

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?
2. What common expression do the Limeans use, after the bridge fell?
3. Describe the student that helps Brother Juniper complete his book.
4. What three qualities did Brother Juniper rate for the 15 victims and 15 survivors of the pestilence in Puerto?
5. Why did Alfonso V receive negative scores from Brother Juniper?
6. What did he discover when he totaled the scores?
7. What bothered the master about the epitaph of the lady he read in the Cathedral of Lima?
8. What fear pursued Brother Juniper when writing his book?
9. The narrator says, "The art of biography is more difficult than is generally supposed." What leads him to say this?

10. Who did Brother Juniper determine he could learn the least from, when it came to compiling the biographies?
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?
 - a. “the wicked visited by destruction”
 - b. “the good called early to Heaven”
 - c. “pride and wealth confounded as an object lesson to the world”
 - d. “humility crowned and rewarded for the edification of the city”
12. As Brother Juniper awaited his death, what did he “long for”? Did he get it?
13. Who did Brother Juniper call on when he died?
14. For the following people who attended the funeral, write down what they thought about while they were there:
 - a. Don Andrés
 - b. Captain Alvarado
 - c. The Abbess
15. Who does the Camila decide to go see after the funeral? Why?
16. Who comes to see the Abbess, from Spain?
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?
18. After the Abbess and Doña Clara speak, what do they do?

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?

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?