

War by Luigi Pirandello – A Group (or solo) Work



If you work on this solo – **make sure that you do** – unless you indicate who and where you worked with other people.

1. What is the setting of this story – if you had trouble getting “this” – they are on a train. Given what happens in the story – how is a train metaphorically “fitting”? In order to answer this, consider how a train is very different than a car, bike, etc. It is even different than being a passenger on a bus – how? Physically – what is a train – how does that “image”, that mechanical specificity of what a train is – echo the characters and their relationship to each other in the story? Be specific, thoughtful, and brilliant here.

2. How is the setting described – look at the words, and images that repeat themselves – ok – it’s smoky. How does that fit in with what happens – what people know, what people are hiding. How does it fit in with how the sad woman is described? Where, specifically, did you see similar (or opposed) imagery in *The Things They Carried* – how was it used there? Pay attention to the woman’s shape and how it is described.

3. Why do the husband and wife (the large woman) of the son who has just been sent off feel that they are worse off than someone who has more than one child – give at least two specifics of their argument – and then two specifics given by the first man (the one with more than one child) against their thesis.

4. What is the main argument (forget the ending for a moment or two) of the large man – the man whose son has died? Why does he say that they should not be mourning – that they should, in fact, be happy? Be specific (yes that mean include quotes – 2 is good here).

5. How does what Martin, in *Candide*, said about judging who has suffered the most – and only being able to tell by looking into their hearts – fit in with what happens in this story. Specifically, what the characters say about their sense of sadness, how they view each other in that regard – and of course the ending.

6. Why is it so hard for the large woman to understand the large man’s (whose son has died) point of view? Again, before the ending – she almost seems excited by what he is saying? Why? What does his point of view offer her? Be specific – use at least 1 quote from him and one from her.

7. True War Stories: Is this story by Pirandello a “true war story” based on O’Brien’s criteria (from *The Things They Carried*)? Find 3 specific reasons backed up by three points from the story? Is the large man’s little lecture a true war story – why or why not? How about the large woman’s?

8. Some endings are almost like a “slap in the face,” to the reader. I believe, for me anyway, this story has this effect. In *The Things They Carried* what was that slap? What is it here? What is the large man’s realization? What brings it on? Go back to your answer for question one – connect the two in a thoughtful and specific way.

9a. How is what happens, in the end to the large man, like what happens to the prisoner in Plato’s Cave who makes it out into the sunlight? Ok – ready for it – How is it like Tim’s (in *The Things They Carried*) realization (epiphany – see the side box with the definition of that word) at the end of that (O’Brien’s) novel? What was Tim’s (the character’s) epiphany? How is it antithetical (look it up if you don’t know its precise meaning) to what we talked about during our reading of *Candide* regarding ships, philosophizing, and getting to one’s

Epiphany - 3 a (1) : a usually sudden manifestation or perception of the essential nature or meaning of something (2) : an intuitive grasp of reality through something (as an event) usually simple and striking (3) : an illuminating discovery, realization, or disclosure b : a revealing scene or moment. Merriam Webster

destination?

9b. Remember Lavender walking “into the sunlight” in the *The Things They Carried*? Link it in a powerful creative way to your discussion from 9a.

