



Pigeon Feathers by John Updike

Read Pigeon Feathers by John Updike.

Watch the movie version of the story.

QUESTIONS to answer after reading the story and watching the movie:

1. What word shocks David when H. G. Wells uses to describe Jesus?
2. As the story begins, the author does not directly state and label how David is feeling. Yet in the first paragraph, he provides scene details about what's going on around David that symbolize how he's feeling inside. Analyze those details and explain how David is feeling:
3. In the third paragraph, what metaphor gives us a picture of how David views books?
4. What metaphors---beginning & ending paragraph 5---convey David's shock at what he reads
5. What had David's mother and grandmother purchased for "protection in the country"?
6. In the scene at the dinner table, do you see any irony at David's mother's concern for the earth contrasted with the way she treats her own mother?
7. What effect does dinner with his family seem to have on David?
8. What is the catalyst for David's vision of death?

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9. Once David begins considering mortality, he is compelled to find answers to his questions. How does he question Reverend Dobson? Is he satisfied with the Reverend's answers? Explain.
 10. What passage in Grandpop's Bible gives David comfort?
 11. What philosophy does Mother share with David? Does her philosophy comfort him?
 12. How does David's fear affect his feelings about his normal activities and everyday life?
 13. What do his parents give David for his birthday?
 14. What chore does his mother ask him to accomplish with the gift?
 15. What metaphor describes the barn in daytime?
 16. What phrase describes the change that comes over David with a gun in his hands?
 17. What truth and beauty does David see in the death of the pigeon?
 18. What is the pivotal scene in the story?
 19. What is the key symbol in the story?
 20. What message do you think the author would like to get across to you through David's story?
 21. When you compare and contrast the short story with its movie version, would you say the same message comes across in both?

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22. How are David's parents different in the movie? How is David different in the movie?
- 23.
24. An author is able to spell out exactly what his character is thinking and feeling. Movies tend to focus on action. How did the director of the movie attempt to convey David's thoughts and feelings? Was he successful?
25. In a coming-of-age story, the main character--typically a teenager--experiences inner changes as he or she moves from childhood to adulthood. These stories tend to emphasize dialogue and internal monologue over action and focus on psychological or moral growth. How does *Pigeon Feathers* fit this genre? What other coming-of-age stories are you familiar with?

Journaling:

Can you identify in yourself an area where you've experienced inner growth? What sparked the change? Did anyone give you advice--good or bad? How do you see life or yourself or those around you differently from when you were a child?

(Need some help sparking your thoughts? . . . Are you more responsible? Better at understanding another's point of view? More able to set goals and reach them? More sure of your purpose in life? More able to imagine what other's may be going through? Do you think more like a grownup?)