

Examining *Wabash* 4 (pp. 136-207)

1. On page 153, Berenice tells Deborah that the reason she acts a bit “off” is because she wants to be “quiet and gentle” for her husband, Joe. Examine this section of the book and explain what exactly Berenice is telling Deborah, or rather, how Deborah takes it. How does this mirror Deborah’s own feelings about her husband?
2. After hearing of Aunt Berenice’s suicide on page 170, Deborah has an odd feeling of calm. “Deborah had no power to control anything important in anyone’s life and it gave her this phony little posture of peace.” Look back at the reasons for Bunny’s suicide and explain this reaction from Debbie. Also explain why, at the end of the passage, Deborah suddenly cries in anger at herself and her aunt.
3. Deborah, having no one else in her life to turn to, goes to her Aunt Effie. However, Effie has cut herself off from Deborah because, as Father Harrison explains on page 175, “Effie has a keen sense of her *sins*. Those she’s committed—for which she has long ago been forgiven—but also for those she knows by her temperament she will inevitable commit in the future, given the right circumstances.” Father Harrison then goes on to tell his own story of sin and the struggle he faces with it. Examine this story and Deborah’s reaction to Harrison’s words and explain why she feels that these words, from the priest and, by proxy, from her aunt, are also the words of Jeremy.
4. Taking a cue from her grandmother, Deborah begins to write letters to the rats, the first being on page 181. However, Debbie’s letters have a far different tone and a different understanding of what the rats are. Reread this, or any of the other letters she writes, and explain exactly what the “rats” are to Deborah.
5. Reread Deborah’s letter and Jeremy’s interaction with the Luger on pages 191 to 195. The letters and the gun play a rather large role in this last bit of the book and, if you examine this section carefully, there are definite similarities between these two items. Explain the significance of each of the item to the characters that interact with them and then explain how they are the same in the overall narrative.
6. Perhaps the most significant event of the novel occurs on pages 200 to 202. Previous questions have asked about the significance of the religious icons in the novel, in particular the savior and mother figures. Reread this very quick, flowing bit of narration and explain exactly how Deborah is a singular example of both of these figures in the novel.