticoat government" mean? What does the last sentence mean when it says that the henpecked husbands wish for "a quieting draught out of Rip Van Winkle's flagon"?

Rip didn't care about politics, but he didn't like living under the "rule" of his nagging wife.

The village's henpecked husbands long for lives without nagging wives.

9. How does Irving make "Rip Van Winkle" a specifically *American* tale?

The setting establishes it in the Catskill Mountains (the description of the mountains and the weather make it interesting for readers who don't live in America or know about that particular geography). The American colonists have a certain way of thinking that is demonstrated in the way they talk, especially when Rip wakes up and sees the American flag on the pole and a picture of George Washington, and when the crowd almost tears him apart for saying he is loyal to King George. There are various mentions of Congress and the American Revolution.

Week 3, Day 3: The Minister's Black Veil

1. What adjectives describe the children, young men, and maidens in the first paragraph? How are they de-scribed later?

Bright, spruce, pretty. Afraid, upset, uneasy.

2. What is Hooper like in appearance and character? What does the veil conceal?

Wears a black veil, but neat, about 30 years old, not married. The veil conceals his face, except for his mouth and chin.

3. Describe how the parishioners react to Mr. Hooper's veil.

They are repulsed, frightened, and baffled. They call him "mad" and "awful." One woman faints and has to be taken away. Men and women feel a disturbance when they see it.

4. How is Hooper's sermon at the story's beginning? What is the subject?

More powerful than usual. It affects the congregation tremendously. The subject is secret sins.

5. What two strange sights do viewers claim to have seen at the young lady's funeral?

That the young lady's corpse shuddered at seeing Mr. Hooper in his veil, and that Mr. Hooper was walking with the maiden's spirit after the funeral.

6. How is the bride described at the wedding Mr. Hooper officiates? Why does this sound familiar? Explain what Mr. Hooper does when he sees himself in the mirror.

She has cold fingers and is deathly pale—just like the maiden who was earlier buried. Hooper gasps and is upset at his appearance, quickly leaving the wedding.

7. Why do you think no one asks Mr. Hooper about his veil for so long? What does the group of men who decide to ask him about the veil end up doing? Explain Elizabeth's attempt.

Answers will vary. The deputation doesn't get anywhere with Hooper, because the veil seems to "hang down before his heart," and they are too embarrassed to continue. Elizabeth asks him to remove it, but he refuses, saying that there is a time when all our veils will be removed. Hooper says the veil is a "type and a symbol" that can never be removed, and that it represents his sorrow.

8. What two reactions does Hooper notice of people now when he takes walks? How does Hooper himself react to his veil?

Either they run away from him, or jump in his way. Hooper hates the sight of it, to the extent that he avoids mirrors altogether.

9. What one benefit does the veil afford Mr. Hooper?

It gives him power in helping people who are in agony over their sin. Hooper's black veil makes him appear to sympathize with them more greatly.

10. Describe Hooper's death and the sight he sees right before he dies.

Other ministers and Elizabeth are there for him. He is concerned that his veil might slip aside. Mr. Clark tries to get him to take it off, but Hooper refuses. He chides the people for keeping themselves away from each other and from God, and sees veils on all of THEIR faces!

11. What is the significance of the old woman's saying at the story's beginning: "He has changed himself into something awful only by hiding his face"? Explain the significance of the author's words about Mr. Hooper: "Love and sympathy could never reach him."

These sum up the story's theme: hiding our true selves and faults/sins from others.

12. Name the verb that often is used to show how people react to the veil.

"Shudder."

13. What do you believe is the *moral* of this parable? (See for example Mark 15:33-38, 1 Timothy 2:5-6, Galatians 6:2, and James 5:16.)

Jesus made a way to cleanse all people of their sins; his coming "tore the temple veil in two" and made a way to come directly to God. Christians are to bear one another's burdens and confess their faults to each other. Secret sins only isolate ourselves from others.

Week 4, Day 3: The Purloined Letter

1. Give details of the story's setting. Who is the narrator of the story?

Dupin and his friend are sitting in their apartment in Paris, silently passing an hour. The narrator is Dupin's friend.

2. What are Dupin and Monsieur G like?

Dupin is calculating, logical, and slightly impatient; Monsieur G is the Parisian police chief, not too bright (he calls everything he doesn't understand "odd").

3. How is Dupin prophetic when he remarks at the story's beginning: "Perhaps the mystery is a little too plain"?

The mystery of the letter is solved in discovering that it is a "simple" solution—that it is right out in the open.

4. How is the letter purloined?

The lady to whom it was written was reading it and was forced to leave it out in the open when someone walked into her room, in order to avoid drawing attention to it. Minister D— saw who the letter was addressed to and took advantage of the situation to steal it. Minister D— steals it by replacing the letter with one that was similar.

5. List the steps that Prefect G has taken to recover the letter.

He has had every inch of Minister D—'s apartment searched, and has had Minister D himself searched under the guise of being robbed.

6. What shocks Dupin's friend and the Prefect a month or so after the Prefect first meets with Dupin to discuss the case of the purloined letter?

Dupin hands him the letter for part of the Prefect's reward.

7. Explain how Dupin compares a schoolboy guessing game to the solving of the crime.

Dupin attempts to put himself in the shoes of the thief, as the winning schoolboy puts himself in the shoes of those boys from whom he wins marbles. The Prefect, he says, did not do this, but merely used the normal police methods to find the letter, which is why he failed.

8. Sum up Dupin's "mathematician vs. poet" argument. Where does Minister D— hide the letter, and why?

Dupin says that Minister D— was more than just a logical thinker; he was poetic, and his method of devising a hiding place for the letter could not have been determined by simply applying logical principles, as if solving the mystery of letter's location were the same as solving an algebraic problem. Minister D— hides the letter in plain view, to confound what he knows will be the police's method of investigation.

9. How does Dupin actually retrieve the letter from Minister D—'s apartment?

In disguise, he visits Minister D—'s apartment, sees a letter carelessly laid aside, and realizes that this is the purloined letter, since the letter is so obviously dirty and torn, which is not typical of Minister D—'s habits.

He memorizes the look of the letter, exits (leaving his snuff box), returns supposedly for the snuff box, arranges for an outside distraction, and recovers the letter, replacing it with a close facsimile, on which he writes a taunting note to Minister D—, who has wronged him in the past.

10. What does Dupin's manner of discussing the case with his friend do for the reader? How does Poe's method of having Dupin's *friend* tell the story affect the reader?

Dupin sounds a little pompous when he discusses his method of solving the mystery of the purloined letter. Having Dupin's friend ask questions and obviously come across as less logical and intelligent as Dupin helps the reader sympathize with Dupin's friend, which makes the conclusion of the story seem less like a lecture.

11. If you are familiar with Sherlock Holmes, name some of the ways that you think Holmes creator Sir Arthur Conan Doyle was influenced by Poe.

Like Sherlock Holmes, Dupin smokes, has an arrogant personality, and is often seen with his friend Dr. Watson (who also writes about the detective's cases, like Dupin's narrator friend). The police in Sherlock Holmes stories are often inept and clueless compared to Holmes.

Week 5, Day 2: A Handful of Clay

1. What does the Bible say on the topic raised in “A Handful of Clay” in Isaiah 64:8 and Galatians 6:9? Write a brief summary.

Isaiah 64:8 – But now, O LORD, thou art our father; we are the clay, and thou our potter; and we all are the work of thy hand.

Galatians 6:9 – And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not.

We’re God’s work, and He has a purpose for us; we should press on, even if it seems as if we don’t have a glamorous purpose, if we do God’s work, we’ll reap rewards—maybe just in the next life, if not in this one.

2. Give an example of a person (someone you know, someone you’ve read about, someone in the Bible) who has experienced what the clay experienced in this story.

Answers will vary!

Week 5, Day 4: Pigs Is Pigs

1. List several examples of humor in “Pigs Is Pigs.”

Answers will vary, but might include Flannery’s not knowing that guinea pigs weren’t pigs, Mrs. Morehouse’s jumping, the Morehouse boy’s acting guilty, Flannery’s being inwardly satisfied for “knowing he did his duty well,” the multiplying of the pigs, the stupidity and inefficiency of the post office, the crazed way Flannery packs up the pigs and the day that the main office gets the shipment of thousands of guinea pigs!

2. What could both Morehouse and Flannery have done better to stop the guinea pig fiasco from happening?

Answers will vary!

3. What non-humorous point might the author be making in the story?

Answers will vary, but possibly the inefficiency of some businesses (or government agencies), because of the nature of the agencies and/or stubbornness of those working in them.

4. Tell about a time you were frustrated and couldn’t make someone understand a basic fact.

Answers will vary!

Week 6, Day 1: The Log of a Cowboy (Chapters 1 & 2)

1. What relationship with cattle does Thomas have at the story's opening? What effect does this have on him?

He milks his family's cows, herds them when it's time, and closely watches them to make sure foragers don't steal them. This experience, and the enjoyment of doing it, lead to his wanting to become a cowboy.

2. How does Thomas's family's move, and his work experience, prepare him for the cattle drive?

He learns to move cattle, persist through hardships, and travel long distances, all of which will serve him well as a cowboy moving a herd of cattle a thousand miles. He also learns how to ride long distances, speak Spanish, and play the fiddle!

3. Give some details of the cattle drive (how far, how many, where, etc.). What details of riding cattle did you not know or surprised you?

It is a thousand-mile trip, three thousand head of cattle, from Texas to Montana. It starts in May and is to end in September; traveling 15 miles a day will ensure the herd gets there on time. Other unknown or surprising details will vary!

Week 6, Day 2: The Log of a Cowboy (Chapters 7 & 10)

1. What happens with the "trail cutters," Flood, and the Texas Rangers?

The "trail cutters" are cattle rustlers. Flood treats them nicely, pretends not to know who they are, and refuses to allow them to take cattle they claim is theirs. The Texas Rangers meet the cattle drivers, and the next day when the rustlers return with a large group of armed men, the Texas Rangers spring on them and arrest them.

2. What is difficult about dealing with the Plains Indian chief and running the herd through potential Indian territory?

Flood doesn't know how much of what the chief tells him is the truth, but decides to give him several cows anyway; Flood also tries to determine through two Apaches, using bribery, what is the safest route to take (to avoid other tribes). Part of the difficulty lies in figuring out if nearby tribes have enough warriors to be a threat to the cattle drivers.

3. What is both encouraging and worrisome about running into the herd of buffalo?

The men are happy about getting fresh meat, but concerned that the buffalo could stampede, causing the cattle to also stampede.

4. What is your thought on how the cowboys handle the Salt Fork River?

Answers will vary, but it's impressive, given as dangerous as its crossing is, that they just accept the challenge: "Get across we must."

Week 6, Day 3: The Log of a Cowboy (Chapters 20, 23, 24)

1. Why does “The Rebel” conduct a gunfight with the stranger in the bar? What is inherently irrational about such fights?

The stranger “insults” him by offering a toast to General Grant; even though Flood had just been joking with him about the same thing. The irrationality of the gunfight is that it is wildly out of proportion with the supposed insult, and it doesn’t really prove either man is correct or the winner—just faster and more accurate with a gun!

2. Are the delivery of the cattle and trip back to Texas a letdown, or anti-climactic, after the various exciting action scenes in the story? Why or why not?

Answers will vary.

3. What are some of the pros and cons of living and working in the style of the cowboys who make the cattle drive?

Answers will vary, but might include things like companionship, living in the wide open, accomplishing a difficult and demanding task; but also loneliness, a tough life on the trail, etc.

Week 8: Bartleby the Scrivener

1. Describe how Melville creates great interest with his opening paragraph. How are the opening and closing paragraphs similar?

He talks about a mysterious copyist named Bartleby, about whom little is known. The narrator expresses his wish to have known more about this fascinating copyist who worked for him. The opening and closing paragraphs both describe the mystery of Bartleby in a way that leaves the reader wanting to know more about this strange character.

2. Who is the narrator? What kind of a man is he?

He is a lawyer, about 60 years old, who deals in deeds and mortgages. He is a “safe,” “prudent,” and calm man, not given to excitement, and not very ambitious.

3. Describe the narrator’s office building.

It sits surrounded by taller buildings and afford only a view of walls that tower around and over it.

4. What are Turkey, Nippers, and Ginger Nut like? How does the lawyer/narrator deal with them? What are their real names?

Turkey, Nippers, and Ginger Nut are employees of the narrator. Turkey and Nippers are office copyists; Ginger Nut is an errand boy.

Turkey is about 60, fat, frequently out of breath, and energetic and efficient, at least before noon. After lunch, he is hopelessly useless and angrily storms around the office, not getting much production work done. The narrator tries to talk him out of working in the afternoons, but Turkey insists he is productive, and the narrator agrees to allow him to stay in the afternoons, although giving him his less important papers so he won’t spoil them through errors caused by his bad temper.

Nippers is about 25, pale and sickly looking, and tormented by “ambition and [bad] digestion.” He grinds his teeth over his mistakes, and is the opposite of Turkey in the timing of his temperament—whereas Turkey is pleasant before noon and angry after lunch, Nippers is irritable in the mornings, and agreeable in the afternoons (partly because he has a few beers sometimes during lunch)! He is irritated at the height of the table he works upon, constantly adjusting it with no success, sometimes even picking it up and slamming it down on the floor. He’s a quick copyist, but a bad dresser.

Ginger-Nut is a twelve-year-old errand boy. He loves nuts and keeps nutshells in his desk. He also frequently is employed by Turkey and Nippers to buy cakes and apples.

The real names of these three characters are never given.

5. Describe Bartleby’s looks and behavior. Where does the narrator place him in the office? What is Bartleby’s view from his desk?

Bartleby looks pale and ghostlike. He is calm and quiet, which pleases the narrator (who hopes it will set an example for Turkey and Nippers). Although he copies a great deal, he writes mechanically and cheerlessly.

He is placed in a desk close to the narrator, but his only outside view is a high brick wall, three feet away from the window. The narrator also places a folding screen between Bartleby and himself, so they cannot see each other.

6. What does Bartleby do that stuns the narrator? How does he (the narrator), Turkey, and Nippers react to Bartleby? Why doesn't the narrator fire Bartleby?

When the narrator one day requests him to proofread a document, Bartleby replies, "I would prefer not to." The narrator is stunned that any employee would talk to his employer this way. He asks Turkey, Nippers, and Ginger Nut what they think, and they support the narrator. He doesn't fire Bartleby only because Bartleby shows no anger or disrespect whatsoever with his reply. The narrator believes Bartleby doesn't mean to be insolent, but that he cannot help it somehow. He keeps Bartleby because he believes Bartleby will not be tolerated by any other employer for being eccentric, and if not for his patience and tolerance toward Bartleby, that he would starve.

7. List some of the strange characteristics of Bartleby that the narrator observes.

- *He never sees Bartleby leave the office.*
- *He seems to live only on ginger nuts.*
- *He never speaks except when spoken to.*
- *He stands looking out of the window at the brick wall for long periods of time.*
- *He never goes out anywhere.*
- *He refuses to give anyone any information about himself.*

8. What happens to the narrator's relationship with Bartleby over time?

He accepts Bartleby as a mystery, allowing for his persistent refusals to assist him.

9. What does the narrator's visit to his office on a Sunday reveal? What does this do for the narrator's sentiment for Bartleby?

Bartleby is sleeping in the law office, and apparently never leaves. The narrator is overwhelmed at the sadness of it and feels tenderly toward Bartleby. He begins to think of the sadness of Bartleby's existence—lonely and miserable, among so many bright colors and happy people with friends in the city. He doesn't feel that he can ever be of any real help to Bartleby, because, as he says, Bartleby's "soul...suffered, and his soul I could not reach."

10. What "word" do the men in the office pick up from Bartleby?

"Prefer."

11. What does Bartleby finally decide about his work at the office? What does the narrator tell Bartleby, and how does Bartleby react?

Bartleby refuses to do any more copying. The narrator tries to comply for a period of time, but eventually asks him to leave. Bartleby refuses to go. The situation regresses to a point where Bartleby does nothing at the office but stare out the window at the wall all day.

12. How does reading "Edwards on the Will" and "Priestly on Necessity" give temporary comfort to the narrator? What does he decide to do in that respect? What changes his mind?

He convinces himself that there is nothing he could ever do to encourage Bartleby to change, since Bartleby is predestined by “Providence” to act the way he does. The narrator decides that he will allow “Providence” to use him to provide Bartleby with a place to stay and work as long as is necessary. When the narrator’s colleagues remark disparagingly about Bartleby’s presence—and when Bartleby refuses to comply with their minor requests for help—the narrator decides to be free of Bartleby by moving his offices and leaving him behind.

13. After Bartleby is sent to the Tombs, what does the narrator find him doing when he visits him? How is this scene familiar?

He finds Staring at a high wall inside the prison, which is the same thing Bartleby did at the office.

14. Explain the story’s end and the tantalizing details (and lack of details) on Bartleby’s past.

Bartleby starves himself to death in the Tombs. Very little is known about him except for his previous employment at the Dead Letter Office in Washington, D.C.

15. Give examples of how “wall” or “walls” appear several times in “Bartleby.” What do you think they might represent?

“Bartleby” is subtitled “A Story of Wall Street.” There are walls in the office, walls outside the office window, and walls at the Tombs where Bartleby stays. They probably represent Bartleby’s—and possibly mankind’s—loneliness and isolation from others. More specifically, the office walls might represent man’s isolation from other people, and the high walls outside might represent man’s isolation from God.

For Additional Study: Bartleby the Scrivener

List some examples of humor in “Bartleby.”

- Turkey makes scraping noises with his pen that blend with the scraping noises he makes while eating ginger nut cakes.
- Turkey absent mindedly licks a flat ginger nut cake and tries to apply it to an envelope for a seal.
- Nippers and Turkey take turns being irritable and loud (one in the morning, one in the afternoon).
- The narrator wonders if ginger nut cakes are too spicy for Bartleby, but remarks that probably Bartleby prefers that they should not be.
- Turkey and Nippers both offer to punch Bartleby for “preferring not to” help with copying.
- The men in the office all begin to use the word “prefer” unintentionally.
- The narrator offers Bartleby a job traveling with a gentleman to Europe, so Bartleby can “entertain” him with his conversation, even though Bartleby barely speaks to anyone.
- The grub-man at the Tombs introduces himself to Bartleby by saying, “Hope you find it pleasant here, sir;—spacious grounds—cool apartments, sir—hope you’ll stay with us some time” (as if Bartleby really wants to be in a prison for a long time).
- The grub-man asks the narrator if he knows a man named Monroe, a prisoner from Sing-Sing, and the narrator replies matter-of-factly, “No, I was never socially acquainted with any forgers.”

It might seem strange that the narrator seems to pity and identify more with John C. Colt more than he does Samuel Adams, Colt’s victim. Why do you think the narrator feels this way?

Answers will vary, but it might be because the narrator feels for the frustration of Colt and his rash decision to strike out at and kill Adams for upsetting him so greatly.

What is the irony in the narrator’s hiring Bartleby partly because of his (Bartleby’s) calm demeanor?

Bartleby is hired partly to calm down the office—with Turkey and Nippers being disruptive and bad-tempered at different times of the day—but he does the opposite, throwing the office into turmoil.

When the narrator goes by his office on the way to church one Sunday morning, he discovers that Bartleby has been living there. The narrator then states, “Somehow, the things I had seen disqualified me for the time from church-going.”

What might this statement by the narrator—and the general mood in “Bartleby”—demonstrate about Melville’s view of God? How would a Christian respond? (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.)

Answers will vary, but one possibility is that this is author Herman Melville’s suggestion that the evil and loneliness in the world demonstrates that he did not think that there was a God (or such problems would not exist), or that he did not like the way that God allowed pain in the world. The Bible says in the above verses, however, that...

- God’s thoughts toward those who trust in Him can’t be numbered (Psalm 40:5).
- God is merciful, gracious, and slow to anger (Psalm 103:8).
- God loved the world so much He sent Jesus to die for the world’s sins (John 3:14-17).
- Nothing can separate the Christian from the love of Christ (Romans 8:35-39).
- God is filled with pity and tenderness toward mankind (James 5:10-11).

- *God cares for those who trust in Him, and He wants us to cast our cares upon Him (1 Peter 5:6-7).*
- *God is patient, not willing that any should perish, but that all would come to repentance (2 Peter 3:9).*

What things happen to Bartleby that remind you of what happened to Jesus Christ?

- *The narrator questions Bartleby, who often doesn't answer (like Pilate questioning Jesus at his crucifixion).*
- *After the narrator moves to a new office and Bartleby hangs around the old one, the narrator denies three times to his colleagues that he doesn't know or isn't responsible for Bartleby (like Peter's denial of Jesus.)*
- *At the Tombs, Bartleby is surrounded by thieves and murderers (as Jesus was on the cross).*

Week 9, Day 2: The Luck of Roaring Camp

1. What is the dual meaning of the title of this short story?

It means both “the fortune of Roaring Camp” (which improved after the baby arrived), and the name that the camp gives the baby.

2. List some of the colorful names of characters in this story. What do these names do for the reader?

French Peter, Kanaka Joe, Cherokee Sal, Stumpy, Kentuck. They make the story sound like it is full of exciting, interesting people.

3. What makes Cherokee Sal’s suffering in childbirth especially difficult?

She is the only woman in the camp, surrounded by men who can’t sympathize with her and can’t help her deliver her baby (although Sandy Tipton, at least for a moment, thinks about her condition instead of the cards he has in his hand).

4. About how many residents are there in Roaring Camp? What are they like?

There are about 100 residents. They are rough characters, fugitives, criminals, gamblers, and so on.

5. What is the camp’s geography? Why is it important that Harte describes this at the story’s beginning?

Roaring Camp sits in a valley where two hills meet a river. The only way out is a steep trail. This is important, because it explains the flood later in the story.

6. How does the town react to the baby’s birth?

They are unsure of what to do. Stumpy organizes a donation line, and the men line up and donate odd items that a baby would not need, although generously. Kentuck is charmed when the infant grabs hold of his finger while he is passing through the line to look at the baby. They decide to raise the infant themselves, not trusting other camps (even ones with females) to look after it as honestly as they would.

7. How does the baby’s naming ceremony turn out?

It begins as a parody of a christening ceremony, but Stumpy steps in and names the baby, in a serious manner, “Thomas Luck.”

8. How does Thomas Luck begin to affect the camp?

The men clean up their behavior, they wash the cabins and themselves, they are quieter (so as not to disturb Thomas), they stop cursing, and they see the beauty in objects like flowers. The camp seems to prosper.

9. How does the winter of 1851 affect Roaring Camp?

The deep snow melts, causing a flood, which destroys the camp. Stumpy’s cabin is destroyed and he is killed, but Thomas Luck disappears. Kentuck is found holding Thomas Luck, who has died, but Kentuck says that the baby is taking him with him.

10. Give some examples of humor in this story.

Here are some examples:

- *The men contribute items to the baby, including a Bible (“contributor not detected”), and a silver teaspoon, on which the initials were not the giver’s (indicating that it was stolen or possibly won by gambling).*
- *Kentuck keeps sticking up his finger to people and saying, “He rasted with it,” and keeps calling the baby “the little cuss.”*
- *The men sometimes call Thomas Luck “The Coyote” because he howls loudly.*
- *Thomas Luck falls into soft dirt and gets stuck with his legs sticking in the air for several minutes.*

11. What about the ending of “The Luck of Roaring Camp” appeals to readers?

It is sentimental to think that just a small, innocent baby could make such a positive change upon a camp full of drunks, gamblers, cussers, and rough men.

12. What comparisons can be made between “The Luck of Roaring Camp” to the Biblical accounts of Noah and Jonah?

It can be compared to the Noahic flood, in which God cleanses the world of evil, and Jonah, who was one man sent by God to save Nineveh from destruction.

Week 9, Day 3: An Angel in Disguise

1. How does the first paragraph of “An Angel in Disguise,” as short as it is, do such an effective job of opening the story?

It uses clear, strong verbs and nouns.

2. Why are John and Katy taken and Maggie not?

John and Katy are bright and able to be useful; Maggie is bedridden and would be a burden to a family that took her.

3. How do the villagers justify their idea of leaving Maggie to the poorhouse?

They say that any place with warmth, food, and clean clothes would be better than what Maggie is used to having.

4. Describe Mrs. Thompson and her reaction to Joe’s bringing Maggie home.

Mrs. Thompson is sharp and quick-tempered, bitter at her life. She objects strongly (and loudly) to Joe’s bringing Maggie to their home.

5. What does Joe see in the window of his house later that day? Why does he walk loudly into the house?

Joe sees Mrs. Thompson interacting with Maggie; he walks loudly into the house so his wife will know he is coming and have time to move away from the child, so she won’t reveal the fact that she is taken with her.

6. Why do you think Mrs. Thompson seems so reluctant to allow Maggie to stay at first? What changes her mind? List some of the hints that the author includes to anticipate her change of heart.

There are hints that Mrs. Thompson has been unable to have children, which could be why she is bitter and reluctant to have Maggie stay. Hints about Mrs. Thompson’s change of heart include her lack of gruffness when Joe asks when the meal will be ready, her strange look when Joe says he will take Maggie to the poorhouse (testing her), her asking Maggie if she likes her food, and her stating that they will keep the child a few more days.

Week 11, Day 3: The Stolen White Elephant

1. Describe the character of Inspector Blunt. Give details describing the preposterous way he handles the case.

He is not “sharp,” but Blunt—an incompetent blowhard of an inspector. He spends money excessively, asks the civil servant ridiculous questions that are supposed to help him identify and find the elephant, sends detectives out on wild goose chases, and ignores or doesn’t see the significance of obvious clues.

2. Name some absurd or funny things that happen during the search for the “stolen” elephant.

The questions Inspector Blunt ask the civil servant about Jumbo, Jumbo’s real and common name, the contents of the absurd telegraphs the detectives send Blunt, the funny things the elephant breaks up (temperance meetings, funerals, etc.), and so on.

3. What is unusual (and ridiculous) about the various theories offered for the elephant’s disappearance?

It is impossible for all of them to be accurate at the same time!

4. Sum up the status of both the elephant and the civil servant at the story’s end.

The elephant dies, shot by cannons, and the civil servant is broke and ruined.

5. List some similarities between Inspector Blunt and the stolen white elephant.

Both receive “honor” and “worship.”

6. What does the term “white elephant” mean, and why is the term significant? (Ask Mom what a “white elephant sale” is for more insight.)

A “white elephant” is a useless, expensive gift. White elephant sales feature these.

7. Other than to entertain, what other goal do you think Mark Twain might have had in mind by writing this story?

To poke fun at the public’s tendency to idolize police inspectors as geniuses, and possibly to parody the detective genre.

Week 12, Day 2: An Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge

1. What kind of mood does Bierce create with how he opens “An Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge”?

He creates a cold, calculated, unfeeling mood, partly by listing step by step the actions of the silent and obedient soldiers in doing a very unpleasant duty, with apparently no emotion at all.

2. How does Peyton Farquhar’s watch’s ticking sound to him? Why?

To him it sounds incredibly loud and metallic, like a death knell. It seems to him as if the space between ticks (or seconds) gets longer and longer.

3. What do we learn about Peyton Farquhar in Part II?

He is a planter, about 35 years old, wealthy, from a respected family, a slave owner, and did not serve in the army as most men his age would have.

4. Who is the “gray-clad soldier” that stops by Farquhar’s home to ask for a drink of water? What information does he tell Farquhar?

He is a Union scout disguised as a rebel soldier. He baits Farquhar into volunteering to try to help the South by destroying the bridge, mentioning clearly that the Union army has said that anyone caught doing that would be hanged.

5. Describe the “rope breaking” scene. What happens to Farquhar’s senses? What dangers does he sense around himself?

Peyton Farquhar’s rope seems to break as he is hanged, and he falls into the water. His senses are sharply tuned to his pain and suffering, and he tries mightily to get the ropes off his hands and get to the surface so he can breathe. He is able to see in sharp focus things like individual trees and insects, colors, and can also hear loudly every sound around him in great detail. He struggles to avoid the soldiers’ firing upon him, diving deeply into the water.

6. Give examples of how Bierce places images of beauty next to ugliness, and pleasant sounds with threatening sounds.

Farquhar’s heightened senses allow him to see sharply focuses images of nature, as well as the inviting sight of his home and wife running to greet him, with scenes of preparations for a hanging, and ultimately, the hanging itself. The sounds Farquhar hears vary, from relaxing sounds of the running waters and the forest, to unpleasant sounds like voices shouting “Ready! Aim! Fire!” and other grotesque cries, and the whistle of gunfire close to him.

7. Give the name of the literary technique that Bierce uses in the opening to Part II. What purposes does this serve?

Flashback. It gives the reader background information on the story, and helps to build suspense.

8. What happens to the verb tense in the next-to-last paragraph? Why do you suppose Bierce does this?

The verb tense changes to the present tense. It might be Bierce's way of hinting that what Farquhar is experiencing in this paragraph is not real.

9. Does Bierce give the reader any hints or clues on what is going to happen at the end of the story?

Answers will vary, but here are a few:

- *Farquhar falls down, loses consciousness, and is "as one already dead."*
- *Farquhar awakens "ages later, it seemed to him."*
- *The forest Farquhar runs down seems "interminable" and strange to him, even though he was familiar with the area.*
- *The road Farquhar finds is wide and straight, but totally uninhabited by man or beast—only by the "black bodies of the trees."*

10. What kind of worldview does Ambrose Bierce promote in "An Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge"? What might the various stages of Peyton Farquhar's "occurrence" represent? How does a Christian respond to Bierce's worldview? (See for example James 4:14, 1 Peter 1:24, John 3:16, Hebrews 11:6, James 4:8, 1 Peter 1:3-5.)

Bierce presents life as a senseless, meaningless, hopeless journey that offers mostly ugliness and pain, and even though a person seems to have hope, even that can hope be taken away from him in the end.

The stages of Farquhar's "occurrence" might represent life in general:

- *Birth – The breaking of the rope is similar to the cutting of an umbilical cord.*
- *Life – A journey, whether down a road or down a river (used by Mark Twain, for example, in his Adventures of Huckleberry Finn, has long been used by authors to symbolize the journey of life itself. In Peyton Farquhar's (short) journey down the river, he encounters a few pleasurable sights and sounds (nature, animals, and so on), but mostly pain and ugliness.*
- *Death – Bierce presents death as a journey into nothingness, blackness, where no one else is present (the empty road in the story), and pointless.*

The Christian's view of life includes these:

- *Although life is a "vapor" (James 4:14, 1 Peter 1:24) God has a purpose for it.*
- *God created mankind and loves his creation (John 3:16).*
- *God draws near to those who draw near to and diligently seek Him (Hebrews 11:6, James 4:8).*
- *God offers a "lively hope" and a resurrection from the dead "that fadeth not away" (1 Peter 1:3-5) to those who put their faith in Jesus Christ.*

Week 16, Day 1: How the Captain Made Christmas

1. Are old Christmas (or old times) always better? Why do many think that claim is true?

Answers will vary!

2. Name one piece of advice that the Captain gives the young man—or name one act the Captain performs—that made an impression on you.

Answers will vary!

Week 16, Day 2: The Gift of the Magi

1. Describe the story's setting. Who are the Dillinghams? What is their financial situation?

It is the day before Christmas in New York City for a young couple living in a shabby New York City apartment. Jim Dillingham doesn't make much money, and his wife Della despairs of finding a gift for him for only \$1.87.

2. Why are Jim's watch and Della's hair sources of such pride?

Jim's watch was passed down from his grandfather, and it is fine and beautiful. Della's hair is long and beautiful.

3. Why do you suppose O. Henry sets the price of Della's hair at \$20?

It is the same amount that Jim earns in a week, so the reader can see that this is a great amount for Della to spend on him. Also, since it is what Jim earns a week, the amount serves to link the two characters in the reader's mind.

4. Explain the story's ironic ending. How is the ending somehow not tragic and gloomy, as it could be? What contrasts greatly with the story's two pairs of "parted items" (the watch and the chain, and the hair and the combs)?

Although Della has sold her hair to buy Jim a chain for his watch, Jim has sold his watch to buy combs for her hair. The ending doesn't come across as tragic because of the lighthearted instances of humor that O. Henry sprinkles into the story, and the characterization of Jim and Della as such a loving and spirited married couple.

5. Why does O. Henry name this story "The Gift of the Magi"?

He compares the wise men to the two young people, whom he says are also wise, because of their true, unselfish love for each other. They also give precious gifts to each other, as the magi did to Jesus.

Week 17, Day 3: A Sisterly Scheme

1. What does the writer accomplish with the first paragraph?

It sets up the story in a way that is intriguing to the reader; he wonders at the possibilities of this place where visitors “go in,” and becomes more interested in what will happen in the story.

2. What occurs at the story’s beginning to set the plot in motion? What things do we learn about characters from what happens?

Mr. Morpeth is supposed to take a young lady (Pauline) out on a canoe trip, but she ditches him for another man, Mr. Brown, and the young lady’s sister (Flossy) starts a conversation with him about it. We learn that Mr. Morpeth is a little mopey and timid; that Pauline is inconsiderate and selfish; and that Flossy is a young woman, although a little brash and tomboyish.

3. What scheme does Flossy cook up? Why does she claim she is doing this for Mr. Morpeth?

She will help Mr. Morpeth by helping him to woo her, supposedly hoping to make her older sister jealous, culminating in his marriage proposal to her (an act, of course!). All the while, Flossy will “dangle” him as if he means nothing to her.

Flossy tells Mr. Morpeth she is willing to help him to get her sister off her back, and that she wants to experience some “liberty.”

4. How does the fake flirtation by Mr. Morpeth progress? What is the reaction of this to the people around them?

Morpeth “woos” Flossy; she treats him with disdain; the vacation crowd is in an uproar, especially Pauline.

5. Give some clues that hint at what Flossy’s actual plan is.

Morpeth tells Flossy, “Your scheme is a good one. Only—it involves the discovery of another girl.” This is true on two counts. First, Flossy’s scheme is indeed a good one! Second, her scheme does involve the “discovery of another girl”—Flossy plans for Morpeth to discover her!

Flossy also asks Morpeth if he thinks she’s “good-looking enough,” and makes sure he knows that she is eighteen years old.

The canoe trip with Pauline, Flossy, Mr. Brown, and Mr. Morpeth is described by saying first that in the canoe there were three sulky people and “one girl radiant with triumphant happiness” (Flossy).

Week 18, Day 1: A New England Nun

1. Name the two adverbs in the second paragraph that describe Louisa Ellis's way of living. How does the fact that she can never remember losing one of her sewing accessories show what kind of person she is? List some other examples that show Louisa Ellis's regular, deliberate, careful way of living.

"Precisely" and "carefully" are the two adverbs. The fact that she can't remember losing any of her accessories demonstrates that her way of life is regular, ordered, and to her liking. She makes sure she hasn't dropped any currant stems into the grass, she is "slow and still in her movements," she arranges her solitary tea precisely, she methodically folds and arranges all of her clothing, either in wearing it or storing it.

2. How does Joe Dagget's personality contrast with Louisa Ellis? Give examples of how this is shown. What is significant about Joe's picking up the books on Louisa Ellis's table, and her reaction? What else does he do to upset her home?

Joe steps heavily, seems to "fill up the whole room," makes the canary jump wildly around the cage, he says, "Good evening" loudly. He doesn't put the books down in the right place, and it bothers Louisa Ellis, who rearranges them as they were before. He also accidentally knocks her work-basket down and spills it, and he tracks in dust. Louisa Ellis's reactions represent her lack of desire to "upset" her way of life by marrying Joe.

3. What is the first indication that something might be wrong with Joe (it happens in the first conversation between Joe and Louisa Ellis)? Why does he feel embarrassed?

He "colors" (turns red from embarrassment) when Louisa Ellis asks him if Lily Dyer is watching his mother. This is an admission that Joe has been "seeing" Lily Dyer often.

4. Sum up the agreement between Joe and Louisa Ellis. How do they feel about it now?

They were engaged, but decided to marry only after Joe made his fortune, which took 15 years! They both want to live up to their agreement by marrying, even though they don't seem to want it as much anymore.

5. List some things that Louisa Ellis knows she will have to give up when she marries Joe.

Her pretty home, her distilling, her freedom to sew things she likes just for pleasure.

6. Explain Caesar's background, temperament, and current situation. How does Joe view him?

He bit a neighbor as a puppy, and Louisa Ellis has chained him for 14 years, even though he's gentle and wouldn't hurt anyone. The town thinks he's a fierce killer, but Joe knows better, and he wants to free him.

7. What is admirable about the conversation between Lily Dyer and Joe that Louisa Ellis overhears? How does Louisa Ellis tell Joe the next day? Describe how Joe is honorable and how Louisa Ellis reacts afterward.

The two agree that the only course of action is for Joe to marry Louisa Ellis, because it is honorable, and she has waited for 14 years for him. Louisa Ellis tells Joe she can't marry him because she's too set in her ways, and Joe offers to help her any way he can. Louisa Ellis weeps a little, but feels relieved, and is excited about her future life.

8. How does Caesar resemble (a) the canary, and (b) Louisa Ellis?

Caesar made a little mistake and paid for it for 14 years, being locked up. Louisa Ellis might have made a mistake by accepting Joe's proposal, and stayed alone for 14 years. Caesar and the canary are also similar in that they are locked up.

9. Go back and read the first sentence in "A New England Nun." What do you think the significance of this opening sentence could be?

It represents the fact that Louisa Ellis and Joe Dagget are growing older, and that their desire for marriage is dwindling.

10. Name at least one reason why Louisa's decision not to marry Joe is healthy, and one reason why it might not be healthy.

She is bowing out, knowing that Joe loves Lily Dyer, which is honorable, but part of the reason she does not to marry him is because he would upset her near-obsession with an orderly, dust-free existence.

11. The last line says that Louisa Ellis prayerfully numbers her days, "like an uncloistered nun" (i.e., she was free). Why, then, do you think author Mary Eleanor Wilkins Freeman titled the story "A New England Nun"?

Answers will vary, but it might be that Freeman viewed Louisa Ellis as still, in some ways, living a life as if she were shut up in a convent.

Week 19, Day 2: The Lady, or the Tiger?

1. Define *barbaric* and *idealist*. Why is the king described as a *barbaric idealist*?

Barbaric means brutal and inhumane; an idealist is someone who aims for optimistic goals to further humanity. The king is a “barbaric idealist” because he thinks he can use violence to achieve beauty and justice.

2. What is strange about saying that the crowd goes home sad after someone is killed by a tiger because they think the victim “should have merited so dire a fate”? What is inappropriate about choosing the “right door” for some?

Just because the person chose the “tiger door” doesn’t mean he’s guilty, but the crowd seems to think that it must mean that! And sometimes a person already has a wife, but if he chooses the “right door,” he has to marry someone else and leave his family!

3. What does it say about the masses who regularly attend these events, who say that they are “fair” because the accused person “has the whole matter in his own hands”?

It makes them look ridiculous to believe that; the accused persons certainly do not have the matter in their own hands.

4. What does the story suggest about tyranny and free will? What do you think was behind the door to the right?

Answers will vary, but for the first question might include something like “There was really no choice for those accused of crimes; a married man, for example, lost either way he chose.”

Week 19, Day 3: The Bride Comes To Yellow Sky

1. Describe the looks and character of Jack Potter, his bride, and Scratchy Wilson.

Jack Potter is the sheriff of Yellow Sky—dressed up more than normal (and uncomfortable with it), slightly unaware of “high society” behavioral customs, a little awkward around his new bride...and delighted to be married. He is, however, brave, tough, and unflinching—even without his guns—during a confrontation with Scratchy Wilson.

Mrs. Potter is not very young or pretty, possibly right at the cusp of being in danger of becoming an “old maid.” She behaves a little awkwardly and self-consciously on the train ride with her new husband, but is earnest and pleasant, happy to be riding on a train and mostly happy to be married.

Scratchy Wilson is a gentle man, except for when he gets drunk, when he walks around Yellow Sky in a drunken fit, shooting up anything in his way. He has had a run-in with Sheriff Potter, who shot him in the leg. During this particular tear he’s on he is dressed up nicely, although yelling incredibly loudly for someone to challenge him to a gunfight. He is an expert gun handler, twirling them and hitting anything he has a notion to shoot at. He even shoots out all the windows of his best friend!

2. How do the newlyweds behave toward each other on the train? What can the reader deduce from this? How do the other train riders regard the couple?

They are shy and slightly embarrassed, sometimes fumbling with words and acting almost as if they were on a “first date.” It seems probable that they do not know each other very well. The other passengers—and the porters—smile, sometimes a little scornfully, at the couple, realizing that they are newlyweds.

3. Why is Potter nervous about returning to Yellow Sky? What does he decide to do as soon as he arrives?

As sheriff, he worries about what the townspeople will say about his bride, a woman they know nothing about. Potter plans to whisk his bride to his home without anyone seeing them, and then think of a plan to introduce her to the town.

4. What time shift occurs in Part II? What do we learn from this scene in Yellow Sky?

The time flashes back to a scene in a bar about 20 minutes before the train with the Potters arrives in Yellow Sky. A man runs in to announce that Scratchy Wilson is drunk, and the people in the bar hide, run away, and lock and bar the doors.

5. What does Scratchy Wilson decide to do when no one offers to oppose him in a gunfight? How does Part IV bring the two separate plotlines together?

He decides to go to Jack Potter’s house to shoot it out with him. While he is loading one revolver, Jack Potter comes around the corner with his wife, startling Scratchy, who claims that Potter tried to sneak up on him. Potter informs Wilson that he has no gun, Scratchy is stunned, and puts away his guns, walking off while mumbling about Potter’s getting married.

6. How does the amount of gunplay the two main men in the story engage in compare to their strength of character?

Jack Potter, who doesn't use a gun at all, even though he is the sheriff, comes across as tough and dependable. Scratchy Wilson uses guns like toys and comes across as infantile and silly, embarrassed into leaving with his tail tucked, simply because a woman is present.

7. Why do you think this story is titled "The Bride Comes to Yellow Sky," instead of another title that gives more prominence to Sheriff Potter or Scratchy Wilson? What does this indicate about this story's *theme*?

The focus is on the bride, because her simple presence has somewhat "tamed" Scratchy Wilson, and the story's theme involves how women like Mrs. Potter represented civilization for and helped to "tame" the Old West.

Week 20, Days 2-3: Locked Doors

1. What about the previous nurse gets the story in motion?

She works for a house in which she had a nervous breakdown within four days, and detective Patton wants to know why, so he gets Miss Adams to replace her.

2. How does Miss Adams's nurse training and personality help her solve mysteries?

She can work as a nurse undercover; she has learned to be decisive and to keep her nerve; she wins the confidence of those around her by helping them; she's able to work silently (since she's used to working quietly so patients won't awaken). Her personality is smart, brisk and decisive, which helps her make decisions and act, especially under pressure.

3. What is in Miss Adams's "box"?

Skeleton keys, a gun, handcuffs, a flashlight, etc.

4. Describe the basic setup and suspicion surrounding the Reed house.

Doors are locked, food is brought in, mysterious sounds are heard, no one is allowed in or out, there are no rugs, Mr. Reed keeps looking behind his back as if he suspects someone will be there,

5. Explain the meaning of (a) the Frenchwoman locked in a room who says "It's coming up! I die tomorrow!", (b) the dead fish and dead dog, (c) the bodyless head, and (d) Mr. Reed's going pale when he reads in the newspaper of the elderly gentleman's death.

The Frenchwoman was bitten by a diseased rat, and is talking about her temperature; the fish and dog died from poisons around the house; the bodyless head was Mr. Reed standing under the stairs, his head wrapped up to protect himself, trying to kill rats; Mr. Reed goes pale when he sees Smythe has died, wondering if plague killed him.

6. What is the reason for the strange goings-on at the Reed house?

Mr. Reed was trying to do research to find a cure for a certain plague, for money, since he was in debt; but some of the rats he was using to test his serum escaped, and he locked down the house to prevent their escape until he could catch them.

Week 21, Day 1: The Fruitful Sleeping of the Rev. Elisha Edwards

1. What is Rev. Elisha Edwards's habit? What explanations, and proof, are given?

He sleeps during church services. Some claim he is in deep meditation; others say he is being disrespectful toward the preacher; some say he is sleeping. Edwards openly and loudly snores during one sermon.

2. What does Edwards think has happened when he sees the congregation looking shocked after he awakes? How does he know something is wrong?

He thinks they've been strongly affected by Uncle Isham Dyer's sermon. He knows something is wrong, because they don't sing with him during the service, the offering collection is small, and no one invites him to dinner after church.

3. What, exactly, is it about Edwards's sleeping that upsets the committee (the complaint voiced by Uncle Isham)? How does Edwards react to Sister Dicey's disclosure to him?

They say they're upset, not at Edwards's sleeping per se, but because they believe he is deceiving them by pretending to meditate. Edwards is shocked at Sister Dicey's news, but thinks about what he can do to undo the damage.

4. Explain how Edwards puts his plan into motion. What is the congregation's reaction? What is ironic now about their initial desire to get rid of Edwards for deceiving them about his sleeping?

Edwards pretends to sleep when Isham Dyer preaches, but then "awakens" with an incredible alertness. He preaches a fiery sermon on the benefits of sleep, invoking the Biblical accounts of Jacob and Lazarus and saying that sleep can sometimes bring heavenly meditation and visions from God. (Jacob sleeps and dream of the ladder ascending to heaven in Genesis 28:10-12. Jesus tells his disciples Lazarus is "sleeping," and the disciples say, "Lord, if he sleep, he shall do well" (John 1:12), misunderstanding that Jesus is informing them that Lazarus is dead. Edwards then "admits" that he has dozed off sometimes, and asks the congregation if he was "sinning," and they shout "No! No!" and other encouragements. Edwards has now regained the approval of the church.

The irony in this is that the congregation first wanted to get rid of Edwards because he deceived them about his sleeping, but now they want to keep him...after he deceives them about sleeping!

5. What are some clues given by the author and occurrences that show that he doesn't necessarily approve of the motives and absolute integrity of Edwards? How could Edwards have been totally honest with the congregation and still relieved their concern?

Edwards takes scriptures out of context both in thought (regarding "let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth") and in word (using the story of Lazarus's needing sleep and applying it to himself). Edwards is also said to have not necessarily prayed about the situation after Sister Dicey discloses the committee's plans, but possibly made his own plans, even walking into the church the next time with the "light of triumph in his eyes." And finally, what Edwards claims in the "If He Sleep, He Shall Do Well" is not true! Edwards was not lost in deep meditation of God; he was just asleep! This doesn't change the fact that he is essentially a good preacher and cares about the church, however, but it does show that he's taking desperate actions to keep his job.

Edwards could have simply explained that on some days he just gets so hot and tired that he drifts off. He could have pointed to his record of service for the congregation to relieve any concerns of the congregation that he wasn't doing his job.

6. Explain the misunderstandings about sleep that link the Biblical account of Lazarus with “The Fruitful Sleeping of Rev. Elisha Edwards.” Is Edwards’s sleeping “fruitful”?

The disciples misunderstand Jesus when he says Lazarus is asleep (he is dead), and Edwards says that the congregation misreads his (Edwards's) sleeping in church (although he is not altogether truthful, he apparently does need the rest).

Week 21, Day 2: Editha

1. At the story’s beginning, Editha is not sure of “whether she could let [George] go,” but “could not let him stay.” She also remarks, “How glorious!” when she is told about the war. How does William Dean Howells use these thoughts of Editha to establish her character?

Editha is manipulative of George, and acts as if she owns him and should tell him what to do. She also is shallow and clichéd in her “thinking,” imagining that war is “glorious”—instead of dealing with the realities of war—even when her fiancé is in a position where he could be sent to die.

2. Editha sees George as “nearly perfect.” What in her mind, would make him “perfect”? Why?

Enlisting to fight in the war would make George “perfect.” Editha romantically envisions marrying a man who has done something brave to win her love: “She had always supposed that the man who won her would have done something to win her; she did not know what, but something.”

3. What does Editha claim about war? About God and war? Give examples. What does George’s “pocket Providence” comment mean? How does the Christian view God’s sovereignty and character, His intervention in world affairs, and the reasons for wars? (See Psalm 115:3, Psalm 145:17, Psalm 5:4, Job 34:10, Romans 9:14, Ezra 1:1-4, Jeremiah 25:1-9, Hosea 8:1-4, and James 4:1-4.)

Edith has a romantic, simplistic view of war as a lark that men march off to, wearing handsome uniforms, and winning glory for themselves, instead of death, destruction, pain, and the agony and sorrow of the families involved. She also claims that God preordained the war simply because it happened. She says, “But don’t you see...that it wouldn’t have come to this if it hadn’t been in the order of Providence?” and “God meant it to be war.” George is skeptical, saying that he’ll try to believe in Editha’s “pocket Providence,” meaning that God to Editha is a handy device she keeps in her pocket, ready to pull out when she wants to justify something she believes at the moment.

The Bible says that God is sovereign and does what he pleases (Psalm 115:3), but is also holy and righteous (Psalm 145:17), doing no evil and hating wickedness (Psalm 5:4, Job 34:10, Romans 9:14). God also stirs up kings at certain times to do His work (Ezra 1:1-4, Jeremiah 25:1-9), but there are nations like Israel who have “set up kings” not according to God’s will (Hosea 8:1-4). The Bible teaches that wars come from the lusts and evil desires of mankind (James 4:1-4).

4. What does Editha’s letter say to George? Why does she decide not to send it? Where does it end up?

Her letter tells George that she doesn't want to marry him unless he enlists. She decides that she doesn't want to send it so she can leave him free to make his own decision, just to pacify her own conscience, since she has already pushed him hard to enlist. She gives the letter to George, telling him not to open it until after he returns from the war.

5. How do Editha's mother and George's mother agree on what Editha has done?

They both agree that she has done a despicable thing. Editha's mother says, "Well, I guess you've done a wicked thing, Editha Balcom." Mrs. Gearson, of course, confronts Editha at the story's end.

6. Why do you think Howells included two instances where George is drinking something? What can be inferred from these incidents?

Editha gives George a glass of lemonade at the beginning; he finishes it, but he refuses her glass when she gives it to him. Later, after enlisting, he wants ice-water and gulps glass after glass. This might represent George's inability at first (with the lemonade) to "swallow" Editha's reasons for his need to enlist, and the ice-water he gulps might represent his unrestrained, giddy acceptance of his decision to enlist.

7. What does George ask of Editha to do "If anything happens"? How does this turn out unexpectedly in two significant ways?

George asks Editha to go see his mother and comfort her "if anything happens." Unexpectedly, first, George is killed, and second, Editha's visit to comfort George's mother...doesn't go as planned.

8. Sum up what Mrs. Gearson tells Editha. What is significant about Mrs. Gearson's order to Editha: "Stand round where the light can strike your face"? What does she finally threaten Editha with? Why?

Mrs. Gearson is angry with Editha for claiming she "left [George] free" to decide about enlisting, when Editha pressured him into it to satisfy her own romantic ideals about war and selfishly create a "hero" to marry. Mrs. Gearson says she is glad George died innocently, without shedding the blood of poor foreigners who had no choice but to join the army.

Mrs. Gearson's order to Editha to "Stand round where the light can strike your face" represents her attempt to get Editha to face the truth of what she has done (which does not happen). Her order to Editha to take the black dress off indicates that Mrs. Gearson knows that Editha's "mourning" is not authentic; it's just a show, and she only feels sorry for herself.

9. How does the portrait painter react to Editha's story? What is ironic when Editha says about Mrs. Gearson, "I think she wasn't quite in her right mind"? What is significant about Howells's mentioning the fact that the portrait painter compares Editha's real lips to the ones she has painted?

The painter is horrified (or at least pretends to be horrified) at Mrs. Gearson's actions as Editha tells her. The irony in Editha's statement is that it is actually Editha who is not in her "right mind."

Editha's real lips are compared to her "false" (painted) lips, possibly to demonstrate that Editha's words are one thing, and her thoughts and motives are totally different.

10. Explain the line in the last paragraph: "The mystery that had bewildered her was solved by the word." What is the word?

The painter says that Mrs. Gearson's actions toward Editha were "vulgar" (the word). Editha has chosen to believe that she has done nothing wrong and that Mrs. Gearson was at fault for blaming her for George's death. Editha has learned nothing at all from this incident, and presumably will continue to live in her make-believe world.

Week 28, Day 1: Regret

1. List some ways Mamzelle Aurlie has to adjust with children around.

She has to care for them, put them to sleep, feed them, bathe them, get used to the noise they make, and generally adjust her life to make sure they're taken care of.

2. What is symbolic about Mamzelle Aurlie's putting on her apron and using her sewing basket, both for the first time in years?

It's as if she's "becoming a woman" again, which contrasts with how she's described as dressing and acting like a man at the beginning.

3. What does it mean to cry "like a man," as Mamzelle Aurlie does at the story's end? How does this allude to—and contrast with—the description of Mamzelle Aurlie in the first paragraph?

To cry hard and roughly; this reminds the reader of Mamzelle Aurlie's man-like description at the story's opening, when she has softened somewhat, shown by her crying.

4. Why is this story titled "Regret"?

Probably because Mamzelle Aurlie regrets being married and having children.

Week 28, Day 2: Poor, Dear Margaret Kirby

1. What positive and negative traits does Margaret possess at the story's opening? How does she come across badly after John opens up to her?

She lives a life devoted to nothing but pleasure and ease, and accomplishes nothing; but she seems genuinely desirous of improving her marriage and won't badmouth her husband to others—and is bothered about living a lifestyle in which women brag about what they don't do rather than what they do.

When John opens up to her, she only thinks of how this will affect her—and even realizes she hasn't been listening to John's attempts to tell her of the troubles up until then—while he is determined to commit suicide.

2. What does John find out the first time he walks to Margaret's residence? How does his new position affect the Kirbys?

It is an ugly old double house, which she has been forced to live in, having sold everything to help out John's firm. Margaret was looking for a secretary job, but ended up co-managing the boarding house, even helping her partner with her family's debts and troubles.

John gets a modest job in a small town, gains his health back, and finds a small cottage he moves himself and Margaret into.

3. What is ironic about these story quotes: (a) Margaret's saying at the story's opening, "Thank Heaven, there isn't a child to complicate things!"; (b) Margaret's saying about a couple she sees out, "Fifty-cent dinner? It must be awful!"; (c) Margaret's biographer's saying, "Absolutely, they might as well be buried!"

Because at the story's end, the children do complicate things—by enriching the Kirby's lives; the cheaper dinners she enjoys later are much more rewarding; the Kirbys are much more alive than they were living as a "society couple."

4. Compare the moral of "Poor, Dear Margaret Kirby" to the warnings in Proverbs 17:1, Proverbs 25:24, and James 5:1.

Proverbs 17:1 Better is a dry morsel, and quietness therewith, than an house full of sacrifices with strife.

Proverbs 25:24 It is better to dwell in the corner of the housetop, than with a brawling woman and in a wide house.

James 5:1 Go to now, ye rich men, weep and howl for your miseries that shall come upon you.

Week 29, Day 3: Miss Hinch

1. Why are the citizens of New York City in such a jumpy state, as explained in the story's beginning?

Two weeks ago, actress and impersonator Miss Hinch killed John Catherwood, a man who jilted her for another woman. Miss Hinch is still at large, and since she is an expert at play-acting and makeup, people are suspicious of each other. They do, however, often talk to strangers to see what they think about the mystery.

2. What do the newspaper, the clergyman, the service-woman, and the old gentleman say about Miss Hinch and Jessie Dark?

The newspaper relates that the police have almost given up finding Miss Hinch, and that even Jessie Dark has been unsuccessful, even after finding so many criminals. The service-woman tells the clergyman that her friend is Catherwood's mother, and that she heard through her that Miss Hinch is an evil woman. The clergyman remarks that if that is true, her sins will find her out.

The service-woman praises Jessie Dark, and the clergyman says he is disappointed that Miss Dark hasn't found Miss Hinch. The old gentleman bursts into the conversation and defends Jessie Dark's methods, saying Miss Hinch will be caught.

3. Why does the service-woman ask the clergyman for a pencil? Why does he suddenly ask her if she had seen Mrs. Catherwood?

She is writing notes to the police, to tell them where Miss Hinch is. The clergyman asks the service-woman if she had seen Mrs. Catherwood that day to test her story, because "he" suspected that she was actually following "him."

4. How does Henry Sydnor Harrison create suspense?

By slowly revealing details, he gets the reader to suspect certain characters of being impersonators. The cat-and-mouse mental games that Miss Hinch and Jessie Dark play make the reader hope that good wins out, and the attempted escape and wait for the police add to the suspense.

5. Why does the old woman get off the train with the clergyman? Why does she not want to stop at a well-lighted lunch counter? Explain the mystery of the bill at the restaurant.

She is tailing Miss Hinch. She doesn't want to eat at the well-lighted restaurant because she doesn't want Miss Hinch to see that she is made up as an old woman.

6. Why does the clergyman prick his finger with the pin?

He wants to use the blood to pretend that the old woman has cut her face, so he can rub her face to see if it is indeed, makeup to resemble an old woman's face.

7. How are the clergyman's words "Her sin will assuredly find her out" ironic?

Miss Hinch's sins did find her out, all right!

Week 30, Day 3: The Most Dangerous Game

1. Sum up Rainsford's feeling about hunting at the story's beginning, based on his conversation with Whitney.

He thinks it's a fun sport, and a challenge, and doesn't care about how the animals feel.

2. What sound does Rainsford hear on the island (a) right before he falls overboard, and (b) as he is swimming to the island? How does this second sound repeat at the end of the story?

He hears (a) a gun fired three times, and (b) "a high screaming sound, the sound of an animal in an extremity of anguish and terror" (a human scream, which he does not realize at the time). The human scream is repeated at the end of the story; this occurs when Zaroff screams in response to Rainsford's surprising him in his room after their hunt.

3. What evidence of a hunt does Rainsford find on the island when he wakes up? What to him seems odd about this evidence?

He finds weeds crushed, blood stains, and other evidence that a "large animal" had been hunted. He also finds an empty cartridge from a .22 pistol, which seems strange to Rainsford, because for hunting such a large animal, the hunter usually would use a larger caliber bullet.

4. Describe General Zaroff. What is ironic in his words to Rainsford describing his servant Ivan: "A simple fellow, but, I'm afraid, like all his race, a bit of a savage." What does Connell suggest when he says that Zaroff "showed red lips and pointed teeth"?

Zaroff is aristocratic, with a military-like demeanor, a snappy dresser, and cultured. He is also an expert hunter and well-read on the subject. The irony in his statement about Ivan is that Zaroff is actually more than a bit of a savage himself. Connell's description of Zaroff's red lips suggest a link between Zaroff and the bloody trail Rainsford had found earlier, and Zaroff's pointed teeth suggest that he is like an animal.

5. What habit of Zaroff's makes Rainsford uncomfortable after they have first met? What is the significance of this behavior?

Zaroff studies Rainsford carefully. Later the reader understands that this is because Zaroff is trying to determine what kind of prey Rainsford will be.

6. Explain why Zaroff believes it is appropriate to hunt men. How does the Christian view of mankind differ from Zaroff's Darwinist, "survival of the fittest" worldview? (See Genesis 2:7, Psalm 8, Acts 17:24-26, Matthew 19:16-22, 1 Thessalonians 5:14, and Romans 15:1.)

Zaroff believes men are simply animals that can and should hunt each other if they can win. The Christian believes man was created as a "living soul" (Genesis 2:7) and "a little lower than the angels" (Psalm 8). The Bible teaches that there are no "inferior races," since God has "made of one blood all nations of men" (Acts 17:24-26). Jesus commands us not to murder, among other things (Matthew 19:16-22), and Christians are commanded by God to "support the weak (1 Thessalonians 5:14, Romans 15:1).

7. What “choice” does Zaroff offer his prey? Why does Rainsford decline Zaroff’s offer to show him his “new collection of heads”?

Either to be hunted, or to be tortured with a whipping from Ivan. Rainsford doesn’t want to see the new heads, because they will probably be stuffed human heads.

8. How does Rainsford survive and win the hunt? What is the irony in his disagreeing with Whitney at the story’s beginning, when Whitney says that hunting is not a good sport for the animals?

Rainsford leaves trails, injures Zaroff with a Malay man-catcher, kills one of his dogs with a tiger trap, kills Ivan with a knife attached to a vine spring, and then leaps into the sea when Zaroff is pursuing with his hounds. Then Rainsford sneaks into Zaroff’s castle, hides in his room, and kills him. Rainsford finds out that Whitney was right about hunting not being a good sport for the hunted animals, because he (Rainsford) is hunted himself!

9. What is the double meaning of the story’s title? What idea does Connell present in this story (i.e., the story’s theme)? What effect might World War I (which had ended only six years before the writing of this story) have had on “The Most Dangerous Game”?

First, “The Most Dangerous Game” refers to the “game” of hunting, which is dangerous because of the potential dangers involved in hunting predatory animals. Second, “The Most Dangerous Game” refers to the most dangerous animal to hunt—man.

One of the themes Connell seems to present is the idea that the worldview that different “races” are worth less is wrong. This view of “inferior races” had become widespread due to the influence of evolutionism in the 19th century, and was reinforced by propaganda in World War I, in which the peoples of nations were encouraged by their governments to regard their own particular nation as superior to all others (and the citizens of other nations as inferior, and therefore acceptable victims of conquest and murder during war time).