

...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 the mother repeats most frequently? What does this repetition reveal about her?
- Why doesn't her son deserve to die?
- What sort of emotional response does this story evoke, and why?
- *Is* the son in the mother's prayer the same one that's mentioned in Vignette #2?

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...)