OLD SCHOOL

Understanding the Story

Übermensch

15. Why is the narrator initially dismissive of Ayn Rand’s novel The Fountainhead? What changes? (64-65)

16. What does the narrator discover about himself as he reads The Fountainhead? What about people like his Grandjohn and Patty fills him with contempt? (68—69)

17. Why did Ayn Rand like Big Jeff’s story, “The Days the Cows Came Home”? Do you believe her literary criteria differ from those of other writers who judged these contests, and if so, how? (78-79)

18. Who is Ayn Rand’s favorite writer (aside from herself), and why? (84-85)

Slice of Life

19. Why does the narrator become disillusioned with Ayn Rand? (91-94)

20. What does Ayn Rand say about Ernest Hemingway and his characters that “[jolts the narrator] into taking sides”? (97-98) Why does he love Hemingway, both the man and his work? (96-98)

21. What does the narrator expect to accomplish by typing out Hemingway’s stories? (98-99)

The Forked Tongue

22. Why does Purcell refuse to enter the doors of the chapel? (105-106) How does the narrator perceive his friend’s elective absences from the chapel and the looming threat of his expulsion? Is he worried about Purcell’s future? Why or why not? (107)

23. Why is the narrator eager to go to Columbia University in New York City and not Yale or Princeton like his classmates? (108-109)

24. How does the narrator justify his “expository lies” in his writing? (110-111)

25. The narrator describes his four-year friendship with his roommate Bill White with a sense of regret. What did he want from their relationship? (118)

26. Why do the editors of Troubadour ultimately decide to publish “The Forked Tongue” by Buckles? What realization does George Kellogg have about all of their literary talents? (120-121)

27. The narrator is deeply moved by a story he reads in a literary magazine published by sister school Miss Cobb’s Academy entitled “Summer Dance.” What is it about the story by Susan Friedman that resonates with him so profoundly? (123-126) And why does he appropriate her story as his own? (127)

When in Disgrace with Fortune

28. Why was the narrator disappointed with the way Hemingway responded to “his” story in the interview as it appeared in the school newspaper? (135-136)

29. The narrator genuinely seems bewildered when he is confronted with accusations of plagiarism. Why does he initially lack remorse? (143) Do you believe he has really forgotten he is not the story’s author? Explain.

30. Does his crime threaten the reputation of his graduating class and of his school? Why or why not? (143-144)

One for the Books

31. Five years after the narrator is expelled from prep school, he seeks out Susan Friedman, the author of “Summer Dance.” Why is she quick to forgive him for plagiarizing her story? (157-162)

32. What reason does Susan give for not pursuing a writing career? Does this discourage the narrator’s own literary ambitions? (163)

Bulletin

33. Why is the narrator resistant to accept an invitation years later to return to his old school as a visiting writer? (168-169)

Master

34. What was Dean Makepeace’s connection (or lack thereof) to Ernest Hemingway? How did students come to think the two men were friends and how did Makepeace perpetuate this myth? (179-183)

35. What bothered Dean Makepeace about the writing competitions? (186)

36. Why did Dean Makepeace choose to resign rather than expel the narrator? (187-188) Do you think Dean Makepeace was guilty of fraudulence?