

QUESTIONS FOR FFC 100, FRESHMAN FOUNDATIONS
Chapman University in Orange, CA, Fall 2002, Alfred J. Drake, Ph.D.

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This document contains questions on the following authors, in alphabetical order (titles / pages / editions are included along with the questions):

Alighieri, Dante.	<i>The Inferno.</i>
Borges, Jorge Luis.	From <i>Ficciones.</i>
Camus, Albert.	<i>The Stranger.</i>
Dostoyevsky, Fyodor.	<i>Notes from Underground.</i>
Homer.	<i>The Odyssey.</i>
Machiavelli, Niccolò.	<i>The Prince.</i>
Marx, Karl.	<i>The Communist Manifesto.</i>
Ovid.	From <i>The Metamorphoses.</i>
Plato.	<i>The Symposium.</i>
Rousseau, Jean-Jacques.	From <i>The Confessions.</i>
Shakespeare, William.	<i>Titus Andronicus.</i>
Voltaire.	<i>Candide.</i>

DANTE ALIGHIERI QUESTIONS

Assigned: *Inferno*.

Inferno

Canto 1

1. Describe the spiritual state and time of life that the narrator is in when the canto begins. To help do this, where is he? That is, how do you interpret the natural setting in the first 30 or so lines? The “dark wood,” the “hill,” and the path, the rays of light?
2. Why doesn't Virgil offer to help the narrator the minute the two meet? What is Virgil waiting for?

Canto 2

3. What's your first impression of Beatrice? How does she explain (around line 94) what led her to make Virgil assist the narrator? What does Virgil say about Beatrice? How does the news that Beatrice is involved in his journey affect the narrator?

Canto 3

4. What does the inscription on the gates of Hell imply about the divine perspective on the sinful and about the place of Hell in God's plan? Consider, for instance, the phrase “the primal love”: in what sense does that kind of language on the gates of Hell seem strange to our modern ears? How does the inscription indirectly explain why the damned are so eager to cross the Acheron and receive their punishment?
5. Why is the punishment -- blindness, cacophony, etc. -- appropriate to those who refused to take a moral stand as Christians? How is the punishment of such souls another instance of God's “poetic justice” rather than a strict, dull “eye-for-an-eye” kind of punishment? In other words, how is God an “artist” of sorts, and not merely a strict judge, in handing out the punishments that he does?
6. What relationship is becoming established between the narrator and Virgil in this canto? Describe how they interact and talk to each other.

Canto 4

7. Around line 90 or so, the narrator is introduced to his predecessor poets: Homer, Ovid, Horace, and Lucan. Virgil is already his guide, so Dante is the sixth among the greats. The narrator says that they all talked amongst one another. Why do you suppose he doesn't tell us what they said? What seems to be his attitude towards Classical literature and the pagan (pre-Christian) past here?

Canto 5

8. How is the punishment of the lustful another instance of God's "poetic justice" rather than just a strict, dull "eye-for-an-eye" kind of punishment?
9. When he meets the lovers Paolo and Francesca, the narrator is obviously filled with compassion for them. Why do you suppose that's the case? Also, is being compassionate the same thing as taking their side? Why or why not?
10. What is the narrator interested in learning from Paolo and Francesca? When Francesca tells their story towards the canto's end, why does she keep it brief rather than expanding on it to satisfy the narrator's interest?

Canto 6

11. Again, how is the punishment (this time of the Gluttonous) poetic rather than just strict and proportionate? Consider, for example, the physical setting at the opening of the canto: the rain and mud.
12. From lines 103-115, Dante asks his guide Virgil what will happen to the sinners after the "last sentence" (the Last Judgment following the Second Coming of Christ to earth) is pronounced. What do you make of Virgil's response: what is going to happen to the sinners?

Canto 7

13. Why is it logical that the avaricious or greedy and the angry should be condemned to the form of punishment that they now suffer?
14. Dante asks Virgil about "Fortune." How does Virgil explain the workings of Fortune? How does that power operate in the world, and what is its relation to God's will? How does Virgil's answer differ from one you might expect from a pagan talking about the Fates?
15. Do you see any change in Dante's attitude here regarding his perceptions and treatment of the damned? Is there any change that would prefigure the much greater change that will manifest itself in the next canto? If so, how?

Canto 8

16. What allows Dante to show anger towards Filippo Argenti, aside from anything personal he may have against that sinner? If it isn't just Dante's personal spite, what must be happening within him to make him malign Argenti? This is an important point in the text.
17. What effect on the pagan Virgil does the fallen angels' brazen resistance have? Dante and Virgil are trying to enter the City of Dis, but the angels fiercely guard the entrance. What important transition in the *Inferno's* structure and theme does the resistance mark?

Canto 9

18. What use does Dante make of Classical mythology in this canto? Why, for example, would the narrator not be able to return if he looked at Medusa? What purpose do the Furies serve in this canto?

19. Around line 80 and following, a heavenly messenger arrives to help the narrator and Virgil enter Dis. What effect does the messenger have on the fallen angels? How is there a ceremonial or dramatic quality to the messenger's actions?

Canto 10

20. How does Farinata behave in this canto, and how does Dante treat him in return? Some have said that Farinata's attitude breaks the unity of *Inferno's* treatment of the sinful. What do you think, and why?

21. Why is the heretics' form of punishment fitting? What is the nature of any heretic's offense, and how is that offense reflected in the punishment of being partially or entirely entombed in a burning receptacle?

Canto 11

22. What does the narrator ask Virgil about God's design or purpose in structuring Hell as he has done? How does Virgil explain and help us understand the stages of the remaining journey in the process? Why is fraud such a terrible, unnatural offense, so that a species of it is punished all the way down at the bottom of Hell?

Canto 12

23. Given Virgil's explanation of the *Inferno's* structure in Canto 11, why should Minotaurs and Centaurs be the guardians of the regions Dante is about to enter?

24. How does Dante react when he gets his first look at lower Hell? This canto marks another transition point in the story.

Canto 13

25. Why are the suicides turned into trees in this canto? Why do you suppose suicide would be a mortal sin: what is the logic in punishing people who commit suicide?

26 Why are the squanderers pursued by hunting dogs? why is the punishment appropriate, in Dantean terms?

Canto 14

27. What sin is Capaneus guilty of? How does Virgil explain his punishment?

28. What is the source of Hell's rivers? How does Virgil explain this matter?

Canto 15

29. What future does Brunetto Latini predict for Dante around lines 55 and following? How does he describe Florence?

30. How does Dante take the news of his future troubles? What does this reaction reveal about him?

Canto 16

31. Discuss Dante's descriptive powers in this canto: how does he make things memorable for us?

32. Characterize the way Dante talks about Florence, the city of his birth, from line 58 and following.

Canto 17

33. How does Dante describe the usurers' punishment? How do their actions reflect the nature of their earthly sins?

34. How does Dante call attention to the perilousness of his transition to lower Hell? Discuss this question by paying attention to the ride that Virgil and Dante take on the monster Geryon.

Canto 18

35. We have seen many awful predicaments for the sinners in *Inferno* so far. What is worse than those earlier punishments about the punishments of ordinary fraud?

36. How is Jason's bearing around line 82 and following reflective of his special sin?

Canto 19

37. What is Dante's attitude towards the simoniacal popes? Is there anything unusual in his interaction with them, around lines 64 and following?

Canto 20

38. How does Dante's reaction in this canto comment on his spiritual progress up to this point in the epic? What does he say has caused him to be sorrowful in this canto, after he showed so much anger at the popes in the previous one?

39. Why are astrology, divination, and magic a violation of God's plan or "Providence"? Is what Dante the poet does -- writing an epic detailing a fictional journey -- liable to be considered divination? If it is, how might Dante justify his poetic task?

40. Why is Virgil more lively and talkative than usual, around lines 58 and following, where he discusses the founding of Mantua, his native city? Discuss also Virgil's rebuke of Dante for pitying the damned souls in this canto: what accusation does he level against Dante?

Canto 21

41. Describe the “comic” atmosphere of this canto. Why is it hard to take the goings-on seriously here?
42. The devils’ behavior in this canto nonetheless amounts to a serious attempt to hinder Dante on his way to salvation. Characterize that attempt, and explain why it’s appropriate that it should take place in a pouch where “barratry” (“the purchase or sale of ecclesiastical preferment, or offices of state”; also more generally vexatious, dishonest litigiousness) is punished. Hint: how common is “barratry,” in its general sense, in human affairs?

Canto 22

43. How are the devils in this canto similar to the sinners they are tormenting? What are the devils constantly doing to one another?
44. How does the barrator from Navarre take advantage of Virgil and Dante and the devils?

Canto 23

45. At this point in the poem, what would you say the interaction between Dante and Virgil reveals about Dante’s progress and Virgil’s limitations?
46. Describe the predicament Dante and Virgil find themselves in during this canto, and the reason why they are in that predicament. What allows them to get out of their present location and continue on their way?
47. We see that Caiaphas is being eternally crucified. What has he done to deserve his fate, and why is his punishment -- a grotesque parody of Christ’s crucifixion -- appropriate as “poetic justice”?

Canto 24

48. Why is there so much emphasis in this canto on the labor, the intense effort, required if the travelers are to continue downward to the center of hell? How does this concentration reflect upon Dante’s task as a writer of epic poetry?
49. What does Vanni Fucci predict will soon happen in Dante’s home city of Florence? Why is it valuable for Dante to keep hearing what will come to pass in Florence?
50. Why is Vanni Fucci’s punishment for stealing from the Church appropriate as another of God’s “poems” of justice? How does Vanni perpetually relive the common sentence on fallen humanity, “ashes to ashes, dust to dust”?

Canto 25

51. How does Dante react to Vanni Fucci’s obscene gesture at God?

52. In this canto Dante describes an astounding metamorphosis of one set of beings into another -- what strategies does he employ to establish authority for the tale he tells?

Canto 26

53. What does Virgil say has caused Ulysses (our Odysseus) to end up in hell as a fraudulent counselor? How is Dante refashioning Homer to suit Christian ends?

54. If we already know why Ulysses is damned, what purpose does making him tell of his own adventures and death serve? How is Dante positioning himself with regard to the values Ulysses promotes?

Canto 27

55. Here Guido da Montefeltro, a fraudulent counselor in the service of Pope Boniface VIII, tells his story. How is the tale an indictment of the Church's temporal (i.e. worldly) power?

Canto 28

56. At the end of this canto, Bertran de Born, French troubadour poet and false counselor to King Henry II of England, explains that he is punished with the usual "law of counter-penalty" ("contrapasso" in Italian). How does "contrapasso" work, and how do the other souls in this canto suffer in accordance with it?

Canto 29

57. In this canto Dante spots an ancestor of his, and pities him. Is he making a mistake here, or do his explanation and conduct excuse his pity, which at some points in the *Inferno* has earned him a just rebuke from Virgil?

58. Why should alchemy (the attempt to turn ordinary metals and substances into precious ones) be punished so far down in hell, in the tenth pouch of the eighth circle?

Canto 30

59. Master Adam is a falsifier of coinage. How is his economic sin a deep offense against his community?

60. What is the point of Dante's dramatizing for us the argument that Master Adam engages in with Sinon the Greek liar?

61. Why does Virgil reproach Dante towards the canto's end?

Canto 31

62. Why is it significant that at first, on his passage with Virgil down to the Ninth Circle, Dante sees an optical illusion -- i.e., he mistakes the Giants for towers? How would you generalize from this incident to make a point about perceiving evil accurately and in proportion?

63. Concentrate on Dante's presentation of Nimrod: how is this giant (who commanded the building of the Tower of Babel) punished? Why is it significant that his speech is now unintelligible and that he is immobile?

64. By what descriptive techniques does Dante "cut evil down to size" in this canto? Why is it important for him to do that as he descends further and further into the depths of Hell?

Canto 32

65. Why does Dante fight with the traitor Bocca degli Abati? Does the narrator's violent behavior -- seizing Abati by the hair -- seem appropriate? Why or why not?

66. How do the traitors in this canto repeat their earthly sins?

Canto 33

67. Consider the case of Ugolino, a Pisan leader who treacherously cut a deal with the Ghibelline Archbishop Ruggieri, and was then betrayed and imprisoned by this cleric. How does Ugolino describe his damnable crime? What connection does Dante make between family, party, and state in this example?

68. How does Dante assume the role of a prophet in this canto? What does he say about various Italian cities?

69. Branca Doria is not even dead yet, but Dante places his soul down in Circle 9! How does this unusual gesture reinforce the moral immediacy of the *Inferno*?

Canto 34

70. How does Dante's presentation of Satan render the archfiend absurd? Why is it necessary to do that, rather than make him seem grand and awe-inspiring?

71. Satan is immobilized in ice and chomps eternally on Brutus and Cassius (Julius Caesar's murderers) and Christ's betrayer Judas Iscariot. How might Satan's predicament be Dante's ultimate comment on the consequences of human sinfulness?

72. What is the significance of the change in perspective that Virgil and Dante go through when they traverse Satan's body and find that the way down has become the way up? How might this perspectival change amount to a comment on the necessary path to salvation?

Edition: Alighieri, Dante. *Inferno*. Trans. Allen Mandelbaum. New York: Bantam, 1982. ISBN 0553213393.

JORGE LUIS BORGES QUESTIONS

Assigned: From *Ficciones*.

Ficciones

"The Circular Ruins"

1. What is the significance of circles and fire in this story?
2. Why does the old man want to dream another human being? What will he accomplish thereby?
3. Why does he at first fail in his project? How does he eventually succeed? How does the Fire God help him, and on what condition?
4. When the old man succeeds, how does he react? What is his relation to the being he has dreamed into existence?
5. What is this story ultimately about? Death? Our grasp of reality? Our relationship to other human beings and to the divine? Something else? Explain.

"The Babylon Lottery"

6. Why, according to the narrator, did the Babylonians invite the lottery into the very fabric of their lives, their reality? Why, that is, are they so taken with the idea that *chance* should pervade their existence?
7. What is the history of the Company? (See 66-68 mainly.) How did the Company finally take all public power into its own hands? From what source did it derive its strength?
8. How reliable does the narrator seem in relating the story's events and the history of the Company? (See 70-71 especially.)
9. What conjectures do the Babylonians offer about the Company? Are any of them satisfactory? Why or why not? What do you suppose to be the Company's ultimate function -- or is it possible to say?

"The Secret Miracle"

10. How does Hladik's reaction to his situation change from the time he first is taken into custody to the period after his death sentence has been pronounced?
11. Why does he want to finish his drama? Is it simply to stave off death, or is something different involved?
12. As with "The Circular Ruins," what is this story ultimately about? Death? Our grasp of reality? The relationship between art and life? Something else?

"The South"

13. Describe the physical and mental effects that Dahlmann's injury has upon him. (See 168-69.)
14. Why is the black cat important to the story? What does Dahlmann say on pages 169-70 about the cat he strokes?
15. What questions emerge from pages 170-72 about whether Dahlmann's trip to his ranch actually occurs?
16. Explain, with reference to pages 171-end, how Dahlmann's trip is more than just a physical experience -- what is he traveling through and where is he going?
17. How does the story's title -- "The South" -- come into play as a theme? What has happened to Dahlmann's identity by the end of the tale?

Edition: Borges, Jorge Luis. *Ficciones*. Trans. Anthony Bonner. New York: Grove Press, 1989. ISBN 0802130305.

ALBERT CAMUS QUESTIONS

Assigned: *The Stranger* (1946); translated by Matthew Ward, 1988.

The Stranger**Part One****Chapter 1**

1. How does Camus establish Meursault's personality? How does Meursault respond to others' conversation, to ordinary social situations, and to the death of his mother?
2. On page 10, Meursault says that at the viewing of his mother, he felt as if the elderly people there were judging him. Offer a conjecture about why he might have had that feeling. (It is worth paying attention to such references to "judgment" because they occur several times throughout the work.)
3. From 14-18, how does Meursault describe the funeral procession: why was it a difficult experience for him? How does he say he felt after the burial was concluded? Do his reactions strike you as odd? Explain.

Chapter 2

4. Meursault meets his old flame Marie Cardona. What happens between them, and why might it be considered inappropriate? Does Meursault seem to consider his behavior with Marie wrong? Explain.
5. How does this chapter deal with Meursault's experience of time's passage after the death of his mother? How does the chapter also convey a sense of emptiness?

6. What reflections does Meursault offer at the end of the chapter?

Chapter 3

7. What is the point of Camus' including a chapter of this sort, one in which we are introduced to several of Meursault's friends and acquaintances?

8. From 26-28 top, Meursault describes his meeting with Salamano and his old dog. What is Salamano's relationship with his dog? How does that relationship contrast with the way Meursault lives his life?

9. From 28-33, Meursault describes his friendship with Raymond Sintes. What explanation does Sintes give for the fight he has had with an Arab man? What isn't quite honest about the order in which he tells his story? How does Meursault react to the story and to Sintes' offer of friendship?

Chapter 4

10. How do you connect the main episodes in this chapter (Sintes' trouble with his girlfriend and Salamano's lamentation over his lost dog) with Meursault's way of experiencing or perceiving the things that happen in his life? What contrasts between Meursault and these other characters does this chapter make?

Chapter 5

11. What changes are offered Meursault in this chapter? How does he react to them?

12. On page 40, how does Meursault introduce the trip that will prove fatal to him? Explain how this reference is characteristic of Camus' handling of events, of "experience," in *The Stranger*.

13. On page 43, what is the purpose of the episode in which a rather perky woman joins Meursault for dinner and then promptly leaves?

Chapter 6

14. What role does the sun play in the unfolding of this chapter's events, especially Meursault's shooting of the Arab man on the beach? How do references to the sun obscure our understanding of the shooting? What other possible explanations does the sun's constant presence undercut?

15. How does Meursault refer to his Algerian Arab opponents throughout this chapter? How much can one understand about them -- their motives, their character, whether or not they started the fight, etc.?

Part Two

Chapter 1

16. What does the magistrate want to hear from Meursault? Why is he upset with Meursault's responses?

17. What difficulties does Meursault have in responding to the magistrate the way he is expected to? Why do the expectations annoy him?

Chapter 2

18. What strategies does Meursault employ to habituate himself to life in prison while he awaits trial? Does he change as a result of prison confinement? Explain.

Chapter 3

19. Why is the "jury trial" a good vehicle for Camus in showing the absurdity of the various attempts made to interpret why Meursault has committed his crime? That is, what things matter most during a trial -- the evidence, or other factors? Explain.

20. How do Meursault's friends and acquaintances explain his actions? What "spin" is the prosecutor able to give to their explanations, and why is it difficult to undo the damage the prosecutor has done to Meursault's prospects for acquittal?

Chapter 4

21. What is Meursault's complaint about the trial proceedings and especially about both the defense lawyer and the prosecuting attorney?

22. If you were a jury member -- and therefore were not a reader of Meursault's own narration of his behavior -- would you find the prosecutor's story about Meursault convincing? Would you buy his defense attorney's story? Explain.

23. The prosecuting attorney describes Meursault's heart as "an abyss threatening to swallow up society" (101), and on 102 he even accuses Meursault of the parricide supposedly committed by the *next* defendant to be tried in the same courtroom. How do you interpret these strange claims? What threat might Meursault be said to pose to "civilized society" even beyond the rather common crime he has committed?

Chapter 5

24. On page 109, Meursault says after his death sentence has been pronounced that there "really was something ridiculously out of proportion between the verdict such certainty was based on and the imperturbable march of events from the moment the verdict was announced." How does this comment address the strong need manifested in social and legal institutions to attain certainty about people and events?

25. Why does Meursault become so upset with the priest who comes to visit him in his cell? What is the priest trying to make him do?

26. To what extent does Meursault accept his fate? How does he arrive at his final understanding of his situation, and how would you describe that understanding?

Edition: Camus, Albert. *The Stranger*. Trans. Matthew Ward. New York: Vintage, 1989. ISBN 0679720200.

FYODOR DOSTOYEVSKY QUESTIONS

Assigned: *Notes from Underground* (1864).

Notes from Underground

Chapter 1 (15-46)

1. What is "the Underground"? To respond, consider how the idea develops in the first several pages of Dostoyevsky's text.
2. How does Dostoyevsky's narrator create and then engage with an audience? Why does it seem important to him to talk to an audience in the first place?
3. On pages 20-23, the narrator refers to "the Wall." What is the Wall, and how does Dostoyevsky's narrator use this metaphor as a means of characterizing his era and of examining the relationship between intellect and action, between human desires and scientific fact?
4. On page 21, the narrator distinguishes between men and mice; what kind of mindset informs the behavior of the "mouse"? Who has the upper hand -- the man or the mouse? And in what sense does one or the other have the upper hand?
5. On page 27, what does the narrator say is "the essence of all thinking and self-awareness"? How does his explanation undercut commonly accepted ideas about what distinguishes human beings as "special" in comparison to the rest of the natural world? (Consider, for example, common claims about the significance of morality, language, and reason as capacities that make us unique among earth's creatures.)
6. On page 29, the narrator attacks the fundamental idea that people act on the basis of self-interest (enlightened or otherwise). What does he claim is wrong with that idea?
7. On page 31, how does the narrator define "civilization"? How does his definition differ from others you have heard?
8. On pages 34-36, the narrator discusses his notion of human will. How does he explain this concept, and why is the concept of "volition" so important to him?
9. On pages 40-41, the narrator says that we are "comically constructed"? What does this phrase imply about us -- that is, about our actions and about the stories we tell to explain them?
10. On pages 44-45, the narrator explains his reasons for writing his "notes." What is the point of writing such notes, according to him?

Chapter 2: A Story of the Falling Sleet (47-123)

11. On page 49, the narrator claims that “at all times, a decent man must be a coward and a slave.” Why is that the case, according to our narrator?
12. On pages 52-58 and following, the narrator tells us how an officer insulted him in a tavern. How does the narrator respond to this insult, what drives him to respond as he does, and how does his behavior illustrate what he has been saying about his mindset or character traits throughout the first part of the text?
13. What is the upshot of the narrator’s attempt to pay the officer back for the insult? Who wins the “contest” (if that’s the right word for it), and in what sense?
14. On page 62 and following, the narrator meets his old school friends Simonov and company. What does he think of these “friends,” and why are they still important to him?
15. On pages 72-80, the friends’ dinner for Zverkov takes place, and the narrator attends in spite of his old friends’ reluctance to invite him. How does he behave during this dinner? How does he interact with his friends at the dinner, and why does he talk and act the way he does?
16. The sequel to the dinner runs from pages 81-102; the narrator intends to confront Zverkov one more time, but instead meets Liza the prostitute. How does the dialogue between the narrator and Liza unfold? That is, what strategy does the narrator use to convince Liza that she is on the wrong path? What seems to motivate the narrator to speak and behave as he does? What effect do his words have?
17. After parting company with Liza, the narrator goes home and apologizes for his conduct towards his friends. Examine pages 102-106: how are the narrator’s apology and his reflections upon his motives in dealing with Liza characteristic of him?
18. On pages 107ff., how does the narrator describe the relationship between himself and his servant, Apollon? Who has the upper hand, and why?
19. On pages 112-end, how does the narrator explain his reaction to the reappearance of Liza at his doorstep? What does the narrator do to Liza, and why do you think he behaves as he does? Consider, for example, his statements about “love”: is this view partly responsible for his bad behavior?
20. Towards the end of the text, how does the narrator sum up what he has accomplished by writing his “Notes from Underground”? Has he redeemed himself to any considerable degree, or was redemption in his own and our eyes not the point of the whole exercise? If not, what *was* the point?

Edition: Dostoyevsky, Fyodor. *Notes from Underground / The Double*. Trans. Jessie Coulson. New York: Penguin, 1972. ISBN 0140442529.

HOMER QUESTIONS

Assigned: *The Odyssey* (circa 725 BCE)

The Odyssey

General Questions

1. How does Homer establish the significance of the story he is about to tell? How does he maintain interest in the tale as it unfolds? Keep in mind that "suspense" is not a key factor in Greek literature since the audience usually knows from the outset how things will turn out.
2. How would you characterize the narrator, the fictive "Homer" whose voice we imagine as singing the verses of the *Odyssey*?
3. What direct references to the craft or performance of poetry do you find in the *Odyssey*? What do they tell us about the importance of poetry in Homer's day? In responding, consider also indirect references such as the ones the text makes to weaving and singing: after all, Homer himself might be said to "weave" his story, stitching together the various episodes and characters into a meaningful tale; and of course an epic bard sings his verses.
4. What qualities does the text hold up as heroic? Keep track of heroic qualities and the episodes in which they are most evident and necessary. Are there different kinds of heroism? If so, what is the distinction between the different kinds of heroism?
5. What kinds of behavior are treated as contemptible in the *Odyssey*? Keep track of these qualities and the characters who embody them. Find episodes where contemptible behavior occurs.
6. How does the poem represent mortal women? Since Penelope is the most important woman in the *Odyssey*, what qualities does she possess, and how does she respond to the troubles she faces? (Some of the other women are of note, too-Eurycleia the serving woman, the faithless maidservants, Nausicaa the Phaeacian princess, and Helen of Sparta, Menelaus' queen, whose elopement with Prince Paris sparked the Trojan War.)
7. How do Homer's gods think and behave? How do their actions and motivations differ from the conception of god in other religions of which you have knowledge? What role do the Homeric gods play in human affairs, and what is the responsibility of humans with respect to those gods?
8. What can you gather from the *Odyssey* about the way the Homeric Greeks lived their daily lives? About how they governed themselves and what sorts of social distinctions there may have been among the citizens of Ithaca? For example, how important is the royal household to the rest of the Ithacans?
9. Keep track of the *Odyssey's* structure -- make a diagram or chart of some kind that illustrates the main episodes and their relation to one another. To get you started, the epic is divided into three main parts or plot-complexes: 1) The maturation of the young prince Telemachus; 2) The wanderings of Odysseus,

which are mostly recounted as past events; and 3) Odysseus' return to Ithaca and re-establishment of his authority as king. Consider also that although the poem's action takes place over the course of forty days, the text refers when necessary to events spanning twenty years -- i.e., from the beginning of the Trojan War on through the ten-year wanderings of Odysseus after the ten-year war.

Book 1

10. What does the invocation (the first 12 lines) say the poem as a whole will emphasize?
11. What first impression does this book give us of the gods? How much of a role do they play in human affairs? What seems to motivate their actions?
12. What is our first introduction to various characters? The suitors, for instance: are they a homogeneous group, or are there differences among them? What qualities does Telemachus possess at the outset?

Book 2

13. How, according to Antinous, do the suitors view Penelope's reluctance? Why do they think they are justified in behaving as they do?
14. How well does Telemachus handle the suitors' chief Antinous and his self-justification?

Book 3

15. How does Athena help Telemachus prepare to meet the old King Nestor?
16. What is the purpose of this book? Why is it important that Telemachus go and visit old Nestor, aside, of course, from the fact that he's out for news of his father Odysseus?
17. What exactly does Nestor tell Telemachus about the War and the return home? Why does he dwell upon the fate of Agamemnon, killed by Aegisthus, the lover of Clytemnestra?

Book 4

18. How does Menelaus represent himself as responding to his wanderings on the way home to Sparta?
19. Why does Menelaus still value and accept Helen, even though her elopement with Paris led to the Trojan War?
20. How might Menelaus' story about the Old Man of the Sea, Proteus, be instructive to Telemachus in his quest to find his father? Why, for that matter, would Menelaus' response to the knowledge Proteus gives him be instructive for Odysseus?

Book 5

21. What sort of character is Calypso? How long does Odysseus stay on her island? What is the source of Calypso's power over Odysseus? To what extent does she help Odysseus or hinder him once the decision to let him go is forced upon her by Hermes?

22. How does Odysseus respond to the shipwreck that he meets upon leaving Calypso? Follow the motions of his spirit as he struggles to save himself. That is, track how the poet represents Odysseus' emotions and thoughts during and after the shipwreck.

Book 6

23. How is the behavior of Nausicaa, the young Phaeacian princess who discovers Odysseus washed up on the shore, appropriate to the situation? What makes her an admirable character?

24. How does Odysseus treat Nausicaa?

Book 7

25. What sort of kingdom is Phaeacia? How well is it governed, judging from the way the King relates to his family and subjects, and the way he receives the suppliant washed up on his shores?

26. How might the impression Odysseus and we receive of Phaeacia be significant for Odysseus' subsequent return to Ithaca?

27. What does Odysseus say when Arete questions him sharply and asks him to reveal his identity?

Book 8

28. What effect does the song sung by the harper Demodocus have upon Odysseus? Demodocus sings again later in the book. Again, with what effect does this singing have on Odysseus? Is the latter's response different from what we would expect from modern-day heroes?

29. How does Odysseus respond to the challenge of Broadsea? What Odyssean qualities shine through in this episode of athletic competition?

Book 9

30. When does Odysseus reveal his identity? How has he been careful in keeping that information to himself from Books 5-8?

31. List Odysseus' tales in the order that he tells them. What patterns of meaning do you find emerging from this order?

32. Patterns aside, what do the individual stories Odysseus recounts tell us about him and his men? For example, what makes Odysseus a worthy leader? Does he make mistakes while leading his men? How is he better than his men? Are there dangers in his strengths?

33. This is actually a question for books 9-12 as a unit, but I'll ask it here: why is it important that Odysseus recount all his wanderings as past events? Why doesn't Homer simply construct his epic as a linear (i.e. "straight-line") progression of events from the Trojan War onward?

Book 10

34. What sort of character is Circe? Why (aside from her magic) is she able to turn Odysseus' men into swine? What have they done to offend her, or what weakness do they show?

35. What makes Odysseus succumb for a time to Circe's enticements? What is his mistake here?

36. Why does Odysseus need to visit Hades (the Greek Underworld) and consult with Tiresias the blind prophet of Thebes?

Book 11

37. What does Odysseus learn from Tiresias in Hades? What other characters does Odysseus speak with, and what does he learn from them?

38. In general, how would you characterize Odysseus' attitude towards his journey to the Underworld? That is, what does the episode tell us about him?

39. What is the Greek Underworld (Hades) like? How is it unlike the Christian Hell?

Book 12

40. Odysseus returns to Circe's island after his visit to Hades. What adventures still await him? Again, what do those adventures tell us about Odysseus as a hero?

Book 13

41. How do Poseidon and Zeus interact in this book? What is the balance of power between them? How does Zeus assert his authority?

42. How does Odysseus handle his return to Ithaca? How much does he tell those he meets about his true identity and intentions? How much help does Athena give him?

43. How is this book pivotal regarding the action of the Odyssey as a whole? What necessary qualities, that is, does Odysseus show in this first step of his return to power?

Book 14

44. What is the function of Eumaeus the swineherd? How does he treat Odysseus, and how does Odysseus treat him? How much of the truth does Odysseus tell him?

Book 15

45. What is Telemachus' main diplomatic challenge in this book? How does Athena help him meet the challenge?

46. What role does Helen play in this book? What does the prophecy she makes reveal about her? Why might it be significant, in terms of the Odyssey as a whole, that Helen, whose misbehavior towards her husband set in motion the Trojan War, gives Telemachus a robe to bestow upon his future bride?

47. Who is Theoclymenus, and why is it appropriate that Telemachus should treat him kindly?

48. What is Eumaeus' own story, as he recounts it to Odysseus? Does the story indicate why Eumaeus is especially loyal to Odysseus? If so, what's the reason?

Book 16

49. In this book Odysseus reveals his identity to Telemachus. What does the reaction of the two characters tell us about the Greeks' attitude towards the expression of emotion? How does their attitude differ from ours? (Think of American film heroes like John Wayne or Clint Eastwood.)

50. In what ways does Telemachus show in this book that he has matured?

Book 17

51. In Elizabethan revenge tragedies, it is common for the villain to declare himself a thorough rascal. In what way do Melanthius the goatherd and the suitors throw away a chance to redeem themselves in this book? Why do they fail?

52. Around line 480 Odysseus tells a "resourceful" tale, namely that he was sold into slavery in Egypt. Although the tale is a lie, what purpose does it serve, aside from establishing some cover for Odysseus in concealing his true identity?

Book 18

53. Why is it appropriate that Odysseus disguise himself from the suitors (with Athena's help) as a beggar?

54. Why is it significant that Odysseus overcomes the swaggering beggar Irus?

55. What part does Athena play in this book? That is, what effect does she have on Odysseus and the suitors?

Book 19

56. Penelope questions the stranger (Odysseus in disguise) closely, and he claims to be Aethon from Crete. Do you think that Penelope knows or suspects Odysseus' real identity? Why or why not?

57. Whether she suspects anything or not, how does Penelope test the stranger? What qualities does she manifest in this book that make her a worthy match for Odysseus?

58. Interpret the dream that Penelope relates to the stranger towards the book's end. Does it reveal things about her stance towards the suitors that would probably surprise even her?

59. Why does Penelope tell the stranger about the contest to string Odysseus' bow that she is planning to announce?

Book 20

60. What portents announce the struggle to come? How does Odysseus react to them?

61. Athena inspires the suitors to behave even more inappropriately than usual. Why does she do that? What effect does their behavior have on Odysseus and Telemachus?

Book 21

62. Penelope fetches Odysseus' bow and announces the contest to the suitors. How do the suitors again prove that they deserve the "blood wedding" that awaits them?

63. The suitors mock at the stranger for wanting to take his turn with the bow. Penelope tells them to let him go ahead. Why?

64. Odysseus strings his own bow at the book's end. How does Homer handle this moment? For example, why don't we hear anything from the suitors right after Odysseus shoots his first arrow?

Book 22

65. As logic dictates, Antinous is the first to die. How do the remaining suitors try to appease Odysseus? Why, in view of the Odyssey's task as we have discussed it in class, would it be inappropriate for Odysseus to accept their arguments or pleas?

66. At what points in the struggle is Athena active? How much does she help Odysseus, and how much credit is mainly his?

67. Why might it be significant, in light of the Odyssey's task as we have discussed it in class, that around line 400 Odysseus, in Fagles' translation, refers to the work that remains to be done in the book as "household chores"?

68. How do Odysseus and Telemachus deal with Melanthius the goatherd and the women who sported with the suitors? Consider the intensity of the violence throughout this book: do you find it unsettling or "over the top"? Why or why not? Does the epic narrator take up an attitude towards the violence?

Book 23

69. Why does the text refrain from making Penelope recognize Odysseus outright? Why does Penelope insist on testing Odysseus even after all that he has done in the hall?

70. Why is it appropriate that the couple's bed should be involved in the main test of Odysseus' identity?

71. Around line 300, Odysseus recounts the prophecy that Tiresias had made about the King's further adventure and death in old age. Why would Homer remind us of this prophecy, just as the poem achieves its goal of bringing Odysseus home and reestablishing him successfully as master of Ithaca?

Book 24

72. Describe the interaction of the suitors' shades with others in Hades. How do Agamemnon and Achilles view each other's fates?

73. How does Odysseus test his father Laertes, now living a hard life, after the slaughter has been accomplished? What's the point of testing his father?

74. What problem remains for Odysseus to deal with, even though he has rid himself of the suitors and their hangers-on? What reason do the suitors' surviving kin give for their attempt to kill Odysseus? Is it grief alone, or something different?

75. How does the reconciliation between Odysseus and the surviving kin occur? Without Athena's divine assistance, what would be the prospects for immediate or eventual reconciliation?

Edition: Homer. *The Odyssey*. Trans. Robert Fagles. New York: Penguin, 1999. ISBN: 0140268863.

NICCOLÒ MACHIAVELLI QUESTIONS

Assigned: *The Prince*.

The Prince

1. What are the circumstances of Machiavelli himself and of his native Florence when *The Prince (Il Principe)* is written in 1513?

2. What overt purpose does Machiavelli give in his "Dedication" (to the son of Lorenzo de' Medici and then to his grandson) for writing his book? Does his stated purpose amount to a betrayal of his republican career and principles? Why or why not?

3. Do you find Machiavelli's advice to princes in any way ironic -- i.e., given in such a manner as to detract from the dignity of princes in general over against republican governors? If so, provide a few examples. If not, explain why you think his advice is straightforward.

4. According to Machiavelli in Section II, custom is among the best aids to an effective prince. Why? What does this view of his say about his opinion of human motivations and needs?
5. How might Machiavelli's treatment of his subject (politics, with an emphasis on princely government) be described as scientific? What are some scientific elements of his method?
6. To what extent are people types or individuals (or both), according to Machiavelli? Respond both in terms of ordinary people and princes.
7. How does Machiavelli discuss human nature? What are some of the characteristics he ascribes to people in general? What motivates people to obey or disobey the prince's commands?
8. Why is "imitation of models" so important to princes? What sorts of examples does Machiavelli provide? That is, where does he get his models for princely conduct? How would Machiavelli define "history"?
9. What are some of the personal qualities that an effective prince needs? What should be the object or objects of his study?
10. What does Machiavelli appear to mean by the word "virtù" (virtue) What range of connotations does this word cover in his writing? See, for example, Section VIII: what is included and excluded as "virtù" in this section?
11. How does Machiavelli discuss the necessity for the prince to behave injuriously or unjustly towards others? When is it advisable *not* to be good? Does Machiavelli abandon more traditional, absolute standards concerning virtuous conduct or "morality"?
12. How did Cesare Borgia, son of Pope Alexander VI, come to power as a prince? What tactics did Cesare use to maintain and augment his power? Why did he ultimately fail, and why does Machiavelli nonetheless set Cesare's career forth as an example of wisdom and "virtù"?
13. What is Machiavelli's attitude towards the people (*il popolo*) as opposed to his treatment of princes?
14. Why, according to Machiavelli, is the Italy of his day so disunited? What narrative does he spin to explain Italy's slide into foreign dependency and internal fragmentation?
15. In Section 14, Machiavelli insists that the rules and methods of war should be among the foremost of the prince's concerns. Do you believe he is correct in this insistence on war's centrality? Why or why not?
16. In Section 16, Machiavelli argues that it is best for a prince to keep up a reputation for miserliness rather than generosity. What reasons does he provide for this claim? How is his reasoning on this point typical of his "scientific" analysis of human affairs?
17. In his "Exhortation," Machiavelli calls for action that will re-unify fragmented Italy, or at least free Italy of foreign influence. How does he recombine and reinvolve the ideas set forth in the main part of his treatise? Do you find Machiavelli's exhortation compelling? Why or why not?

18. What is Machiavelli's conception of fortune (*la fortuna*)? To what degree, if at all, can one overcome it?

Edition: Machiavelli, Niccolò. *The Prince*. 2nd edition. New York: Norton, 1992. ISBN 0393962202.

MARX QUESTIONS

Assigned: *The Communist Manifesto of 1848*.

The Communist Manifesto of 1848

Section I: Bourgeois and Proletarians

1. Trace the development of the bourgeoisie. That is, within and against what historical conditions did this class arise?
2. What distinguishes the bourgeois epoch from all previous ones?
3. In what way do the defining characteristics of the bourgeoisie, combined with the activity of the proletarian class that has necessarily arisen alongside it, spell trouble for this new ruling class? In other words, trace Marx and Engels' narrative of the bourgeoisie's eventual, and perhaps imminent, self-destruction.

Section II: Proletarians and Communists

4. How do Marx and Engels differentiate the communists from the proletariat per se?
5. The authors say that their whole theory fines down to "Abolition of private property." However, they are careful to qualify this statement. Why? Follow out their exploration of the term "private property" within a bourgeois context.
6. What do the authors say about the relationship between economics (the base) and institutions like jurisprudence and the family (the superstructure)? What philosophical justification do they offer for their claims?
7. According to Marx, what happens to national differences under capitalism?
8. What do Marx and Engels state will happen when communism achieves its aims?

Section III: Socialist and Communist Literature. (Not Required reading)

9. Marx and Engels dissect various kinds of pseudo-socialism. Have any of these socialisms accomplished much by way of analyzing capital? Why do they all deserve to be called reactionaries?

Edition: Marx, Karl and Friedrich Engels. *The Communist Manifesto*. New York: International Publishers, 1948. ISBN 0717802418.

OID QUESTIONS

Assigned: from *The Metamorphoses*.

From *The Metamorphoses*

“Pentheus and Bacchus”

1. How does Pentheus interpret Bacchus and his rites? What power does Bacchus represent in this story?
2. Offer your view on why Pentheus’ mother, Agave, does not recognize her own son before she tears him to pieces. One possibility: how might the fact that she cannot recognize him be taken as a comment on Ovid’s theme of poetry’s power?
3. What attitude does the teller of the tale take towards the violent behavior of the Bacchantes? Is their violence a positive and appropriate thing here?

“The Rape of Proserpine”

4. Explain the “nature myth” involved in this tale: how is the story about the seasons or cycles of nature?
5. How does this story treat the issue of sexuality? Why does Venus, goddess of love, insist on pursuing the course she does, and why does Jove (the Roman Zeus) accept the outrage that has been committed against Proserpine (also called Persephone)?
6. Who or what undergoes metamorphosis in this story? Is metamorphosis invariably a positive thing in “The Rape of Proserpine”? Why or why not?

“Arethusa”

7. How does Ovid construe the gods in this story?
8. How does Ovid treat sexuality in this story?
9. Does this story offer any comment or perspective on “The Rape of Proserpine”? What are your reasons for thinking as you do on this point?

“Orpheus and Eurydice”

10. You have read Persephone’s story; does that cast any light on (or shadow over) Orpheus’ quest to recover Eurydice from the Underworld? Why or why not?
11. What reasons does Orpheus give Persephone for wanting to enter Hades? What constraint do the Underworld gods impose on Orpheus in his quest, and why can’t he return for a second time after his initial failure?
12. What powers does Orpheus have as a poet? Explain.

13. What do you believe to be the significance of the course of love that Ovid pursues after he is denied a second chance to rescue Eurydice?

“The Death of Orpheus”

14. Orpheus is torn to shreds by Bacchantes, female followers of Bacchus’ wild mystery cult. What power or order might the Bacchantes represent, in a wider social and political context? That is, how, with reference to the previous Orpheus tale, has Orpheus offended more than these women’s vanity?

15. What role do Apollo and Bacchus play in this tale? Why do they take Orpheus’ side? Why is it appropriate that the Bacchantes are turned into trees?

“Tereus, Procne, and Philomela”

16. How does Ovid handle the violent subject matter of his story? To what extent, for example, does he describe Tereus’ rape and mutilation of Philomela graphically? What would you say is Ovid’s attitude towards the cannibalistic revenge Procne takes on Tereus?

17. We have seen that weaving is often a metaphor for poetry and its power. How might that be the case in this story? Is there any other way to connect the tale with this theme of poetry’s power?

18. How does Ovid, in this tale and others, differ from authors who offer us some conventional “moral”? What do you suppose we are expected to take away from our reading of such Ovidian fables about metamorphosis?

Edition: Ovid. *Metamorphoses*. Trans. A. D. Melville. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1986. ISBN 019283472X.

PLATO QUESTIONS

Assigned: *The Symposium*.

The Symposium

General Questions

1. Is there an order or progression in the speeches on love? Comment on the structure of the *Symposium* in terms of the arguments set forth about love.

2. The *Symposium* is obviously a literary text, not a dry work of philosophy. To what extent does the work’s literary qualities suit the topic (love), and how does it affect your view of the philosophical positions offered?

Questions on the Speeches

3. What is your first impression of Socrates? How does that impression affect the way you understand him later in the dialogue?

4. How does the doctor, Eryximachus set the topic and the tone for the discussion to follow?
5. Phaedrus' speech comes first. Summarize the points that Phaedrus makes. To what extent does he do justice to the topic?
6. Pausanias follows with his view of love. What distinctions does he introduce concerning love? How does he view friendship, and why is it so important to him? For example, what does politics have to do with friendship between an older and a younger man?
7. Now we move to the physician Erixymachus' speech. How does Erixymachus compare love between a man and woman with male/male companionship? What does political life have to do with the latter kind of companionship, according to him? How does Erixymachus' status as a doctor affect his view of love or friendship and its uses?
8. Aristophanes the comic poet follows. What, according to him, is the origin and nature of love? What is its purpose with respect to the individual? How does he ultimately view relationships between men and women? What value does he accord to friendship between two men? A structural question: how does Aristophanes' manner of proceeding provide some relief from the kinds of speeches we have been hearing so far?
9. What is Agathon's criticism of the speeches preceding his own? What, according to him, is the true nature of the god Love or "Eros"? How does the structure and crafting of Agathon's speech mark him off from the others?
10. Socrates begins his turn by questioning Agathon. What point is he driving at in his questioning? That is, what has been the problem or problems with all the preceding speeches? How is Socrates' manner of interrogating Agathon characteristic of him, if you have read other Platonic dialogues?
11. Socrates proceeds by ascribing what he says to the woman Diotima of Mantinea, who seems to be an expert in matters of love and prophecy.
 - a) Why does it matter that Love isn't a god, but is instead a "spirit"?
 - b) What is the "object" of love in its most general sense?
 - c) How does Diotima use the term "procreation," and why is it a central term with regard to the purpose of love?
 - d) Why, according to Socrates, does Diotima argue that love between males produces better "offspring"?
 - e) Pages 53-56, from the passage beginning, "The proper way to go about this business..." is the heart of Socrates' speech. Set down the ascending stages that the lover is said to go through. What is the ultimate purpose of this ascent, the ultimate prize to be attained?
12. Alcibiades enters just after Socrates concludes his speech. What effect does his entrance have upon the dialogue thus far? How does Alcibiades praise Socrates? How might one interpret Alcibiades'

characterization of Socrates, and even Alcibiades' presence in the text generally, as more than comic relief? How might they be significant with regard to the various things that have been said about love's nature and purpose?

Edition: Plato. *The Symposium*. Trans. Robin Waterfield. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1994. ISBN 0192834274.

JEAN-JACQUES ROUSSEAU QUESTIONS

Assigned: from *The Confessions*, Books 1-2.

From *The Confessions*

Book 1

1. What does R say on page 5 about his intentions and aims in writing the book? What do his comments imply about his views on the significance of "the individual" as opposed to the mass of human beings?
2. Discuss how Rousseau deals with the question of character formation on pages 7-10. What factors influenced Rousseau's growth while he was a boy in Geneva, before he had to leave for Bossey to stay with M. Lambercier? At what points does he introduce the complex feeling we call "guilt"?
3. From pages 14-17, Rousseau tells us how he came by a rather embarrassing sexual predilection, and then explores its consequences for his later happiness and his character. Why does he tell us embarrassing things in this manner? What do they allow him to explain? Also, do you think his confessions ennoble him for us, or do they seem more prideful than honorable? Explain your response.
4. From pages 18-20, Rousseau tells us how his embarrassing predilection was set to rest for a time by unjust punishment at the hands (pun intended, of course) of someone less attractive to Rousseau than Mlle. de Lambercier. How does Rousseau characterize this incident as a kind of "fall," to use the theological term? How does he employ the incident as a vehicle for his views about childhood and about society's penchant for "punishing the offender"?
5. From pages 21-23, Rousseau narrates how he and his cousin planted a willow sapling next to a walnut tree, only to have M. Lambercier tear up the "aqueduct" the two kids built with such great effort and ingenuity. What does this anecdote illustrate about Rousseau's view of the relative value in life of striving and achievement? Do you think that life is mainly about achievement (i.e. the end product of our efforts) or about the *process* of living and striving? Explain.
6. On pages 26-27, Rousseau explains that there are two different kinds of love. What are they, and how do they differ?
7. On pages 29-31, Rousseau describes his unhappy apprenticeships, first as a "fee-catcher" or bill collector of sorts, and then to an engraver. How does he explain the source and consequences of the first serious corruption of his nature in connection to those apprenticeships? What view of the relationship between "human nature" and "social environment" emerges from this part of the chapter?

8. From pages 33-35, Rousseau delves further into his persistent tendency to steal. How does he elaborate a “psychology of crime and punishment” here? And why does he steal little items even when he really doesn’t need them? How does he link this unattractive tendency to a deep-rooted individual character trait?
9. On page 36, Rousseau explains that he often has difficulty carrying out simple tasks and satisfying perfectly acceptable desires, like buying a pear at the grocer’s, for instance. How does he explain his inhibitions in such everyday matters? How does his explanation reveal his view about the complexity of human interaction and “personality”?
10. From pages 38-40, Rousseau explains how he became an insatiable reader. What benefits does he derive from reading? How does it affect his character?
11. From pages 42-43, Rousseau explains the kind of life he might have led if his early experiences had been different. As in question 7, what view of the relationship between “human nature” and “social environment” emerges from this part of the chapter? To what extent, according to Rousseau here and throughout Book 1, does a meaningful “I,” or “self,” exist before immersion into social customs and relationships?

Edition: Rousseau, Jean-Jacques. *Confessions*. Trans. Angela Scholar. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2000. ISBN 0192822756.

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE QUESTIONS

Assigned: *Titus Andronicus*.

Titus Andronicus

1. In a classical tragedy -- which *Titus Andronicus*, an Elizabethan revenge tragedy, isn’t -- there is one protagonist or main character. How might Titus and Tamora be said to have an equal or nearly equal claim to the title of protagonist?
2. In classical and in most revenge tragedy, the protagonist attains to a “recognition” or *anagnorisis*. When does Titus arrive at such a moment in *Titus Andronicus*? What does he learn, and how does that knowledge affect his subsequent behavior?
3. Explain the play’s presentation of Roman political ethics. Why, for example, does Titus believe that his sacrifice of Tamora’s eldest son Alarbus is honorable? Why isn’t he particularly upset about the death of several sons in his latest military campaign? Why does he lend his authority to the crowning of the pretentious and dissolute Saturninus over the more presentable candidate, Bassianus?
4. What does Tamora understand about Roman ethics and politics that Titus doesn’t, at least until his moment of recognition? Explain how she takes control of the situation in Rome by Machiavellian stratagem and manipulation of Roman codes of language and conduct.

5. How does Aaron the Moor (Tamora's lover) try to take advantage of both the Romans and the Goths? What is *his* ethical system or moral code? When does he articulate this system for us? Do you take him at his word when he does so? Why or why not?
6. Explain Shakespeare's use of Ovid's story about *Tereus, Procne and Philomela* in *Metamorphoses*. How does Lavinia's tale compare to Philomela's?
7. How does Lavinia's fate reflect on the ancient Roman "foundational" story about the expulsion of the Tarquins after Lucretia's rape and suicide? (See the web handout on this tale, as told by Livy.)
8. Why does Shakespeare include the boy Young Lucius as silent witness to some of the play's most violent events? What perspective do we gain thereby?
9. Why are there so many references to "body parts" (especially hands and heads) in this play, even to the point of obvious silliness? What theme or themes is Shakespeare exploring when he makes his characters refer so clumsily to the body parts they or others have lost?
10. Is *Titus Andronicus* a straightforward revenge tragedy, a parody or send-up of revenge tragedy, or something in between? Explain. In other words, do you think the play is meant to be taken as a serious tragedy? Or is it partly or entirely offered in jest?
11. How well does Julie Taymor's film *Titus* deal with the basic conflicts between the Roman and Gothic perceptions and conduct that the play explores? How does the film enhance or detract from our understanding of the play? That is, of the play as a set of stage directions and verse lines? In responding, remember that a play is meant to be *performed*, not merely read. So we are always dealing with someone's dramatic interpretation of a text.

Edition: Shakespeare, William. *Titus Andronicus*. New York: Penguin, 2000. ISBN 014071491X.

VOLTAIRE QUESTIONS

Assigned: *Candide*.

Candide

General Questions

1. Is Voltaire's work pessimistic or cynical, or is it in some sense meant to offer a relatively positive view of human potential and human affairs?
2. What criticisms does Voltaire level against religion, or at least against particular religious characters, in *Candide*?
3. What common notions about the eighteenth century or the Enlightenment does Voltaire's text render difficult to believe? How so?

Chapter 1

4. What is Dr. Pangloss' logic in saying that "all is for the best in the best of all possible worlds"?
5. On what basis does Candide believe Dr. Pangloss? What is the Doctor doing when Cunegonde observes him with the maidservant?

Chapter 2

6. How does the narrator characterize the military and its traditions?

Chapter 3

7. What attitude does the narrator show towards the violence of war? How can you tell?
8. What is Candide bracketing out or refusing to see when he insists that Pangloss is right about everything being for the best in the best of all possible worlds?

Chapter 4

9. Describe the narrator's treatment of the violence that occurs in this chapter: what effect does that treatment have on your own perception of such events in *Candide*?

Chapter 5

10. How does Dr. Pangloss' optimism affect your view of events in this chapter?
11. What gets Dr. Pangloss into trouble with the Inquisitor? What is it that the Inquisitor finds heretical about Pangloss' optimism?

Chapter 6

12. What is an "auto da fé"? How is it supposed to lessen the tragedy of the Lisbon earthquake? What reactions do you find in this chapter to the great earthquake of Lisbon?
13. What happens in this chapter to the notion that reason and probability largely govern our affairs? Why is it hard to believe such notions in *Candide*?

Chapter 7

14. Is it surprising that Candide meets Cunegonde? How do they treat each other after they are reunited?

Chapter 8

15. What image do you get of Cunegonde's character or virtue in this chapter?

16. How does the arrangement between the Lord Inquisitor and the Jew Don Issachar amount to a satire on religion?

Chapter 9

17. Does Candide continue to follow the principles of Dr. Pangloss in this chapter? Or is he for the moment acting on some other set of principles? Explain.

Chapter 10

18. Why do the Spanish give Candide a company of infantry?

19. What disagreement do Candide and Cunegonde have about Dr. Pangloss' philosophy? To what extent does either of them hold on to Panglossian beliefs?

Chapter 11

20. How does the old woman's tale tear apart the idea that rank is a permanent separator among people? How does her tale affect your view of Cunegonde and Candide?

21. Why does Voltaire include so many violent sexual outrages in his text up to this point? What psychological effect is he trying to visit on readers? The same question might be asked of his many mentions of extreme violence of any kind.

Edition: Voltaire. *Candide*. Trans. Robert Adams. New York: Norton, 19xx. ISBN 0393960587.