

Comprehension Questions for Day 1 of “The Ones Who Walk Away from Omelas”

Check your comprehension of the following expressions.

What do the following two sentences mean? **“But we do not say the words of cheer much any more. All smiles have become archaic.”** Choose from the explanations below:

1. Nobody cheers for anything now. Nobody is happy now.
2. People have outgrown cheering for things. They are so happy they never smile anymore.
3. Writing about happiness is unfashionable. Happiness seems old-fashioned to us.
4. People have stopped being proud of their city. The best times are long past.
5. It’s time to stop describing their happiness. We don’t need to describe their smiles anymore.

In the expression, **“If you can’t lick ’em, join ’em,”** the word **“lick”** specifically means:

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| 1. clean or wash | 3. seduce or kiss |
| 2. beat or defeat | 4. destroy or exterminate |
| | 5. convince or confuse |

In this sentence, **“I thought at first there were no drugs, but that is puritanical,”** what does the last word mean?

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| 1. too dirty | 3. too unrealistic |
| 2. too clean | 4. too silly |
| | 5. too moralistic |

In this sentence, **“The terms are strict and absolute; there may not even be a kind word spoken to the child,”** what does **“the terms”** mean?

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| 1. the words | 3. the feelings [felt by the people] |
| 2. the language | 4. the rules |
| | 5. the ideas |

In the sentence, **“It is too degraded and imbecile to know any real joy,”** what does **“imbecile”** mean?

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| 1. culturally ignorant | 3. morally selfish |
| 2. mentally deficient | 4. physically ruined |
| | 5. emotionally broken |

In this sentence, **“Theirs is no vapid, irresponsible happiness,”** what does **“vapid”** mean?

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| 1. selfish | 3. temporary |
| 2. childish | 4. shallow |
| | 5. ignorant |

Discussion Questions for Week 3, Day 1: “The Ones Who Walk Away from Omelas”

1. According to the criteria we developed as a class last time, is “The Ones Who Walk Away from Omelas” a science fiction story?
2. How would you summarize the story in a few simple sentences? What does such a summary leave out?
3. If you were to make an outline for this story, what would it look like/contain?
4. Are there any unusual moments in the story that give you pause or “get your alarm bells ringing”? If so, what parts are they?
5. What is your personal response to the dilemma presented in the story? Debate your response with your group members. If everyone agrees, one or more group members should assume the position of “devil’s advocate.”

Whatever questions you don’t answer as a group—and also, the questions you *do* answer as a group—continue to think and ruminate on them. Tomorrow, we’ll discuss the story more deeply.