IB 12

Reader Response Journal- *East of Eden*, *Atonement* and “The Visit”

In your Reader Response Journal (RRJ) you will be recording your reactions to the assigned readings for the three works we study this semester. Your entries should be unique, personal descriptions of the effect the reading is having on you. In these responses you can admit your confusion, expand on the author’s ideas, and attempt to discover your own. To help you at first, you might want to use one of the following openers to begin your entry:

**I began to think in terms of…/I noticed that…/This reminds me of…/I realized…/I’m not sure…/I was surprised…/I can’t believe…/I can’t really understand…/If I were…/I wonder why…/I know the feeling…**..Although, For some entries, I will give you something specific to which you will respond.

After you have written the “response” part of the journal, you will need to connect that response to at least one of the overarching motifs/themes of the work. Additionally, you will want to note and explore any literary techniques the author uses in developing these motifs/themes. You also want to touch on possible contexts which naturally lend themselves to the ideas you have presented in your RRJ.

This journal should be a running document for each of the works. It will serve as a way for you to “personally engage” with the texts and explore appropriate contexts. Hopefully, it will be a good review for Paper 2.

I will collect all of the responses, either in class or with the binder check; the responses are not optional assignments.

Here is a sample Reader Response Journal:

I was surprised when reading the end of chapter 7- the conversation between Adam and Charles about the money Cyrus left them. It had already been established that Charles loved Cyrus and was hurt by the fact that Cyrus loved Adam more (the birthday gift). What really surprised me was that Charles was suspicious of where the money came from, but Adam was not. You would think that Charles would not question his father because he loved him. **Generally, you trust and believe in people you love, but this conversation turns that idea upside down.** Adam admits that he does not love his father and has no trouble believing that he came by that money honestly. This is clear in the exchange where Adam asks Charles what he is getting at (that Cyrus was a thief) and he says, “I thought you loved him,” and Charles says, “I did. I do. That’s why I hate this- his whole life gone- all gone…” When Adam confirms that he did *not* love Cyrus, Charles says, “Then you don’t care if his life is spoiled and his poor body rooted up and- oh, my God almighty!” Adam says, “I don’t have to care.” He goes on to say that he doesn’t have to care because he doesn’t believe it. Then, this is the real surprising part: Adam says, “…Maybe – maybe love makes you suspicious and doubting. Is it true that when you love a woman you are never sure- never sure of her because you aren’t sure of yourself? I can see it pretty clearly. I see how you loved him and what it did to you…..but he did not love you so he had faith in you. Maybe, why, maybe it’s a kind of reverse.” And then when Charles argues that “the papers” may indicate that Cyrus was lying, Adam says, “Papers are no match at all for my faith in my father.” Wow! This completely challenges my idea of love and trusting those you love….it is a bummer, in a way, because it emphasizes the vulnerability of a person when they love someone and the fragility of their psyche if that love is not returned- especially between a father and son. **Parents are supposed to love their children unconditionally, so when you realize the truth of your parent, that can be devastating. The one who loves the least has the most power- that is a hard truth about love.** The absence of love, on Adam’s part means he is free of the care or worry about Cyrus. He will believe in him because he doesn’t care enough not to….that is such a different way of looking at love. *This also connects to the fact that because Charles loved his father and Adam did not, Charles is no longer dangerous to Adam….but that is a whole other discussion.*

So, this addresses the **motif of love,** the complexities of love, the love between a parent and child, how that love affects the relationship between siblings, the effects of unresolved love and the one I like the most: **the one who loves the least, has the most power.** (That is even a theme) I am not sure what the overarching themes are yet because this happens pretty early on, but SB is clearly addressing several aspects of love. This lends itself naturally to the **biographical context**: what was SB’s relationship with his father, and/or his relationship with his sons….he dedicated the book to them- hmmmm? In terms of father and son, it lends itself to historical/cultural contexts. What was a typical father-son relationship in the early 1900s? Would that shed some light on this? Also, you could even look into the economic context- what would that amount of money mean at that time? All contexts to explore….

Literary techniques I noticed with regard to this motif: Character foils: Adam and Charles/ symbol: birthday gifts for Cyrus- which has come up several times. The symbol also helps to characterize Charles (it is the question he asks in order for Adam to get his $). Also, paradox in terms of believing in or having faith in someone you don’t love.