

Song of Solomon Group Work #4 - Chapter 9-10



1. What do Corinthians' actions (both the job and car jumping) have to do with Railroad Tommy's speech to Milkman and Guitar (pgs 59-60). How does Porter's speech on 200 (on what he is giving her) fit in with Tommy's earlier speech? How does Corinthians jumping on the car relate to Elaine Robinson's last words to her mother? (hint: it's at the church). With peacocks? (maybe not limited to male birds after all – think about her reluctance to take Porter's card to begin with) - and the type of kiss that she plants on his throat.

2. What do Pilate's actions in the police station tell us about her *character* (both her fictional character and her personal makeup, personality). Is she a **sell-out**? What do her roots, east & west feet, and geography book have to do with your answer (hopefully something?) BE SPECIFIC. What so angers Guitar about her actions? Is he justified? What have we seen in Guitar's character (and feelings to women) that may have foretold his reaction? What does Milkman think of how she acted (you will find one earlier when Corrie returns - be specific)? Do Milkman's views of her actions change from chapters 9-10. Find 2 quotes (one from before, one from after) to support your viewpoint. How have our views changed? Macon once called her a snake – specifically, based on this Chapter (9) – how is that true (think of changing skins) and is that necessarily a bad thing. Explain.



3. Is Lena correct when she accuses Milkman of disrespecting (I know those aren't her words, but...) his family? What is the connection with the dying tree, his action when he was a boy that ruined his sister's dress. Did he tell his father about his sister and Porter out of concern? How does what she says explain his earlier hitting of his father? Explain. If Milkman believes that freedom lies in getting away from his past and his family (see chapter 8) then what impact do Lena's words have on that argument? Be very specific and use at least two quotes in answering this question.

4. Once again, what last page of a great work of literature does the opening of Chapter 10, echo? What does this have to do with Milkman at this moment in getting the money? At this moment in his life? Look at the next page, how do the opening lines of this chapter as well as the lines from *Gatsby* fit in with the effect of the airplane ride on Milkman? Be specific. Now what does all of this have to do with the last part of your answer to question 3. Is the airplane ride truly flying? How does that very subtle ending of *The Graduate* (the uneasy looks bus) make even more sense? How does his airplane ride resemble (metaphorically) his waiting for Hagar in Guitar's apartment? (was he really not running away then?)

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5. In George Orwell's famous essay on the nature of imperialism, "Shooting an Elephant," a British policeman (part of the occupiers in Burma) is forced, by the native Burmese to shoot an elephant that has temporarily gone mad. He knows it makes no sense to shoot the beast but the crowd demands it of him. The policeman (Orwell) has an epiphany realizing that those who oppress are ultimately in turn oppressed by their own actions. Connect this to:

- Why Milkman thinks that Circe stays (look at his lines)
- Why Circe does stay (go see her lines)
- Remember the radio documentary on Emmett Till? Remember the fate of the killers? The town? Tie this to the Butler mansion and its inhabitants.
- What Circe is for the family she stays with.
- Now, think about the family's name – and how it fits in with everything – ahhhh cool, yes?

Most of the big shore places were closed now and there were hardly any lights except the shadowy, moving glow of a ferryboat across the Sound. 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.

And as I sat there, brooding on the old unknown world, I thought of Gatsby's wonder when he first picked out the green light at the end of Daisy's dock. He had come a long way to this blue lawn and his dream must have seemed so close that he could hardly fail to grasp it. He did not know that it was already behind him, somewhere back in that vast obscurity beyond the city, where the dark fields of the republic rolled on under the night.

Gatsby believed in the green light, the orgastic future that year by year recedes before us. It eluded us then, but that's no matter—tomorrow we will run faster, stretch out our arms farther. . . . And one fine morning—

- Full circle: How is what Pilate does at the end of Chapter 9 a refutation (denial) of that same *relationship of power*?