

4 Little Girls part 1

READ the excerpt below – it is from the first page of Chapter 8 (*Song of Solomon*). If you haven't gotten to that chapter yet – it will let you know why we are watching this film. If you have read it – well, it's a reminder. All movie questions are due Monday. You should also read the first part of Chapter 9 (thru 209) but will be quizzed on all of Ch 9 on Weds. **Briefly answer ALL not italicized questions and the Five Italicized (3 in Part 1, 2 in Part 2) questions.**

Chapter 8

Every night now Guitar was seeing little scraps of Sunday dresses—white and purple, powder blue, pink and white, lace and voile, velvet and silk, cotton and satin, eyelet and grosgrain. The scraps stayed with him all night and he remembered Magdalene called Lena and Corinthians bending in the wind to catch the heart-red pieces of velvet that had floated under the gaze of Mr. Robert Smith. Only Guitar's scraps were different. The bits of Sunday dresses that he saw did not fly; they hung in the air quietly, like the whole notes in the last measure of an Easter hymn.

Four little colored girls had been blown out of a church, and his mission was to approximate as best he could a similar death of four little white girls some Sunday, since he was the Sunday man. He couldn't do it with a piece of wire, or a switchblade. For this he needed explosives, or guns, or hand grenades. And that would take money. He knew that the assignments of the Days would more and more be the killing of white people in groups, since more and more Negroes were being killed in groups. The single,



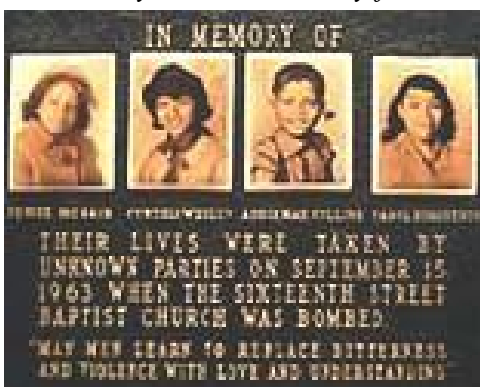
*1.
In
the

beginning, why do you think Spike Lee gives us so many details about the lives of these girls that were murdered? **Why not*

start with the murders? Besides the little girls themselves, what information does Lee give us. *Once again, think back to the words of Alma's uncle (The History of Love) about painting a forest, and the quote about if you want to tell the story of an army – tell the story of...*

2. In the discussion of Birmingham, how is the view that Birmingham was a wonderful place to live, ironically countered? *Have you seen this kind of view in Song of Solomon (where one group sees the other as much better off than those that are actually living that life?) If you wish you may bring in your own encounters with people seeing those worse off as doing "just fine".*

3. What does one man say is as painful as seeing his daughter killed by a rock? *How does this make any sense? What can you relate directly from Song of Solomon that supports this idea? That refutes it? Be specific and use at least one quote for each.*



4. What sort of mischief do the girls get into at the movie theater? *Why do you think they do? Link this to Ruth and that cabinet door of hers. What is ironic about the murdered girl's role in that incident?*

5. How does the film's discussion of dynamite and bombs *fit in with the chapters that you are reading right now in Song of Solomon?*

6. What are the implications of the mayor of Birmingham's comments on talking with African-American (not his term) leaders? Who is he saying is to blame for the violence? *How is this almost unbelievably ironic? Specifically, what did we hear in the Emmett Till radio documentary that echoes this incredulous point of view?*

7. Note the comments about segregation of the downtown stores. *These sit-ins are mentioned in Song of Solomon - where?*

*8. There are many comments on the police's role in racist violence – *what specific comments do you believe resonate from Song of Solomon? Guitar's comments? Milkman's discussion with Circe (if you've read that far) about the murderers of his father? Be specific. Again, you will want to read Chapter 8 before you answer the italics here.*

from an interview in Indiewire.com

IW: Frederick Douglas said, "We have to do with the past only as we can make it useful to the present and to the future." Is that your goal with this film?

Lee: I think that there's a lot of young people, both black and white, that really don't know about the civil rights struggle and civil rights movement, and African-Americans in particular who today are bearing the fruits of everybody who had to sacrifice and struggle. They have no idea what happened, and they think it was always like this because they were always allowed to vote or go wherever they wanted. That wasn't the case at all. Afro-Americans somehow fear going back and revisiting painful parts of history, nevertheless we need to do it. All we have to do is look at our fellow Jewish brothers and sisters and see how much they revert back to the Holocaust. Most blacks don't even want to bring up slavery. Why bring that up? But that's our legacy. Even though I don't know how "Amistad", Spielberg's film, is going to turn out, I hope it's good. I do hope the success of that film generates many more projects about that whole dark period in this country.

9. How important was the Baptist Church in the movement to end segregation in Birmingham?

10. Who was Bull Connor? What specifically did he do to terrorize the populace? *How responsible do you believe he is for what happened? Be specific. Do you remember Milkman and Guitar's discussion about Bull Connor – "What would you do if you found yourself in Alabama..."?*

11. "Bull Connor" is called the walking **id** of Birmingham. What exactly does that mean (look up id if you need to)? *Big question: how can we relate this to Song of Solomon? Mike Royko wrote a column on the death of Martin Luther King where he said that we (everyone) were responsible for his(King's) death? (You may remember we talked about this idea when we listened to the Rolling Stones's "Sympathy for the Devil" (with "Young Goodman Brown"). Can you make a connection to Bull Connor and what people say about him? Just as Lee shows the individual lives of the four little girls, he also shows individual racists. Look at your answer to number one. What is the effect on the other side?*

12. One of the interviewee's says that George Wallace expressed others' feelings and attitudes. *Which character from Song of Solomon does this seem to concur with? How does it contrast to what you answered for the second part of question 11?*

13. How does George Wallace's insistence on showing "his best friend" fit in with stereotypes of racists? *Can you make a subtle link with question 12? Ok, now to the more subtle – does Lee showing 2 incidents of this weaken or strengthen his argument? Finally, in an unexpected way, how does Wallace's defense of his past racism actually work: think of your answers to question #1 & #11.*

*14. How does the end of Wallace's life (this was shot shortly before he died) echo the Butlers(the family that Circe works for – ok I may have said "Hunters" in class sorry) and Circe from Song of Solomon (you will get to this by time questions are due- in other words its in an upcoming chapter), and to what happened to one of the killers of Emmett Till (from the radio documentary)?

15. Why were the protesters asked to take objects out of their pockets? *In the novel, there is a comment about making "your hair look bushy" if it fit the description of what the police were looking for. How can you make a connection to the movie?*

16. How do young people take the lead in the movement? *Connect Guitar's "lectures" to Milkman about getting involved and caring about than his own existence. How are they punished in an especially cruel way?*

4 little girls – part II

TRAUMATIC SCENE ALERT: part II of this movie contains graphic depictions of the bodies of the 4 little girls' dead bodies;; if you wish you may choose to not watch this part of the movie, but instead listen to the audio of the documentary with your heads down or turned away from screen. **Briefly answer ALL not italicized questions and the Five Italicized (3 in Part 1, 2 in Part 2) questions.**

1. How does what the blind man says (from part 1) *echo Guitar's words about white people and mental illness? Remember how Guitar contradicts himself – first he says the mental illness is an excuse, then...*

*2. Spike Lee presents 2 very contradictory views of the fire hoses used against protestors. **How do those 2 views echo misunderstandings views of the struggle? of African-American lives? Recent (2020) events in our country have shown how people from different backgrounds can view the same event (ie the shooting of a young man in Ferguson, Mo; or the killing of George Floyd) and see very different stories.*

3. Notice how the father of one of the victims recounts his "last supper" with his daughter. *Again, think back to our discussions of fiction vs. nonfiction or even Pilate's discussion about brothers by law vs. brothers by sentiment (or falling off imaginary cliffs). If echoes, as used by Mr. Scotese, describe an author's focus and reiterating of certain ideas – do we use these same type of echoes in our lives? Explain.*

4. What dream does someone have that foretells the next day's events? *How can you relate this directly to Song of Solomon? What other feelings or premonitions do people have?*

5. What events seemed to almost conspire with the girls being at the church at the time of the bombing?

6. What are people's general first reactions to the bomb? Why don't they think it was a bomb? *What does this have to do with Milkman's reaction to white killers as being crazy? (think here).*

7. What was the reaction of one of the father's (who subsequently died) that seems to go with question 6?

8. *Why do you think Spike Lee chooses to show the pictures of the girls in the morgue? Can you relate it to question 1 from part 1? Emmett Till's mother insisted on an open casket funeral for her son so that everyone could see what those people had done to her child. Can you make a connection?*

9. At the morgue, who receives a reaction similar to the one given by the nurse from Mercy Hospital (from *Song of Solomon* when Mr. Smith jumps off the roof)?

10. After the bombing, someone says that "we will teach you a lesson." *What exactly did they mean?*

11. What were the two options of how the community could react? *How does this echo choices in Song of Solomon?*

12. Why does Dr. King believe he has to go to Birmingham?

13. What does the incident with the high school student and his principal and *their exchange of ties* signify?



14. A number of speakers talk about a void, an empty spot, *how are these feelings related (speak your heart here). How is this like Franz's (from All Quiet) phantom leg – how is it like what Alma and Bird feel for their father [in The History of Love)?*
15. How do Walter Cronkite's (the white broadcaster with the mustache) words relate to what you wrote about question #2?
16. *What is the nature of **the awakening** that is spoken of?*
17. Which question do Bill Cosby's comments seem to echo? Which question do Jesse Jackson's comments echo?
18. How does the comment about the burning of the churches and "a conspiracy of the mind" make sense? (this portion of the film may be skipped if we are running out of time – if we do, skip this question as well)
19. *How is a Joan Baez song, for the prosecutor, like the rocks that Pilate carries around with her? Big subtle question. One of the parents, keeps the rock that killed their daughter? Why – and how can you relate that to the beginning of this question.*
- 19b. *How is the rock, song, even this film with its interviews of those that were affected by this tragedy like the objects that are taken and preserved by "the collector" (Jonathan) from Everything is Illuminated (be subtle and specific)?*
20. What brave choices are made by some witnesses, including a Methodist Minister? *There was a similar witness (Moses Wright) at the trial of Emmett Till who risked everything? How do these actions belie the generalizations of question #2?*
21. Think about the closing comments by the mothers and fathers (especially Mrs. Robertson) when you reach the end of *Song of Solomon*. *Which character from Song of Solomon, even now, does Mrs. Robertson most remind you of?*

*22. *The difference between a maze and a labyrinth is that a maze has multiple paths – dead ends – many ways to get lost, while a labyrinth has only a single winding path. Accordingly, it has been said that the only way to get lost in a labyrinth, is to stop walking. How are the parents (specifically Mrs. Robertson) walking the path of a labyrinth? How is Milkman? Be specific and thoughtful – use what you've read, seen, and talked about so far. Do you see a different character that is lost in a maze – tell me why.*

