

Advanced Placement English Literature and Composition *Song of Solomon* Quotations for Discussion

Due Dates:

19-20 November 2009	Chapters 1-4
30 November & 1 December 2009	Chapters 5-9
8-9 December 2009	Chapters 10-15

To prepare for class discussion, identify the speakers and/or the person(s) to whom the quotation refers and contemplate the **context**. We will focus our discussion on the **significance** of the quotation in terms of *allusion, characterization, contrast, detail, diction, figurative language, foil, imagery, motif, setting, symbol, syntax, theme, and/or tone*. You should not limit your preparation for discussion to these quotations, however. Choose other quotations that illustrate motifs, themes, character development, and conflict in the novel.

1. "At least he thought of it as his office, had even painted the word OFFICE on the door. But the plate-glass window contradicted him. In peeling letters arranged in a semicircle, his business establishment was declared to be Sonny's Shop. Scarping the previous owner's name off was hardly worth the trouble since he couldn't scrape it from anybody's mind."
2. "Mama liked it. Liked the name. Said it was new and would wipe out the past. Wipe it all out."
3. "Mr. Smith's blue silk wings must have left their mark, because when the little boy discovered, at four, the same thing Mr. Smith had learned earlier—that only birds and airplanes could fly—he lost all interest in himself. To have to live without that single gift saddened him and left his imagination so bereft that he appeared dull even to the women who did not hate his mother."
4. "The disappointment he felt in his daughters sifted down on them like ash, dulling their buttery complexions and choking the lilt out of what should have been girlish voices. Under the frozen heat of his glance they tripped over doorsills and dropped the salt cellar into the yolks of their poached eggs. The way he mangled their grace, wit, and self-esteem was the single excitement of their days."
5. "Ruth was still frightened of her a little. Not just her short hair cut regularly like a man's, or her large sleepy eyes and busy lips, or the smooth smooth skin, hairless, scarless, and wrinkleless. For Ruth had actually seen it. The place on her stomach where a navel should have been and was not. Even if you weren't frightened of a woman who had no navel, you certainly had to take her very seriously."
6. "Milkman stood before his mirror and glanced, in the low light of the wall lamp, at his reflection. He was, as usual, unimpressed with what he saw. He had a find enough face. Eyes women complimented him on, a firm jaw line, splendid teeth. Taken apart, it looked alright. Even better than all right. But it lacked coherence, a coming together of the features into a total self. It was all very tentative, the way he looked, like a man peeping around a corner of someplace he is not supposed to be, trying to make up his mind whether to go forward or to turn back. The decision he made would be extremely important, but the way in which he made the decision would be careless, haphazard, and uninformed."
7. "No geography? Okay, no geography. What about some history in your tea? Or some sociopolitico—No. That's still geography. Goddam, Milk, I do believe my whole life's geography."
8. "She was the third beer. Not the first one, which the throat receives with almost tearful gratitude; nor the second, that confirms and extends the pleasure of the first. But the third, the one you drink because it's there, because it can't hurt, and because what difference does it make?"

9. ". . . because the fact is that I am a small woman. I don't mean little; I mean small, and I'm small because I was pressed small. I lived in a great big house that pressed me into a small package. I had no friends, only schoolmates who wanted to touch my dresses and my white silk stockings. But I didn't think I'd ever need a friend because I had him."
10. "You have yet to wash your own underwear, spread a bed, wipe the ring from your tub, or move a fleck of your dirt from one place to another. And to this day, you have never asked one of us if we were tired, or sad, or wanted a cup of coffee. . . . Where do you get the *right* to decide our lives?"
11. "Except for his broken watch, and his wallet with about two hundred dollars, all he had started out with on his journey was gone . . . His watch and his two hundred dollars would be of no help out here, where all a man had was what he was born with, or had learned to use. And endurance."
12. "But nothing was like the shame he felt as he watched and listened to _____. Not just her Aunt Jemima act, but the fact that she was both adept at it and willing to do it--for him."
13. "She banged her knuckles until they ached to get the attention of the living flesh behind the glass, and would have smashed her fist through the window just to touch him, feel his heat, the only thing that could protect her from a smothering death of dry roses."
14. "'They loved it. Stole for it, lied for it, killed for it. But I'm the one left. Me and the dogs. And I will never clean it again. Never. Nothing. Not a speck of dust, not a grain of dirt, will I move. Everything in this world they lived for will crumble and rot.'"
15. "'Too much tail. All that jewelry weighs it down. Like vanity. Can't nobody fly with all that shit. Wanna fly, you got to give up the shit that weighs you down.'"
16. "Milkman was getting confused, but he was as excited as a child confronted with boxes and boxes of presents under the skirt of a Christmas tree. Somewhere in the pile was a gift for him."
17. ". . . he could not stop the worn old words from coming, louder and louder as though sheer volume would wake her. He woke only the birds, who shuddered off into the air. . . . Two of the birds circled around them. One dived into the new grave and scooped something shiny in its beak before it flew away."
18. "He soaped and rubbed her until her skin squeaked and glistened like onyx. She put salve on his face. He washed her hair. She sprinkled talcum on his feet. He straddled her behind and massaged her back. She put witch hazel on his swollen neck. He made up the bed. She gave him gumbo to eat. He washed the dishes. She washed his clothes and hung them out to dry. He scoured her tub. She ironed his shirt and pants."
19. "He loved these things to excess because he loved his father to excess. Owning, building, acquiring--that was his life, his future, his present, and all the history he knew. That he distorted life, bent it, for the sake of gain, was a measure of his loss at his father's death."
20. "Perhaps that's what all human relationships boiled down to: Would you save my life? or would you take it?"