

The Bridge of San Luis Rey

Part 5: Perhaps an Intention

Comprehension Questions

Your quiz questions will come from the content in this packet.

Remember the questions Thornton Wilder said he was writing about:

- Is the intention that lies behind love sufficient to justify the desperation of living?
- Is there a direction and meaning in life beyond the individual's own will?

1. What has replaced the rope bridge?
 - a. a bridge of stone
2. What common expression do the Limeans use, after the bridge fell?
 - a. I will see you... "unless the bridge falls"
 - b. like our "knock on wood" or "God willing"
3. Describe the student that helps Brother Juniper complete his book.
 - a. his wife left him and their two daughters behind
 - b. possessed of bitterness
 - c. derived joy from a conviction that all was wrong with the world
4. What three qualities did Brother Juniper rate for the 15 victims and 15 survivors of the pestilence in Puerto?
 - a. their goodness, their piety, their usefulness
5. Why did Alfonso V receive negative scores from Brother Juniper?
 - a. he wasn't merely bad, he was a propagandist for badness
 - b. he didn't merely avoid church, he led others away from it too
6. What did he discover when he totaled the scores?
 - a. the dead were 5 times more worth saving
 - b. it almost looked as if the pestilence was directed at the really valuable people of the village
7. What bothered the master about the epitaph of the lady he read in the Cathedral of Lima?
 - a. She was purely good
 - b. He went to all who knew her to find some story that told otherwise, but couldn't
 - c. Ultimately, he holds to his belief and mutters that she was just an exception
8. What fear pursued Brother Juniper when writing his book?
 - a. the fear that omitting the smallest detail would lose some "guiding hint" about God's purpose with their deaths

9. The narrator says, "The art of biography is more difficult than is generally supposed." What leads him to say this?
- Everyone Brother Juniper talked to about the Marquesa had different opinions about her
 - Their stories were based on their experience, but they were all conflicting perspectives
 - pg. 138
10. Who did Brother Juniper determine he could learn the least from, when it came to compiling the biographies?
- Those who were closest to the subjects.
 - Why? They knew them too well
 - "Those who know most, venture least."
 - p. 138
11. The narrator tells us that Brother Juniper made the following conclusions about those on the bridge. Who do you think he was talking about with each description?
- "the wicked visited by destruction"
 - opinion
 - "the good called early to Heaven"
 - opinion
 - "pride and wealth confounded as an object lesson to the world"
 - opinion
 - "humility crowned and rewarded for the edification of the city"
 - opinion
12. As Brother Juniper awaited his death, what did he "long for"? Did he get it?
- for one voice, somewhere, to testify that his intention had been faith
 - yes, a huge crowd of people who believed him where there
13. Who did Brother Juniper call on when he died?
- St. Francis
 - he was the founder of the order of monks that Brother Juniper was part of
14. For the following people who attended the funeral, write down what they thought about while they were there:
- Don Andrés
 - he was ill and troubled
 - he knew people expected him to "play the father who lost his only son"
 - he wondered if the Perichole was there
 - Captain Alvarado
 - he thought it was false/unreal
 - left to sit by the sea
 - said, "Happy are the drowned, Esteban"

- c. The Abbess
 - i. “she had torn the idol from her heart” (echoes of Marquesa)
 - ii. Pepita was gone, and she was the purpose for Abbess’s work
 - iii. “I have been too busy”
 - iv. beautiful quote on pg. 141
- 15. Who does the Camila decide to go see after the funeral? Why?
 - a. her daughters were being sent to Spain
 - b. she believed the bridge was not an accident
 - c. “the vast ritual of the church” was “like a chasm into which the beloved falls”
– echo of the bridge falling
 - d. came to the realization that people love her and she fails them
 - e. She did not go to the funeral
 - f. The Abbess
 - g. because they both loved two people who died
 - h. they connect over this truth
 - i. Camila pours out her entire story on “that dusty friendly lap” of the Abbess in the garden
- 16. Who comes to see the Abbess, from Spain?
 - a. Doña Clara
- 17. The Abbess says, “I scarcely dare say it—but in love our very mistakes don’t seem to be able to last long.” What does she mean?
 - a. in real love, we find forgiveness
 - b. she’s talking to Doña Clara about her mother
 - c. she’s seeking forgiveness for their relationship
- 18. After the Abbess and Doña Clara speak, what do they do?
 - a. she gives her a tour of the convent and all the work they do there
 - b. she’s hoping Doña Clara will invest in their work and/or send back information about how they are handling these things
- 19. When the Abbess needs to go speak to the very sick, she brings “one of her helpers, who had likewise been involved in the affair of the bridge and who had formerly been an actress.” Who is this person and how does this description show us that her life has changed?
 - a. It’s Camila
 - b. We learn that she’s now living at the convent with the Abbess
- 20. Thornton Wilder set out to ask the question, “Is the intention that lies behind love sufficient to justify the desperation of living?” He answers it in the final lines of the book. What does he say?
 - a. The love will have been enough...
 - b. The bridge between the living and the dead is love, the only survival, the meaning

