

## *Second Quarter*

The first quarter is always the hardest as you learn what is expected of you. So now that you “have the hang of it,” you should be able to move along a little more quickly.

The first literature assignment of the second quarter is *The Bridge of San Luis Rey* by Thornton Wilder. After each assignment, take a brief content quiz, *closed book*. Note that there are a total of 40 questions in the 4 quizzes. Each question is worth two and one half points in the total grade which should be put on the Second Quarter Report form in the blank for “*The Bridge of San Luis Rey Quizzes*.” There are no *Cliffs Notes* for *The Bridge of San Luis Rey*. Think about what might have been included in a *Cliffs Notes* book.

After you have taken each quiz, think about, or talk with your parents about, the discussion questions and jot down your ideas. Then turn to the answer key, read and study the answers. Be sure you understand them before moving on.

Optional Enrichment: Try to find some library books which discuss Wilder and this novel. Ask the librarian to help you. Look in the *Essay and General Literature Index*. With parental permission, check the Internet.

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### WEEK ELEVEN

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#### Day 1

Read Part I and Part II of *The Bridge of San Luis Rey*.

#### Quiz #1:

1. What was the overall purpose of Brother Juniper’s research?
2. What was the main purpose of the Marquesa’s letters?
3. What did the Perichole do that she had to apologize for?
4. Who made her apologize?
5. How did the Marquesa react to the apology?
6. Where was Pepita from?
7. Whom did Pepita love most in the world?
8. Why was the Marquesa visiting the shrine?
9. Why did Pepita tear up her letter?
10. What effect did the letter have on the Marquesa?

#### Discussion Questions on Parts I & II:

1. Describe the character traits of Brother Juniper.
2. a) Why does he begin his project? b) What does he hope to determine?
3. Point out especially good descriptive words and phrases in the description of the Marquesa.

4. a) What was her early life like? b) How did it influence her character?
5. a) Describe the relationship of mother and daughter. b) To what extent was each to blame?
6. Characterize the Marquesa's love for her daughter.
7. a) Discuss the incident of the Perichole's apology. b) How does it further develop the Marquesa's character? c) What is the reader's attitude toward the Marquesa? d) How has the author created a personality with both weaknesses and sympathetic qualities?
8. a) Describe the character traits of the Abbess. b) What are her main strengths and weaknesses? c) What are her similarities to the Marquesa?
9. What is the Abbess' relationship to Pepita?
10. Describe Pepita's life at the Marquesa's.
11. a) How does the Marquesa react to the news of her daughter's pregnancy? b) How is this consistent with her character?
12. Why does Pepita write to the Abbess?
13. What does the Marquesa do just before she finds Pepita's letter?
14. What is her reaction to Pepita's letter?
15. a) Why does Pepita not send the letter? b) What effect does her reason have on the Marquesa?
16. What kind of letter does the Marquesa then write?
17. What prayer does she make as she looks at the sleeping Pepita?
18. In what sense is her prayer answered?

## Day 2

Read Part III.

### Quiz #2:

1. Who had raised the twins?
2. What was Madre Maria's view of men?
3. What did the twins do for a living?
4. Which twin falls in love with the Perichole?
5. How did the other brother react?
6. How did the Perichole treat the twin who loved her?
7. How is Manuel injured?
8. What treatment is recommended?
9. How does Manuel react to the treatment?
10. Who persuades Esteban to leave Lima with him?

**Discussion Questions for Part III:**

1. Describe the background of the twins.
2. a) Describe their relationship. b) How did they feel about everyone else? Why?
3. a) Characterize Manuel's love for the Perichole. b) To what extent does it resemble the selfish, passionate loves of the Marquesa or the Abbess? c) To what extent does it differ?
4. a) How does Esteban respond to Manuel's love for the Perichole? b) To what extent is he being selfish?
5. a) How is the Perichole's character further developed in the scenes with Manuel? b) What kind of love does she have in her life?
6. a) After the Perichole's last visit, how does Esteban react? b) What does Manuel do? c) What does this show about Manuel?
7. What happens to the relationship of Manuel and Esteban during Manuel's illness?
8. a) How does Esteban react to Manuel's death? b) How does he refuse to face reality?
9. What tragedy had Captain Alvarado suffered?
10. When does Esteban finally admit the reality of his brother's death?
11. a) Trace the conflicts in Esteban's mind from the time he first talks to the Captain until the end of the section. b) What is his final decision? c) What motivates the final decision?
12. What had Esteban learned about love and about suffering through his experiences?

**Day 3**

Read Part IV to the bottom of p. 109 (to the paragraph beginning "The Archbishop knew. . .").

**Quiz #3:**

- 1-2. Name two specific things Uncle Pio did for the Perichole.
3. Where was Uncle Pio originally from?
4. Where did he first meet the Perichole?
5. What did she do before she became an actress?
6. How did he act toward her after a performance?
7. What did she do when a new actress joined the company?
8. Why did Uncle Pio come to approve her friendship with the Viceroy?
- 9-10. Uncle Pio had three great passions in life. Name two.

**Discussion Questions for Part IV:**

1. a) Examine the relationships of Uncle Pio and the Perichole, the Abbess and Pepita, Marquesa and Doña Clara, and Esteban and Manuel. Point out the similarities. b) Point out the differences.
2. Describe Pio's character traits.
3. Summarize the early years of the relationship of Pio and Perichole.
4. How does he bring out the best in her performances?
5. Summarize her relationship with the Viceroy.
6. Summarize the personality of the Archbishop. (Many Church leaders in the 18th century were corrupt and/or worldly. The Archbishop was a typical Church leader of the time.)
7. a) What is Uncle Pio's conception of love? b) To what extent does it reflect a Christian view? c) To what extent is it inadequate?
8. a) How does Pio feel Camila relates to this notion of love? b) Do you agree?
9. What kind of mother is Camila?
10. a) When she takes her place in society, how does she treat Uncle Pio? b) What other character has this same attitude toward one who loves her?
11. a) How does Uncle Pio respond to her treatment of him? b) How does this show unselfishness?
12. a) How does she react to her illness? b) What does this show about her?
13. Discuss: "...she had never realized any love save love as passion. Such love, though it expends itself in generosity and thoughtfulness, though it give birth to visions and to great poetry, remains among the sharpest expressions of self-interest." Show how this statement applies to Camila.
14. To what extent does Uncle Pio's interest in Jaime show an unselfish love?

**Day 4**

Read the rest of Part IV.

**Quiz #4:**

1. Name one other person who attended the Viceroy's dinners for the Perichole.
2. The Perichole tires of being an actress and wants to be a \_\_\_\_\_.
3. Name the Perichole's son.
4. What illness does he have?
5. How does she treat Uncle Pio?
6. What illness does she contract?
7. Why is that particular illness so horrible for her?
8. How does she react?

9. Why does Uncle Pio ask her if he can take her son to Lima?
10. List the five people who are on the Bridge when it falls.

No Discussion Questions.

### Day 5

Read Part V.

No quiz questions.

### Discussion Questions for Part V:

The first section of Part V betrays the author's ignorance of colonial Spain. No one would have been burned at the stake for such a book as Brother Juniper's. Even if a person like Brother Juniper had been questioned by the Inquisition, his docile and obedient attitude would have led to his immediate release, though the authorities might have decided that the book was unsuitable for general reading.

In spite of the author's historical errors, his message is important. Brother Juniper tried to "figure out" God, to determine why God willed the death of these five people at this particular time and place. Though Brother Juniper's motives were good, he was attempting a task that we humans, who lack God's omniscience, cannot really accomplish. We cannot see the full significance of God's actions. Though we can often find some reason for what has happened (see the second part of the chapter, when we see how Camila, Abbess, and Doña Clara have changed for the better), we must also learn to surrender ourselves to God's will even when we don't understand it.

1. a) How does Don Andres react at the funeral? b) Captain Alvarado? c) What is the significance of this contrast?
2. a) How has the Abbess changed? b) What is the significance of "she had torn an idol from her heart"?
3. a) Why does Camila decide to visit the Abbess? b) What happens in their conversation?
4. a) Who else comes to see the Abbess? b) Why? c) How has she changed?
5. What is the significance of this line: "Suddenly she disappeared a moment to return with one of her helpers, one who had likewise been involved in the affair of the bridge and who had formerly been an actress"?
6. a) In the line, "all those impulses of love return to the love that made them," what is "the love that made them"? b) How does this relate to the Catholic doctrine as expressed in St. John that "God is Love"?
7. a) What are the two Great Commandments? b) Show how the failure to obey these commandments by characters in the book brought misery. c) Show how the obedience to these commandments by characters in the book brought them peace.

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**WEEK TWELVE**

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Please answer the Questions for Analysis for the following Days 1-3 in complete sentences and well-developed paragraphs.

**Day 1**

Today we will examine the characters.

**Questions for Analysis of *The Bridge of San Luis Rey***

Characters

- I. Summarize in one sentence for each the characters of Marquesa, Pepita, Esteban, Uncle Pio, Jaime, Doña Clara, the Abbess, the Perichole, Manuel, Captain Alvarado, the Viceroy.
- II. In two sentences each, trace the changes that take place in the Marquesa, Esteban, Uncle Pio, Perichole, Abbess, and Doña Clara. For the Perichole, Abbess, and Doña Clara, the last section of the book is crucial.
- III. Are the changes that take place believable? That is, are there logical reasons within the story for the characters to change as they did?
- IV. Explain how the changes in the main characters focus on their ability or lack of ability to love unselfishly.
- V. Recall Uncle Pio's belief that love is not really love unless it involves suffering. Which characters are not able to love until they have suffered? Explain the suffering each undergoes.

**Day 2**

Today we will study the plot.

Plot

The plot is the sequence of events or actions in a short story, novel, play, or narrative poem. Every plot is composed of incidents that are related to one another. The plot must involve conflict, a struggle. Whether the conflict is internal or external, opposition must exist, come to a head or climax, and then resolve itself.

- VI. In each of the three middle sections of this book, there are two conflicts: a man vs. man conflict and a man vs. self conflict. Describe each of these two conflicts in each section, giving climax and resolution of each.
- VII. Pepita, Abbess and Doña Clara also have a man vs. self conflict. Describe these conflicts, giving climax and resolution of each.

**Day 3**

Today let's examine the style and tone of the author.

Style/Tone

- VIII. Wilder is a master at the use of words. Rarely does he waste a word or use a word that is not perfectly appropriate. Choose five characters from the book. Find particularly apt descriptive phrases that Wilder uses, both in describing them physically and in pinpointing their characters.

- IX. a) What are the various tones that Wilder creates throughout the book? Find some good examples of each. Note especially the tone of his descriptions of the sufferings of the injured Manuel and Esteban's mental sufferings in caring for him; the descriptions of Pepita's misery; the portrayal of Jaime's sufferings; and the final scenes in the Abbess's convent. b) How is Wilder able to communicate very deep emotions without overdoing them?

#### Day 4

Today let's think about the four questions to help us determine the theme. Your answers need not be in complete sentences, but you should at least jot down your ideas or, better yet, type them into the computer.

##### Theme

1. What is the main overall conflict that unites the book? (This will often be a conflict of values or ideas, tying together all the individual conflicts of the book.) How does the author resolve this conflict? That is, what values win?
2. How and why do main characters change in the book? How are the characters who change made into better people?
3. What values does the author endorse in this book? (Your answers to questions one and two will help you answer this question.)
4. Is the author basically optimistic or pessimistic? In this book, many of the characters die just as they have made a pivotal change in their lives. Does this fact indicate pessimism? If not, how is the author able to communicate a balanced view of life in spite of the tragedies of the book?

- X. Formulate a statement of the theme in writing. In a paragraph, show how the theme unites the entire book. Consult the answer key for a sample theme. Your theme should contain similar ideas but should be in your own words. If your formulation of the theme needs revision, do so now, using your own words and trying to develop your theme even further.

#### Day 5

##### Questions for Analysis (cont.):

##### Philosophical Judgment:

Since Wilder is not a Catholic, let us examine his ideas carefully from a Catholic point of view. Think about each question thoroughly and write down your ideas.

- XI. Does the author acknowledge a belief in God? Where and how?
- XII. a) Are the moral values advanced in the book in harmony with Catholic morality? b) Some of the characters do immoral things. Does the author show approval or disapproval of the way they behave? (Note especially his comments on passion.)

- XIII. Does the author have a balanced view of life, showing a belief in sin and in virtue, neither too optimistic nor too pessimistic?
- XIV. Does the author believe in free will, in human responsibility, rather than showing man as controlled by outside forces or as not responsible for his actions, as avoiding punishment for his sins and receiving no reward for his virtues?
- XV. Do the values flow from the characters and plot, rather than being outwardly “preached”?

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**WEEK THIRTEEN**

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**Take this whole week to work on writing an interpretive essay.**

This quarter we will further sharpen the skills of literary interpretation and of expressing the interpretation in writing. We will work on refining the thesis statement, the specific interpretive point of the essay.

The main problems we want to avoid are a thesis statement that is too broad or one that is too obvious. Here are two thesis statements that are much too broad for a five or six paragraph essay: “Nathaniel Hawthorne’s style in *The Scarlet Letter* is effective.”; “Shakespeare uses imagery in *The Merchant of Venice*.” An example of a thesis that is too obvious is “Shylock is a villain.” We should also be careful that our thesis is not simply a statement of a topic: “This paper will discuss the character of Hester Prynne,” or “The purpose of this paper is to show how Hawthorne uses colors.” Remember that the thesis statement must present a point of view to be defended throughout the essay.

Here are some examples to help clarify what makes a good thesis statement:

Poor: Hawthorne has an interesting style in *The Scarlet Letter*.

Improved: Hawthorne uses descriptions to advance his theme in *The Scarlet Letter*.

Best: Through his descriptions of the forest, Hawthorne symbolizes the power of passion in the lives of his characters.

The first example is much too broad. The second would be good for a longer paper than is normally assigned in this class. The third is ideal for a five or six paragraph essay. It is specific and defensible. It would be easy for the writer to organize his essay around this thesis statement.

Here is another series of examples:

Poor: Hester is a believable character.

Improved: Hester has both strengths and weaknesses of character which are combined in a believable portrait of a woman who must suffer for her sins.

Best: In her relationship with Dimmesdale after Pearl’s birth, Hester Prynne shows both the strengths and weaknesses of her passionate nature.