Sylvia Plath, T.S. Eliot, and *The Great Gatsby* name: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**Pre-read questions:**

1. What’s better? The event or the build-up to the event?

2. What’s better? Knowing what’s going to happen next or not-knowing?

3. If you knew a horrible event that you would not survive were coming, what would you do?

**TEXT 1: “Ennui” by Sylvia Plath**

Tea leaves thwart those who court catastrophe,

designing futures where nothing will occur:

cross the gypsy’s palm and yawning she

will still predict no perils left to conquer.

5 Jeopardy is jejune now: naïve knight

finds ogres out-of-date and dragons unheard

of, while blasé princesses indict

tilts at terror as downright absurd.

The beast in Jamesian grove will never jump,

10 compelling hero’s dull career to crisis;

and when insouciant angels play God’s trump,

while bored arena crowds for once look eager,

hoping toward havoc, neither pleas nor prizes

shall coax from doom’s blank door lady or tiger.

1. What do tea leaves do (besides make tea)? How the heck do they design futures?

2. The “gypsy’s palm,” then, is related to tea leaves now that you’ve googled tea leaves. Right? Explain.

3. Good luck with “Jamesian grove.” I’m not enough of an expert on the writer Henry James or his brother, philosopher William James, to say what the heck is going on here, and the internet only provides more info than needed. Maybe you’ll figure it out.

4. Time to google “lady or tiger” and figure out what’s going on here.

**TEXT 2: excerpts from “The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock” by T.S. Eliot**

And indeed there will be time

To wonder, “Do I dare?” and, “Do I dare?”

Time to turn back and descend the stair,

With a bald spot in the middle of my hair —

5 (They will say: “How his hair is growing thin!”)

My morning coat, my collar mounting firmly to the chin,

My necktie rich and modest, but asserted by a simple pin —

(They will say: “But how his arms and legs are thin!”)

Do I dare

10 Disturb the universe?

In a minute there is time

For decisions and revisions which a minute will reverse.

For I have known them all already, known them all:

Have known the evenings, mornings, afternoons,

15 I have measured out my life with coffee spoons;

I know the voices dying with a dying fall

Beneath the music from a farther room.

                So how should I presume?

1. Characterize the speaker. What sort of person is he?

2. What is the poet’s attitude (tone) toward the speaker?

3. Every action creates something new. “Do I dare / Disturb the universe?” therefore is a rhetorical question, right?

4. What has the speaker “known” (13)? He claims to have “known them all” (13)? Is he right?

5. Explain the metaphor in line 15.

***GATSBY* PASSAGES: Thematically relate one or both poems to at least three of the following from *Gatsby***

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **p. 2**  **ch. 1** | And, after boasting this way of my tolerance, I come to the admission that it has a limit. Conduct may be founded on the hard rock or the wet marshes, but after a certain point I don’t care what it’s founded on. When I came back from the East last autumn I felt that I wanted the world to be in uniform and at a sort of moral attention forever; I wanted no more riotous excursions with privileged glimpses into the human heart. |
| **p. 8**  **ch. 1** | The younger of the two was a stranger to me. She was extended full length at her end of the divan, completely motionless, and with her chin raised a little, as if she were balancing something on it which was quite likely to fall. If she saw me out of the corner of her eyes she gave no hint of it — indeed, I was almost surprised into murmuring an apology for having disturbed her by coming in. |
| **p. 35**  **ch. 2** | I wanted to get out and walk southward toward the park through the soft twilight, but each time I tried to go I became entangled in some wild, strident argument which pulled me back, as if with ropes, into my chair. Yet high over the city our line of yellow windows must have contributed their share of human secrecy to the casual watcher in the darkening streets, and I was him too, looking up and wondering. I was within and without, simultaneously enchanted and repelled by the inexhaustible variety of life. |
| **p. 57-58**  **ch. 3** | Jordan Baker instinctively avoided clever, shrewd men, and now I saw that this was because she felt safer on a plane where any divergence from a code would be thought impossible. She was incurably dishonest. She wasn’t able to endure being at a disadvantage and, given this unwillingness, I suppose she had begun dealing in subterfuges when she was very young in order to keep that cool, insolent smile turned to the world and yet satisfy the demands of her hard, jaunty body. |
| **p. 79**  **ch. 4** | It was dark now, and as we dipped under a little bridge I put my arm around Jordan’s golden shoulder and drew her toward me and asked her to dinner. Suddenly I wasn’t thinking of Daisy and Gatsby any more, but of this clean, hard, limited person, who dealt in universal scepticism, and who leaned back jauntily just within the circle of my arm. A phrase began to beat in my ears with a sort of heady excitement: “There are only the pursued, the pursuing, the busy and the tired.” |
| **p. 107**  **ch. 6** | But the rest offended her — and inarguably, because it wasn’t a gesture but an emotion. She was appalled by West Egg, this unprecedented “place” that Broadway had begotten upon a Long Island fishing village — appalled by its raw vigor that chafed under the old euphemisms and by the too obtrusive fate that herded its inhabitants along a short-cut from nothing to nothing. She saw something awful in the very simplicity she failed to understand. |
| **p. 135-136**  **ch. 7** | I was thirty. Before me stretched the portentous, menacing road of a new decade.  It was seven o’clock when we got into the coupe with him and started for Long Island. Tom talked incessantly, exulting and laughing, but his voice was as remote from Jordan and me as the foreign clamor on the sidewalk or the tumult of the elevated overhead. Human sympathy has its limits, and we were content to let all their tragic arguments fade with the city lights behind. Thirty — the promise of a decade of loneliness, a thinning list of single men to know, a thinning brief-case of enthusiasm, thinning hair. But there was Jordan beside me, who, unlike Daisy, was too wise ever to carry well-forgotten dreams from age to age. As we passed over the dark bridge her wan face fell lazily against my coat’s shoulder and the formidable stroke of thirty died away with the reassuring pressure of her hand. |

Plath site: https://www.thefreelibrary.com/Dragon+goes+to+bed+with+princess%3A+F.+Scott+Fitzgerald's+influence+on...-a0185166829