

UNIT 2 NOVEL STUDY:
The Road, by Cormac McCarthy

During this section of the course, you are responsible for keeping up with independent and/or class reading, assignments, group discussions, and documenting your thoughts in a journal. Regular quizzes will be given on the content of the book, and the journal will be due at the end of the unit.

It is highly recommended that each student obtain a separate, slim binder or notebook in which to record journal reflections, or at least a divided section in the binder he or she normally uses for course work.

*Assessment and Evaluation of Reflection Journal - the rubric from the Ontario Curriculum will be used. Reflections may be reviewed at any time by the teacher, to provide feedback and guidance, using the rubric as a guideline.

Worth: 20% of course mark

PREVIEW:

A) Set up a Glossary Section in your notes. We will add to your glossary throughout the unit.

B) List the physical features of your copy of The Road. How is the book organized?

Novel Study

Reflection Journal Instructions and Expectations:

- At the end of every **two chapters** read, you are to write a personal reflection on your reading that is at least half a page in length (single-spaced), varying your approach from day to day.
 - ✓ To write a reflection, choose an idea from the list of Reflection Topics the follow these instructions - make sure to check off the idea you selected. You must use **six different ideas** from the list over the course of this novel study, to complete your reflections.
 - ✓ After you have completed six different ideas for your reflections, some may be repeated if you wish.
 - ✓ Number each entry and indicate the topic for the response, by letter (**a to j**). This will make it easy to determine which response you have chosen to complete. You should also title the response appropriately. **Indicate the chapters** from the novel that you are responding to.
- In addition to your regular, independent responses, you will be asked to complete specific questions on your readings during class. These Study Guide questions, and your responses, must be included in your reflection journal, and **numbered** in order.
- All questions are to be answered neatly in complete sentence form, on binder paper using blue or black pen, or pencil, or word-processed on clean printer paper.
- Leave space after each answer for my comments.
- Make sure that your answers are thorough: Each answer must be started with an effective and detailed topic sentence (unless otherwise indicated). This sentence must indicate the main points of the answer you are going to provide. In addition, it must introduce the answer in such a way as to make the question obvious - without simply restating the question.
- Make specific references to the story for each answer, providing quotations as necessary.

✓ **Response Topics**

- a) As you read this section, what feelings did you experience in response to events or characters; for example, irritation, disbelief, etc. Why do you think you responded in this way?
- b) What is your understanding of the man's character, at this point? Explain the choices he makes, and why he makes them.
- c) What is your understanding of the boy's character, at this point? Explain the choices he makes, and why he makes them.
- d) With what character do you identify the most closely, or feel the most sympathy? What is it about this character which makes you feel this way? How does the section you just read help to support this feeling?
- e) As you think ahead to your next reading, what possible direction(s) do you think the story might take? How do you hope the story will unfold?
- f) Discuss an example of CONFLICT from this section of your reading: identify what type of conflict it is, how it is revealed, and how it affects the plot or character development.
- g) Identify and explain one example of IRONY from the section you have just read. Why do you think that the author included the example or episode in the story?
- h) Comment on one aspect of the novel you are enjoying or interested in, so far, explaining why you feel this way. Provide a specific example from the section you just finished reading.
- i) Consider the choices made by the protagonists in the section you have just read. Do you agree with those decisions? Why or why not? Be specific.
- j) Which THEME stands out in the section you just read - is it Death, Paternal Love, Good vs Evil, Trust, Faith and Doubt or Survival and Resilience? Why? Provide examples from the text and explain how they represent or explore this theme.

Novel Study - The Road STUDY GUIDE

After you read each chapter, you must complete the questions INDIVIDUALLY in full sentences with specific reference to the text, unless the question asks otherwise. TWO questions in each section may be completed using a sketch, clipart, magazine clipping, photo collage, or small artifact. You will be expected to hand this work in, so it is your responsibility to keep up with the work under the guidance of the educator.

Section 1 - pages 1-7

TWO questions may be completed with a sketch, clipart, magazine clipping, photo collage, small artifact.

Vocabulary: glaucoma, flowstone, pilgrims, flues, translucent, alabaster,
 decanting, dregs

- 1) This novel is classified as part of the post-apocalyptic genre. Why? Refer to some of the clues in the first section which indicate that a terrible event has occurred. As you read, keep track of those clues - record the descriptions of the original event, or the consequences of the event, each time the man refers to them in the narrative. (Use the template provided)

- 2) Where are the man and the boy going? Why?

- 3) "He'd pulled away his mask in the night..." (5) What kind of mask is he referring to? Suggest reasons why they may travel with masks on their faces.

- 4) How is the sense of constant danger communicated to the reader?

- 5) What does the father do with the phone in the abandoned gas station? Why?

- 6) Think about the literary style of the book - there are no quotation marks to differentiate speech from the rest of the text, and sometimes punctuation is omitted. How does this style reflect the atmosphere and themes of the book?

- 7) McCarthy has said in an interview that his four-year-old son John practically co-wrote the book: "I suppose it is a love story to my son." Why do you think he said this? Predict the direction of the plot.

Section 2 - pages 8-17

TWO questions may be completed with a sketch, clipart, magazine clipping, photo collage, small artifact.

Vocabulary: gully, enshroud, mote, temporal, gryke, transom, shoals, cauterized, autistic, vestibular, chronicle, declination, matrix, rotunda

- 1) What does the father mean when he says, "You forget what you want to remember, and you remember what you want to forget?" (12) Suggest memories he is trying to keep, and sights or experiences he wishes he could forget about.
- 2) "...[T]he blackened shapes of rock standing up out of the shoals of ash and billows of ash blowing downcountry through the waste." (14) Why do you think McCarthy uses the imagery of the ocean to describe the landscape?
- 3) There are words being used in this novel which are new to our language - "slutlamp" (7), "scabland" (16), "bloodcults" (16) are some examples. What do these terms mean? Why is McCarthy combining words in this way?
- 4) What are the man's main concerns, other than avoiding other people? Why?

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Section 3 - pages 18-33

TWO questions may be completed with a sketch, clipart, magazine clipping, photo collage, small artifact.

Vocabulary: pipeclayed, peril, sconces, keel, frescoes, breakfront, effigies, bogfolk, discalced, firedrake, sectarian, deranged

- 1) What is the significance of dreams in this novel?
- 2) Why does the man say that he doesn't trust good dreams?
- 3) What do we learn about the man's past in this section?
- 4) Identify the 'treat' the boy has in the ruins of the supermarket, and why it is significant.
- 5) Why do they go to the father's childhood home?
- 6) What frightens the boy about the house?
- 7) How has the meaning of time changed for the boy and the man, because of the disaster?
- 8) "Can you do it? When the time comes? Can you?" (29) To what is the father referring? Why?
- 9) "That the boy was all that stood between him and death?" (29) What does this mean?
- 10) Why doesn't McCarthy directly state the protagonists' location?
- 11) "Not all dying words are true and this blessing is no less real for being shorn of its ground." (31) To which dying words do you think he is referring? Who or what is the blessing? How do you know?
- 12) Define "godspoke men". (32)

Section 4 - pages 34-48

TWO questions may be completed with a sketch, clipart, magazine clipping, photo collage, small artifact.

Vocabulary: basalt, gorge, bluffs, pipsissewa, piedmont, madacam, mastic

- 1) "You promised not to do that, the boy said." (34) What do you think his father promised not to do? Why? Does it matter? Explain.
- 2) How old do you think the boy is? How do you know? Provide examples from the text to suggest his age.
- 3) What do they do at the waterfall? Do you think this is a wise or foolish act? Why?
- 4) Explain the purpose of the father's flashbacks. Why do they happen so frequently?
- 5) Why doesn't the man know what happened to the states?
- 6) Compare the benefits and disadvantages to traveling with a grocery cart in a post-apocalyptic landscape. Why are they using it?
- 7) What was in the jack-knifed truck? Why do you suppose this was the cargo?

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Section 5 - pages 49-60

TWO questions may be completed with a sketch, clipart, magazine clipping, photo collage, small artifact.

Vocabulary: skeins, coagulate, provenance, penitent, cheroot, obsidian, meconium

- 1) What do the boy and the man decide to do when they first see the other man on the road? Why?
- 2) Why did the boy want to help the burned man? Why didn't the father offer help?
- 3) Explain the significance of the wallet, and what the man does with it.
- 4) Why does the man allow his son to hope and have fantasies about life in the south?
- 5) No names are given for any of the characters. Suggest reasons why McCarthy made this choice for the story.
- 6) Describe the argument that the man had had with his wife - explain the differences in their points of view on whether to live or choose to die.
- 7) Why didn't the woman say good-bye to her son?
- 8) How long do you think they survived together after the disaster? Or, how long did the man's wife survive before making her final decision? What are the clues in the text?
- 9) Why is the memory of the boy's birth as important to the man as his wife's suicide?

Section 6 - pages 60-79

TWO questions may be completed with a sketch, clipart, magazine clipping, photo collage, small artifact.

Vocabulary: bracken, emaciation, lacquered, stropping, rachitic, lepers, ambush, anointing, evoke, quoits, changeling, commune

- 1) Do you think it is realistic that a truck would still be functional, and that fuel would be obtainable for it, as indicated in the book?
- 2) “[H]e had a tattoo of a bird on his neck done by someone with an illformed notion of their appearance.” (63) What does this indicate about the survival of animal life since the disaster? Provide at least one other example from the text.
- 3) Is or was the man a doctor? What evidence suggests this possibility?
- 4) Why do you think the night is so completely dark in the environment of the book?
- 5) Explain the significance of the single bullet left in the revolver.
- 6) What happened to the man with the knife, after the father and son got away?
- 7) According to the man, what is his job, as a father?
- 8) How long had it been since the father had spoken with another human being, other than his son?
- 9) List the differences between ‘the bad guys,’ and ‘the good guys.’

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Section 7 - pages 79-89

TWO questions may be completed with a sketch, clipart, magazine clipping, photo collage, small artifact.

Vocabulary: sappers, viaduct, embankment, parsible, entities, idiom

- 1) Why do they agree not to kill the dog?
- 2) Explain the meaning of the phrase, “[W]e’re carrying the fire.” (83)
- 3) Do you think the son actually saw another boy, or did he imagine it? Why?
- 4) Why doesn’t the father go back to search for the other boy?
- 5) “He’d had this feeling before, beyond the numbness and the dull despair. The world shrinking down about a raw core of parsible entities. The names of things slowly following those things into oblivion. Colors. The names of birds. Things to eat. Finally the names of things one believed to be true. More fragile than he would have thought. How much was gone already? The sacred idiom shorn of its referents and so of its reality.” (89)

What does this mean?

Section 8 - pages 90-105

TWO questions may be completed with a sketch, clipart, magazine clipping, photo collage, small artifact.

Vocabulary: woad, runic, motifs, truncheoned, stile, phalanx, forge, catamites, horde, sedge

- 1) When they stop by the orchard, what does the man see that he has seen before? Why is it significant?
- 2) Suggest reasons for the physical appearance of the armed group of men and women. What is the purpose of the red scarves?
- 3) If the bad guys are on the move, why is it not a good sign for the man and the boy?
- 4) Why is it important for the father that his son keep talking? What is wrong with not talking? Explain what it means about the boy's character.
- 5) When the father and son have conversations, the boy frequently ends their talk by saying "Okay." Does that mean that he believes what his father tells him? What else might it mean?
- 6) Does the boy believe that they will live? How do you know?
- 7) Describe the father's strategy after he believes they might be followed. Why is this important?

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Section 9 - pages 105-113

TWO questions may be completed with a sketch, clipart, magazine clipping, photo collage, small artifact.

Vocabulary: port cochere, privet, chattel

- 1) Explain how McCarthy uses suspense and creates foreboding on page 105-106, with regard to the mansion.
- 2) Do you think the detailed descriptions of physical setting are necessary for this story? Why?
- 3) Why is the boy afraid of empty houses?
- 4) "All these things he saw and did not see." (109) What does this mean?
- 5) Why doesn't the man help the people in the cellar?

Section 10 - pages 114-130

TWO questions may be completed with a sketch, clipart, magazine clipping, photo collage, small artifact.

Vocabulary: formica, cistern, hydraulic, mendicant, palimpsest, intestate

- 1) "Is there such a being within you of which you know nothing?" (114) Explain the meaning of this quote.
- 2) How do they escape?
- 3) What happens at night in the house?
- 4) How does the man keep them going when the boy cannot walk anymore?
- 5) What was the father's mistake in approaching the house?
- 6) Describe what they do after getting away. Suggest at least one reason for the lack of action. Is this part anti-climactic? Why?
- 7) How is the next house different? Why is there no menace or foreboding with the abandoned farm?
- 8) Why is the man concerned about his coughing?
- 9) Explain the boy's reaction to the truth about the people in the cellar.
- 10) "Borrowed time and borrowed world and borrowed eyes with which to sorrow it." (130) What does this mean?

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Section 11 - pages 131-144

TWO questions may be completed with a sketch, clipart, magazine clipping, photo collage, small artifact.

Vocabulary: begonia, hasp, serrated, corroded, krugerrands

- 1) Why does the boy wish that the other little boy was with them?
- 2) How does the father know that the town has been empty for a long time?
- 3) Why does the man take the flower seeds?
- 4) According to the father, what do the good guys do? Why does he say this?
- 5) What do they find buried in the yard?
- 6) Why do you think the original owners did not use it?
- 7) List the supplies that they find. Why do you think there is no gun?
- 8) "He'd been ready to die and now he wasn't (sic) going to and he had to think about that... This was not hiding in the woods. This was the last thing from that." (144) What does the man mean by this?
- 9) How realistic is this section - do you think a find like this would really be possible? Why? For what reason does McCarthy include this solution to their starvation?

Section 12 - pages 145-156

TWO questions may be completed with a sketch, clipart, magazine clipping, photo collage, small artifact.

Vocabulary: footlocker, laved, sumptuous, bonded whiskey

- 1) Why does the father have to explain what to do with the butter and the biscuits?
- 2) What does the boy do before eating? Why? To what other, traditional act is this similar?
- 3) Explain the reasons for bathing and cutting one's hair - why does it matter in a post-apocalyptic world?
- 4) When the father reassures his son - "They wont (sic) find us." (148) - why does he say this? Is he telling the truth?
- 5) What kind of global disaster would require the mass removal and burning of bodies?
- 6) Explain the man's reasons for only taking one grocery cart.
- 7) Why does the father tell his son, "...sometimes I might forget to be on the lookout?" (151)
- 8) Explain the meaning of the man's dream, on page 154-155.
- 9) McCarthy compares the open hatchway to a grave - what might be his reasons for doing this? What might it - the shelter - represent?
- 10) Why don't they stay in the shelter?

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Section 13 - pages 156-167

TWO questions may be completed with a sketch, clipart, magazine clipping, photo collage, small artifact.

Vocabulary: balustrade, pall, decoy, rucksack,

- 1) What has happened to, or where are, the crows? What does their disappearance suggest?
- 2) Why do you think they have not yet seen the sun?
- 3) What does the boy say he threw away? Why do you think he did that?
- 4) When the father cautions his son, "Well, let's not get too smart." (160), what does he mean?
- 5) Why does the boy ask about their long term goals, at this point in the story?
- 6) What are the boy and the man's "new world standards" (161) for cleanliness?
- 7) When the old man asks what the man and the boy are, explain the reason why they cannot answer.
- 8) For what reason do they stop for the night with the old man?
- 9) What does the father want the old man to tell him? Why?
- 10) Do you think the old man is as old as he says? Explain your response.

Section 14 - pages 168-180

TWO questions may be completed with a sketch, clipart, magazine clipping, photo collage, small artifact.

Vocabulary: bivouacked, threadbare, buddha, secular, gullied, middens, kudzu, transit

- 1) "People were always getting ready for tomorrow. I didnt (sic) believe in that. Tomorrow wasn't getting ready for them. It didn't even know they were there." (168) What is Ely talking about?
- 2) Explain what this idiom means: "Beggars cant (sic) be choosers." (169)
- 3) What does Ely mean when he says, "There is no God and we are his prophets." ? (170)
- 4) Why doesn't the old man tell them his real name?
- 5) The father has already made reference to his son being a god. What does he mean by that?
- 6) Why do you think the boy gives some food to Ely, though Ely admits he would not do the same?
- 7) What do you think the boy represents?
- 8) Why does McCarthy continue to avoid specifying where the protagonists are?
- 9) "If they saw different worlds what they knew was the same." (180) Compare how the man sees the world with how the boy sees it. What might it be like to never know about the world as it is now - to grow up in ruins and ash?

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- j) Which THEME stands out in the section you just read - is it Death, Paternal Love, Good vs Evil, Trust, Faith and Doubt or Survival and Resilience? Why? Provide examples from the text and explain how they represent or explore this theme.

Section 15 - pages 180-195

TWO questions may be completed with a sketch, clipart, magazine clipping, photo collage, small artifact.

Vocabulary: cairn, paterans, sundries, notions, dessicated, culvert, fey,
 predicated, caustic, quadrants, mattock, bolus

- 1) What do the stone cairns represent? Why do you think they start appearing in the south?

- 2) Locate two examples of foreshadowing in this section. Predict the next developments in the plot.

- 3) In the man's flashback, he recalls a time when they had slept in an abandoned pharmacy, and that the expensive electronic equipment had not been touched on the shelves. Why do you think it had not been taken by people? What does that suggest about the catastrophe that ended the world?

- 4) Why did the three men on the highway leave the man and the boy alone?

- 5) What do you think the dream of the snakes represents?

- 6) Suggest reasons for the new distance the father senses between himself and his son.

- 7) The father tries to prevent the boy from seeing the dead in the highway, but it appears not to bother him. Do you think this is true? Why?

- 8) Explain why the man watches the boy eat, and why the boy says for him to stop.

- 9) How did the father know they were being followed?

Section 16 - pages 195-204

TWO questions may be completed with a sketch, clipart, magazine clipping, photo collage, small artifact.

Vocabulary: corrugate, harrowtrough, ledgerbook, magnolia, spire,
provisions, enroute, jerry jug, slough, serpentine, verdigris

- 1) “Do you think that your fathers are watching? That they weigh you in their ledgerbook? Against what? There is no book and your fathers are dead in the ground.” (196) Who says this? What does it mean? Why does he say it?
- 2) What do you think killed the trees?
- 3) What do you think might happen if the man tried to fire the revolver, and a wooden bullet was in the chamber?
- 4) Why did the people leave their food cooking?
- 5) What happens when they realize what the people had been eating?
- 6) What has the father noticed about the boy’s emotional growth from the previous year? Explain the boy’s behaviour when presented with things left by the road.
- 7) Where do you think the people in the forest got the baby? Why doesn’t the father tell his son what he thinks?
- 8) Why does the son apologize for what he had said about the dead in the road?
- 9) How do you think the father feels, watching his son run in oversized shoes toward the creek?
- 10) Predict what they will find in the next house they explore.

✓ **Response Topics - CHOOSE ONE FROM THE LIST BELOW:**

- a) As you read this section, what feelings did you experience in response to events or characters; for example, irritation, disbelief, etc. Why do you think you responded in this way?
- b) What is your understanding of the man's character, at this point? Explain the choices he makes, and why he makes them.
- c) What is your understanding of the boy's character, at this point? Explain the choices he makes, and why he makes them.
- d) With what character do you identify the most closely, or feel the most sympathy? What is it about this character which makes you feel this way? How does the section you just read help to support this feeling?
- e) As you think ahead to your next reading, what possible direction(s) do you think the story might take? How do you hope the story will unfold?
- f) Discuss an example of CONFLICT from this section of your reading: identify what type of conflict it is, how it is revealed, and how it affects the plot or character development.
- g) Identify and explain one example of IRONY from the section you have just read. Why do you think that the author included the example or episode in the story?
- h) Comment on one aspect of the novel you are enjoying or interested in, so far, explaining why you feel this way. Provide a specific example from the section you just finished reading.
- i) Consider the choices made by the protagonists in the section you have just read. Do you agree with those decisions? Why or why not? Be specific.
- j) Which THEME stands out in the section you just read - is it Death, Paternal Love, Good vs Evil, Trust, Faith and Doubt or Survival and Resilience? Why? Provide examples from the text and explain how they represent or explore this theme.

Section 17 - pages 205-213

TWO questions may be completed with a sketch, clipart, magazine clipping, photo collage, small artifact.

Vocabulary: palladian, lintel, myraid

- 1) "We both have to say." (207) Why does the father include his son in decision-making. Does he do it all the time? Explain.

- 2) "I think maybe they are watching, he said. They are watching for a thing that even death cannot undo and if they do not see it they will turn away from us and they will not come back." (210) To whom is the man referring? Why do you think that? What could be a thing that death cannot undo?

- 3) Predict what will happen after they leave the house.

- 4) Predict what they will find if/when they arrive at their destination. Do you think they will make it? Why?

Section 18 - pages 213-223

TWO questions may be completed with a sketch, clipart, magazine clipping, photo collage, small artifact.

Vocabulary: disinterred, cholera, desolation, careened, slag, vigilant, okra, iodine, tidewrack, isocline, sepulchre

- 1) Why does the boy stare at the deerhead for a long time?
- 2) What evidence is there that the boy is feeling hopeful about their journey?
- 3) Describe what they find when they arrive at the beach.
- 4) What do they do when they arrive? Why?
- 5) Why does the father let the son play in the surf?
- 6) Why do you think the boy cries afterward?
- 7) Do you think the disaster was truly worldwide, or might it have been confined to just the one continent? Why? What evidence is there that everything has been destroyed?
- 8) Explain why the wind off the water does not smell like the sea.
- 9) Predict what will happen when the father swims out to the boat.

✓ **Response Topics - CHOOSE ONE FROM THE LIST BELOW:**

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- b) What is your understanding of the man's character, at this point? Explain the choices he makes, and why he makes them.
- c) What is your understanding of the boy's character, at this point? Explain the choices he makes, and why he makes them.
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Section 19 - pages 223-240

TWO questions may be completed with a sketch, clipart, magazine clipping, photo collage, small artifact.

Vocabulary: sheer-rail, transom, davits, turnbuckles, souwester, humidor, sextant, baize, windfall

- 1) What does the father's knowledge of sailboat vocabulary suggest?
- 2) What useful things does he find on the boat?
- 3) How does the sextant affect the man, and why?
- 4) "It occurred to him that he took this windfall in a fashion dangerously close to matter of fact but still he said what he had said before. That good luck might be no such thing." (229-230) Explain what the father means.
- 5) Why do you think the father keeps going, when the easiest thing would be to give up?
- 6) The boy forgets the pistol on the beach, but the father doesn't get angry. Why is that?
- 7) Why was going back for the pistol a problem?
- 8) How does the father get them back to camp?
- 9) "The slow surf crawled and seethed in the dark and he thought about his life but there was no life to think about and after a while he walked back." (237) What does this mean? What is the man realizing here?
- 10) Of what use might the flarepistol be?

Section 20 - pages 240-253

TWO questions may be completed with a sketch, clipart, magazine clipping, photo collage, small artifact.

Vocabulary: tendrils, magnesium, conjuring, travois, pruned,

- 1) Was it a good idea for the man to shoot the flare? Why?
- 2) What is the father afraid of when the boy is sick?
- 3) "He walked out on the beach to the edge of the light and stood with his clenched fists on top of his skull and fell to his knees sobbing with rage." (250)
Explain the emotions the man is feeling, and the reasons why.
- 4) Predict what will happen when they catch up to the thief / thieves.

✓ **Response Topics - CHOOSE ONE FROM THE LIST BELOW:**

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- b) What is your understanding of the man's character, at this point? Explain the choices he makes, and why he makes them.
- c) What is your understanding of the boy's character, at this point? Explain the choices he makes, and why he makes them.
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Section 21 - pages 253-270

TWO questions may be completed with a sketch, clipart, magazine clipping, photo collage, small artifact.

Vocabulary: communes, sheaves, cognate, impoderable, dolmen, oracles, moldering, sloe, lampblack, entabled, rickets, congealing, bollards, gantry cane, suture

- 1) How do they find the thief and their supplies?
- 2) Why do you think the thief was an outcast? Suggest reasons why his fingers had been cut away.
- 3) Why do you think the thief responds to the boy by surrendering?
- 4) Explain the man's punishment of the thief. Do you think he did the right thing?
- 5) How does the boy feel about his father's action?
- 6) "You're not the one who has to worry about everything...[The boy] looked up, his wet and grimy face. Yes I am, he said. I am the one." (259) What does he mean by this?
- 7) Where do you think the thief went?
- 8) Why do think the man with the bow tried to kill them?
- 9) Why doesn't the boy want to hear his father's stories anymore?
- 10) Predict what will happen when they leave the town.

Section 22 - pages 270-end

TWO questions may be completed with a sketch, clipart, magazine clipping, photo collage, small artifact.

Vocabulary: lee, askew, armatures, sloughed, incinerate, crozzled, ensepulchred, tabernacle, hagmoss, counterspectacle, hydroptic, hydrangeas, isthmus, prophet, loess, bandolier, skirmishes, stoven, wimpled, torsional, vermiculate

- 1) What does the father say is the bravest thing he ever did? Why?
- 2) How has the man's perspective about the boy changed? Why?
- 3) Why does the man say that his son reminds him of an orphan waiting for a bus?
- 4) "Look around you, he said. There is no prophet in the earth's long chronicle who's not honoured here today. Whatever form you spoke of you were right." (277) What is the father talking about?
- 5) Why can't the father kill his son?
- 6) What is the 'goodness' to which the father refers?
- 7) How long does the boy stay with his father? Why?
- 8) What does the boy do when he sees someone coming? Why?
- 9) Why does the man in the parka pause before answering the boy's question, about whether he is a good guy?
- 10) How long do you think he was following or watching the boy and the man?
- 11) Why does the man in the parka say that the boy needs to keep out of the road?
- 12) Do you think the man in the parka is a good guy? Why?

13) Why is the woman glad to see the boy?

14) What does the woman represent?

15) What do the brook trout represent?

✓ **Response Topics - CHOOSE ONE FROM THE LIST BELOW:**

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The Road | Ideas for Reports and Papers



1. Write a paper in the form of a letter from the mother to the son, meant for the boy to read when he turns eighteen. In the letter, try to explain why the mother left him. Read your letter to your class.
2. From the clues provided in the story, decide how the world was most likely devastated—climate change, earthquakes and volcanic eruptions, or the explosion of nuclear bombs? Then research one of those catastrophes and write a detailed report of the consequences of such a disaster as science might predict it. How close do these predictions come to the details provided in the story? Report your findings to your class.
3. Choose three passages from *The Road*, and then find three different pieces of music that you believe match the tone of the passages. Practice reading the passages with the music in the background, and then present your performance to your class. Take a vote at the end to see which one they liked the best.
4. In the middle of their journey, the man and the boy come across a well-stocked underground sanctuary where they hide for several days. Write a mock journal that the boy might have kept while they stayed there. What did he enjoy most about this place? How does he reflect on what he has already been through? What are his thoughts of what lies ahead?
5. Research the author's life as well as the themes and topics of his previous novels. Look for clues as to what might have inspired the topic of world destruction as found in this novel. What elements of hope exist in this story, if any? Is hope expressed in the author's other books? What types of destruction are found in his previous novels? Is anything as dark as this novel? Present your information to help to enlighten your classmates as they discuss this book.

Further Ideas:

6. Does McCarthy think that people are naturally good, or naturally evil? why?
7. Research the story of Ely in the Bible. Why is this name used for the old man in this novel?
8. is the geographical location (e.g. country, state, region) important to the story? Why has it been left out? Where do you think they travel from, through, and arrive? Use a map to suggest their journey.