

Mr. Greenberger
English 10H

Name: _____
Date: _____

Cautionary Tales Questions

DIRECTIONS: After reading each story, answer the questions below with detail, complete sentences, and evidence from the text if warranted. You may skip one question per story without penalty although, if you answer all questions, you will receive bonus points. Each story is worth 20 points or 100 points for the complete packet (120 points with the bonus). This packet should be turned in no later than **Monday, June 8.**

“THE LOTTERY”

Were you surprised by the ending of the story? If not, at what point did you know what was going to happen? How does Jackson start to foreshadow the ending in paragraphs 2 and 3? Conversely, how does Jackson lull us into thinking that this is just an ordinary story with an ordinary town?

This story satirizes a number of social issues, including the reluctance of people to reject outdated traditions, ideas, rules, laws, and practices. What kinds of traditions, practices, laws, etc. might "The Lottery" represent?

This story was published in 1948, just after World War II. What other cultural or historical events, attitudes, institutions, or rituals might Jackson be satirizing in this story?

What are some examples of irony in this story? For example, why might the title, "The Lottery," or the opening description in paragraph one, be considered ironic?

Jackson gives interesting names to a number of her characters. Explain the possible allusions, irony or symbolism of some Of these:

- Delacroix

- Graves

- Summers

- Bentham

- Hutchinson

- Warner

- Martin

“THE ONES WHO WALK AWAY FROM OMELAS”

How would you describe the city of Omelas? What do we know about it from the opening pages?

Why does the narrator think seem to doubt that we will believe in and accept the description of “the festival, the city, the joy”?

Why do the people of Omelas understand that the child “has to be there”?

What “terrible paradox” must those who observe the suffering child face? Why do they come to accept the child's confinement as “the terrible justice of reality”?

Who are the ones who walk away from Omelas? Why do they leave? And why go alone? Is it a brave act or something else?

“HARRISON BERGERON”

What kind of world is this?

Why do they do the things they do? How do they view themselves and society?

Would you object if society sought equality not by handicapping the gifted as in the story, but by lifting up the not-gifted, say through genetic engineering or biotechnological enhancement?

In May 1961, about five months prior to the appearance of Vonnegut's "Harrison Bergeron," Newton Minow, then chairman of the Federal Communications Commission, gave a memorable speech titled "Television and the Public Interest," which challenged his audience as follows:

I invite each of you to sit down in front of your television set when your station goes on the air and stay there, for a day, without a book, without a magazine, without a newspaper, without a profit and loss sheet or rating book to distract you. Keep your eyes glued to that set until the station signs off. I can assure you that what you will observe is a vast wasteland.

Since 1961, TV has grown in leaps and bounds, making Americans even more addicted to it than George and Hazel and their society were. But has it remained the "vast wasteland" that Vonnegut parodied and of which Minow spoke?

Do other technologies like the Internet, Twitter, or instant messaging improve the American character? Our prospects for happiness? If so, how? If not, why?

“REPENT, HARLEQUIN, SAID THE TICKTOCKMAN”

Why does Ellison open the story with a long quotation from Henry David Thoreau’s essay “On Civil Disobedience”? Are the ideas represented in this quotation exemplified in the story, and if so, how? What is the effect of including this excerpt? Why address the quotation directly to those readers who tend to “ask, what is it all about?”

Describe the nature of the social “Machine” that must be “Kept . . . Running Smoothly” for this near-future world to function. What are its basic political and cultural norms? How are they enforced? How do the citizens relate to one another, and to the political regime that runs the social Machine? Why, for example, do people routinely wear masks?

What is the Ticktockman’s basic job? Why does this society need him? Why are precise timetables emphasized throughout the story? What is Ellison saying about the regimentation of time in modern bureaucratic societies?

At the end, the Ticktockman shows up late for the first time ever, murmuring nonsense syllables. Why do you think Ellison ends the story this way?

Why do you think the author uses a deliberate run-on sentence to describe the scene of Harlequin dropping those jellybeans? What effect does this run-on sentence structure have on the tone of that scene and how does it reflect the Harlequin’s personality?

“THE LAST NIGHT OF THE WORLD”

What might be meant by the line, “The Closing of a Book”?

Why might the two men have “started walking through the office, for the hell of it”?

What might the man mean when he says, “...it's just that things didn't work out? What might the woman (or man?) mean when s/he says, “We're all tired”? What might be the significance of the woman's final act of turning off the water?

Who would you rather be-- the parents or the children?

What would you miss the most if the world came to an end?
