

## *The History of Love* – Green Fields and Dirty Dishes - Group Work #3 (pages 153-170)

1. “The train left the city behind. Green fields fell away to either side. It had been raining for days, and it kept raining” (162). Connect this *History of Love* quote with this excerpt from *The Great Gatsby*. What color was Rosa’s dress the first time Zvi lays eyes on her (and yes it is VERY significant, and may help you forgive Zvi for what he did). Be specific, thoughtful, and *ooooo-worthy*. Now, make a less subtle connection with what is going on with Bird.

And as the moon rose higher the inessential houses began to melt away until gradually I became aware of the old island here that flowered once for Dutch sailors’ eyes—a fresh, green breast of the new world. Its vanished trees, the trees that had made way for Gatsby’s house, had once pandered in whispers to the last and greatest of all human dreams; for a transitory enchanted moment man must have held his breath in the presence of this continent, compelled into an aesthetic contemplation he neither understood nor desired, face to face for the last time in history with something commensurate to his capacity for wonder.

From *The Great Gatsby* by F. Scott Fitzgerald.

2. Go to page 10 (about 2/3 down the page) – “...I was dreaming of my childhood. The field where we used to play, the field in which everything was discovered and everything was possible.” Connect this (specifically and profoundly) with what you wrote for question 1.

3. One of the great mysteries of Shakespeare’s works can be found in the lines from *Henry V* where the beloved (usually very comic) Falstaff’s dying words are recounted as him having “a’ babbled of green fields.” Consider Leo’s state of mind concerning death that we get to see from the very beginning of the book, to even now. Any thoughts (you better have, and they had better be specific).

4. (page 166). How can you do dishes *with love* – in an earlier chapter – Leo said that he sits shiva – if you don’t know what this means – to overly simplify – it is a profound mourning of the dead complete with prayer and meditation. How is his tidying of the apartment similar to this? Explain. There is a similar scene with dishes that also involves Leo? What is it? How is it fundamentally different? (OK – this gets very cool: Like all survivors (Leo has survived just about everyone – but in this case consider his surviving his son), there is a certain amount of guilt in either “what could I have done, how could I have spent more time with them.” In the *earlier* dishes scene (ask another group if you are unsure of that scene) – how is the outcome what every survivor wishes to be?

5. What does Leo put on while he is at his son’s house? How does this precisely echo the actions of another character – for many of the same reasons? Explain (both the actions and their reasons). Now – if that was about the living and the dead on page 138 this same *action* is echoed between the living. Identify and explain bringing in as much of what you wrote in question 4 into the mix (consider “regret” and living in the moment).

6. Page 167 – “I mistook your mother for my life? No. *Isaac*, I said. *The truth is the thing invented so I could live.*” How does this justify his “life” after he came to America – how does it explain Charlotte’s (little Alma’s mother)? Can you see her (Charlotte) saying the same to Alma? What is it about this that little Alma doesn’t understand – and how does she act (think Misha) on that misunderstanding (I hope to, but won’t count on, hearing an “oooooo”).



7. Get out your Poem packets and look at the third poem “Childhood” by Rainer Maria Rilke.

Quickly look it over (you should already have notes on it). Connect it as specifically as you can to your reading and this group work. Find at least two direct quotes and link them specifically and thoughtfully to this chapter.

8. Any time left – connect any of the other poems in the packet to your reading (group work).