Guidelines to the Analysis

of

“The Vulture”

The main character in the story is the narrator, the one who tells the story. This first-person narrator is the protagonist; he is the one who suffers the attack of the vulture and fails to defend himself. The story ends with the man being killed by the monstrous bird. Like “The Bridge”, the story sounds as a dream for the events transcend the real. This “literariness”, however could be interpreted from different approaches.

**Reader Response Criticism:**

In the light of “Reader Response Criticism”, “The Vulture” contains many “gaps” (as explained by Wolfgang Iser). For instance, the text does not give all the information about the protagonist, therefore, a reader may ask questions such as the following:

Who is the man under attack? Is he a soldier? A traveller? A foreigner? Why is he “helpless”? Is he injured ? Is he sick?

As the text does not provide the reader with explicit answers to such questions, he is bound to make an attempt to complete the information himself . That is, it is possible for him to imagine certain answers to complete the information missed in the story. In doing so, he contributes in developing the thread of the narrative.

However, the answers suggested by any reader should be justified by the text. That is, the text could accept or refuse the reader’s response. For example, a reader may think that as the protagonist could not defend himself and fight the monster he might be wounded. The text does not refer to this idea clearly but the attack of the vulture, a carnivore, indicates that the animal’s savage rush on the man could be due to the latter being injured. Perhaps it smells the blood of his wound. You know vultures survive out of the remains of dead or wounded animals. Yet, if the reader suggests that the man is a soldier, the text cannot accept this idea, for there is no indication to a war nor a battle field.

This way of asking questions, suggesting answers and examining if they are relevant to the story demonstrates and exemplifies how a reader could actively communicate and interact with the text.

**Question1**: try to spot other gaps in the story and try to suggest answers ; Do not forget to justify your ideas by referring to the text.

**Marxist approach:**

The protagonist is the victim in the story as he is subject to the attack of the huge bird; he is exhausted and “helpless.” Moreover, he has no gun; That is, no material power, for the gun stands for the ability to protect oneself and control others. On the other hand, the second character is addressed as a “ gentleman”, so he clearly belongs to the high social class. He even owns a gun. In addition to this, the vulture attacks the “helpless” man and not the “gentleman”. All these remarks imply that the protagonist could represent the proletariat; whereas the gentleman is a capitalist. The vulture therefore is a symbol of the hard circumstances that surprise humanity. According to traditional Marxists, it is the economic base that controls the superstructure of Man’s social life; that divides people into the rich and the poor.

**Notice**

***(This is the last course. The exam will be in the form of two questions: one on the theories discussed online and the second on one of the three stories: “Clothes”, “The Bridge” or “the vulture.”)***

***Good Luck***