

NARRATIVE AND EXPOSITORY WRITING

Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring* Chapters 1 and 2

Get into small groups of five and, after introducing yourselves to one another, appoint a note-taker in the group. Give your note-taker adequate time to record your responses; these will later be shared with the class. Where you are asked to look closely at the text, be prepared to cite specific paragraphs or sentences.

Question 1

Examine "Chapter One: A Fable For Tomorrow" in Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring* and decide the following:

Genre: A Fable

- a. What are the elements of this chapter that make it, according to Carson, a "fable for tomorrow"?
- b. What is the moral of this tale, and how do you know it?

Technique: Narrative-Descriptive Writing

- a. What examples of sensory detail can you locate in the descriptive writing of Carson's fable?
- b. Choose one example of imagery that, in your opinion, is the most effective in Chapter One, and discuss why. (This image can be other than visual, as long as it contains some descriptive detail—preferably sensory detail.)
- c. What is the tension of Carson's fable? Why?
- d. Is there the kind of dialogue and characterization in Carson's fable you expect to read in a fictional tale? Explain your answer?

Question 2

Examine "Chapter Two: The Obligation to Endure." Why does Carson not begin with this chapter instead of "A Fable For Tomorrow"? What's different about the way she writes it, and why? Catalog at least five different ways in which the chapter's technique, content, tone, etc. make it different from Chapter One.

Question 3

Rachel Carson end Chapter Two of her book with a quote from French philosopher / biologist Jean Rostand: "The obligation to endure gives us the right to know."

- a. What might have been important enough about these words for Carson to highlight them at the end of this chapter? How do they help you to understand the argument of Chapter Two? Form a position in your group on exactly *what* the obligation to endure *is*.
- b. Talk about the sorts of things you feel are important to know in honoring this obligation to endure. Then, talk about other quotes you personally feel are important enough to use in your everyday life. (They can be can be sayings or verses, or even those quotable phrases you use in your e-mail signatures, or as captions for your forum avatar; perhaps there's one expression you highlight on your Facebook page.) How do these quotes or sayings help to characterize what's important to you?