

Ideas for Student Consideration

Read the following prompts and select one or more of them to respond to creatively.

1. In the “Far and the Near,” the main character finds hope in the women waving at him, and “no matter what peril or tragedy he had known...the women waving to him...had become fixed in the mind of the engineer as something beautiful and enduring, beyond all change and ruin, something that would always be the same...”. **What is something you look forward to or gives you hope, in good times and bad? Why? How do you think it will go when you finally achieve your goal? How will you feel? Do you think it will live up to your expectations?**
2. As the engineer passed by the women’s house each day, he dreamed of someday going to meet them. Think about your own life. **Is there a person or place you often see that you *don’t* know very well but would like to? Give this person/place a backstory. What might people not realize about this person/place? Do they have a history that influences their behavior (in the case of a person) or their appearance (in the case of a place)? Are they affected by others’ incorrect or incomplete assumptions?**
3. The engineer felt he knew every detail of the lives of the two women, but reality turned out to be much different. **Think about someone or something you thought you *did* know well and a situation that made you realize you were wrong about them. What caused you to think of that someone or something differently? How did you react? How did it affect you? How did it affect them?**
4. Seeing the two women wave at him was the highlight of the engineer’s daily routine. **Do you have a routine that you follow regularly (every day, every week, etc.)? Is there a part of your routine that you look forward to? A part that you dread? Describe this and what makes it good or bad.**
5. The “iron schedule” of the engineer’s routine is occasionally interrupted by horrific tragedy when someone is caught on the railroad tracks in front of him. **Describe a time, good or bad, when a routine you have was suddenly interrupted. What caused the interruption?**
6. The engineer felt crushing disappointment after his visit to the women’s house. **Describe a time you felt incredibly discouraged or disappointed. What happened? Were you ever able to get over it?**
7. As time passes, the engineer watches the young girl in the house grow into an adult woman. **Describe something you see that changes over time. Does it look different through the seasons? Does it grow? Does it slowly wither away? Do you notice new things about it as it changes?**