

**Directions**

☺ Respond to at least **20** of the following questions. Your responses should be a minimum of 3-5 sentences in length. Please be certain to stagger your responses so that your journal demonstrates your complete understanding of the play. Adhere to the structural format of Mr. Kuhn’s example and use it as a guideline.

**Preface**

1. With regards to Stanley’s perception of “doubt,” what does he mean when he says – “Your answers are your current topography, seemingly permanent, but deceptively so. Because under that face of easy response, there is another YOU” (viii)?
2. Analyze and interpret: “Doubt is nothing less than an opportunity to reenter the present.”
3. What significance does the setting have and how does it tie into the significance of the title?
4. Stanley refers to the “social contract” on page ix.

a). What does he mean by this?

b). What is Stanley’s attitude about the social contract?

c). Consider the “social contract” of RHSH

1. Analyze and interpret the gist of what Stanley is implying in the following line – “The beginning of change is the moment of Doubt. It is the crucial moment when I renew my humanity or become a lie (ix)”.
2. Stanley refers to his play as a parable. Why? What exactly is a parable and what do you suppose is the parable of *Doubt?*

**I.**

1. If we are to assume that Father Flynn’s sermon is autobiographical in nature, what does his diction reveal?

2. With regards to the cargo ship analogy, consider the following:

a). If we assume that the story is autobiographical (about Father Flynn personally), what can we conclude?

b). Consider one of our essential questions – “How is it that a stereotype can leave an individual vulnerable to manipulation and deceit?

c). If we assume that the story isn’t autobiographical and intended for the audience (the parishioners), how does our interpretation of the story change?

**II.**

1. In discussing William Condin’s nose bleed, what do we learn about the characterization of Sister Aloysius and Sister James?
2. Sister Aloysius continually implores Sister James to “pay attention.” What does she mean by this? Moreover, argue whether or not Sister Aloysius is right or wrong in her assumptions.
3. Sister Aloysius warns Sister James of the limitations and vulnerabilities of innocence. What does she mean by these remarks? Moreover, what are the limitations of this advice?
4. What is Sister Aloysius alluding to when she asks – “Well, sermons come from somewhere, don’t they?” (14)?
5. On page 15, Sister Aloysius once again alludes to “Alertness.” Within this context, what do you suppose is her intention?

**III.**

1. With regards to Father Flynn’s comments to his gym class, consider a few of our essential questions:

a). What is the “something” that is unsaid under any given society?

b). To what extent is the beginning of change the moment of doubt?

c). How is it that a stereotype can leave an individual vulnerable to manipulation and deceit?

**IV.**

1. Sister James and Sister Aloysius imply that intercourse is linked to the creation of womanhood and masculinity. With this concept in mind, how might they perceive Father Flynn’s discussion with the boys in the rectory?
2. On pages 19-22 we’re introduced to the character of Donald Muller. How does his stereotype leave him vulnerable to manipulation, deceit, and misunderstanding especially in light of how this stereotype intersects with Father Flynn’s?
3. With regards to the evidence that Sister James and Sister Aloysius mount, consider Father Flynn’s innocence and guilt.
4. Sister Aloysius keeps alluding to the power structure (hierarchy) of the church. How does his hierarchy hurt her cause while helping Father Flynn’s?
5. Analyze and interpret the significance of the following line – “He may tell the truth and lie afterwards” (24).

**V.**

1. Out of curiosity, is it possible to read the wind as a symbol? If so, a symbol for what?

1. From Sister Aloysius’ perspective, what do the long finger nails and three sugar cubes symbolically suggest about Father Flynn?
2. With regards to the Christmas pageant conversation, consider one of our essential questions – To what extent is the beginning of change the moment of doubt?
3. Stereotypical assumptions abound in this scene. Analyze and interpret how these stereotypes function ironically on pages 29-30.
4. Based on the exchange that transpires between all three characters, how does the stereotype cast Father Flynn in a guilty light? Conversely, how does the exchange lend credence to his innocence?
5. Upon leaving Sister Aloysius’ office, Father Flynn reinforces the need and the propriety of handling situations like these through the chain of command (pg. 35). How does this suggestion reinforce Sister Aloysius’ claims?
6. Analyze and assess Sister James’ argument on pages 35-36. Is her point valid? Furthermore, does it prove Father Flynn’s innocence?

**VI.**

1. Regarding Father Flynn’s sermon on pages 36-37, explain the parable of the pillow.

**VII.**

1. Sister James’ dream is revealed on pages 38-39. Analyze this dream as a symbol, as well as the significance of the “complaining bird.”
2. Consider the following statement by Father Flynn by placing it beneath the lens of one of our essential questions: How is it that a stereotype can leave an individual vulnerable to manipulation and deceit? ----- “I feel as if my reputation has been damaged through no fault of my own. But I’m reluctant …” (39-40).
3. Based on Father Flynn’s statements on pages 40-41, to what extent are the allegations leveled against him little more than a philosophical clash between “old school” and “new school” mentalities?
4. Analyze and interpret the following statement as it pertains to Sister Aloysius: “It’s an old tactic of cruel people to kill kindness in the name of virtue. Don’t believe it. There’s nothing wrong with love” (41).
5. Explain the irony behind the allusion on page 42.

**VIII**

1. Analyze and interpret the earpiece as a symbol. What does it convey about Sister Aloysius’ character?
2. The statements made by Mrs. Muller by and large focus on race, but her words can also be misconstrued. What happens when we place a sexual connotative value on the exchanges, as Sister Aloysius often does?
3. Mrs. Muller seems intent on discussing Sister Aloysius’ allegations. In light of this, consider one of our essential questions – “To what extent is the beginning of change the moment of doubt?”
4. Analyze and interpret – “He beat Donald for being what he is” (48). How does this tie into the “stereotype” theme?
5. The hierarchical order of the church is mentioned yet again in the heated exchange between Father Flynn and Sister Aloysius

a). What does this “power play” suggest about Father Flynn’s innocence and guilt?

b). What does the “power play” suggest about Sister Aloysius’ motives?

6. Explain Father Flynn’s resignation. What are the essential factors that need to be taken into consideration?

7. Upon leaving the office, why does Sister Aloysius tell Father Flynn to cut his nails. Examine the symbolic significance of this.

**Ix.**

1. Examine the “lie” that revealed the “truth” concerning Father Flynn’s fate and Sister Aloysius’ conviction of his guilt.
2. The last line of the play is quite loaded. Analyze and interpret – “I have doubts! I have such doubts!” (58).