

### ***...And the Earth Did Not Devour Him: Question Series***

#### **“What his mother never knew...”**

- Do you agree with the boy’s decision to drink the water? What about his decision to keep it a secret?
- Do you think he will be able to keep it a secret? What will happen if he fails?
- Analyze the mother in terms of her faith. Is her faith healthy or crippling?

#### **The Children Couldn’t Wait**

- Is the boss a terrible person? Is anything he does or feels justifiable? Evaluate all of the criteria at your disposal!
- What’s more outrageous – the fact that a child was murdered, or the fact that the person gets away with it?

#### **A Prayer**

- What are the phrases and sentiments Juanalito’s mother repeats most frequently? What does this repetition reveal about her?
- Why doesn’t Juanalito deserve to die?
- What sort of emotional response does this story evoke, and why?

#### **It’s That It Hurts**

- What “hurts” in this story? Evaluate all of the criteria at your disposal!
- What greater significance does the cemetery have? Why does Rivera spend time talking about it?
- Why does the boy try to deny the reality of his expulsion? Why can’t he avoid it?

#### **“Why do y’all go to school so much?”**

- What sort of emotions does this piece inspire?
- How do you react to the words of each character – do you identify with either one?
- How could either outlook be realistic?

#### **Hand in His Pocket**

- How are the couple’s criminal actions so effective – and how do they plan the perfect crime? For that matter, why do people like them?
- Why doesn’t the child get rid of the ring if it means he has to keep putting his hand in his pocket? What does that decision – to hide his hand in his pocket – reveal about his character?

#### **“It was an hour before...”**

- Why aren’t the barbers more explicit? Why don’t they openly say what they mean?
- What sort of power dynamics are at work in the story? (Think about the use of the word “couldn’t” – as opposed to, say, “wouldn’t.”)
- What’s the greater significance of the barber telling the boy it would be better if he left?

### **A Silvery Night**

- What fears are at work in this story? What fears are *not* present?
- Why would you go crazy if the devil doesn't appear? Why is the boy at peace when the devil doesn't show? (Think carefully...)
- What's the reason the boy wants to call the devil?

### **"One afternoon a minister..."**

- What does this section imply regarding the hopes of the Chicano migrant community?

### **...And the Earth Did Not Devour Him**

- What point is Rivera making by contrasting the parents' view of God with the young boy's?
- What are the various causes of the boy's anger and hate?
- What do the quoted passages reveal about migrant attitudes regarding fate and justice?
- What's significant about the aftermath of the boy's curse, particularly the final quote?

### **"A stroke left the grandfather paralyzed..."**

- What does this story reveal about hope? (Think carefully...)

### **First Communion**

- This is the last of Rivera's "religious" stories. Why do you think he places this one after *...And the Earth Did Not Devour Him* instead of before it? (What purpose does its placement serve?)
- What do you think this story reveals about innocence (and sin), as well as what it reveals about guilt and fear? (Think about how humans typically react to the "unknown"...)

### **"The teacher was surprised..."**

- What does this story reveal about sacrifice – for both those who give and those who receive its benefits?
- What does this story say about the nature of love? (Look beyond the idea that you have to be willing to make sacrifices in order to feel love or desire.)

### **The Little Burnt Victims**

- What does this story reveal about parents and children?
- Why is the fact that the parents are away while the children box significant?
- Why do you think Rivera allows the oldest child to survive? (Think carefully...)

### **"It was a beautiful wedding day..."**

- Why do you think Rivera included this story? Why do you think he decided to place it in its current location (between *The Little Burnt Victims* and *The Night the Lights Went Out*)?

### **The Night the Lights Went Out**

- What is Rivera saying about betrayal here?
- How much blame should Ramiro face for Ramon's death?
- What's the symbolic significance of Ramon's suicide method? Why does Rivera couch it in terms of what happens to the town – and why does he show the unknowing reactions of the townspeople in *Under the House*?

### **"A little before six..."**

- What is Rivera saying about justice here? How is this piece related to the earlier stories on the subject?
- What sort of emotions does this piece inspire?

### **The Night Before Christmas**

- What does this story reveal about fear and the unknown?
- What does this story say about family – on multiple levels?

### **"Before people left for up north..."**

- This story has a very odd tone to it, and some readers have trouble getting a handle on what it's really about. What *is* the point of this story?

### **The Portrait**

- How do the interactions between the portrait salesman and the migrants represent the nature of migrant existence? (Think of *Vignette #6...*)
- Rivera often puts scenes of vengeance "offscreen." Why doesn't he show us these scenes?
- What's your reaction to the end of the story?

### **"They let Figueroa out..."**

- What does this section reveal about the migrants' attitudes towards society and justice? What about society's attitudes towards them?

### **When We Arrive**

- Why does Rivera show us such a wide range of emotional responses over the course of the story?
- Outline and analyze the interplay between hope and cynicism throughout the story.
- Why is that final, quiet moment important?

### **"Bartolo passed through town..."**

- Re-read this story, and explain how this piece is particularly representative of Rivera's goals (as well as the novel itself).

### **Under the House**

- Trace the people who speak during the italicized section as best you can. Can you figure out which stories they're from?
- What's especially significant about the novel's final image?
- Why does Rivera end the novel with that passage and moment? (Think about *The Lost Year* from a symbolic standpoint...)