

Spring Rain Teacher Notes by Richard Yaxley

Pre-reading

1. In a literary and artistic sense, what do you understand by the season of Spring? Work with a group to write down words or phrases that might be associated with Spring. Can these words / phrases be grouped? If so, how?
2. The acknowledgements at the back of this book make reference to a number of poems, songs and other texts:
 - a) Read the lyrics to Janis Ian's *At Seventeen*. What are some of the main ideas being put forward in this song?
 - b) Read Robert Frost's *The Road Not Taken*. Is the poet celebrating or lamenting his choice of roads – or is there a different mood in the poem? Explain your answer, incorporating quotes from the text.
 - c) Read Amy Lowell's *September 1918*. Is this a poem about hope? Explain your answer, incorporating quotes from the text.
3. Find and read other poems, songs or texts that focus on Spring. For example, you could listen to the Spring section of Vivaldi's *The Four Seasons* or read William Wordsworth's *Lines Written in Early Spring*.

Post-Reading

1. 1 Boy: In this section, Tom tells us about his relationship with Emma. What are some of the key images / phrases that he uses? How does he feel about Emma?
2. 1 Girl: What link does Zooey make between colours and people? Why does she decide to be monochromatic?
3. 2 Boy: How is Tom's world changed in this section? Is Emma's advice reasonable? Explain your answer.
4. 2 Girl: How is Zooey's world changed in this section? Is this a positive change? Why or why not?
5. 3 Boy: What is the significance of the story of the valley tribe in this section? How does it relate to Tom's feelings?
6. 3 Girl: Zooey initiates a range of changes to her life in this section. What are they and why does she do this?
7. 4 Boy: Is Tom really more Nick than Gatsby? Explain your answer.
8. 4 Girl: This section highlights differences between Zooey's mother and Callie's grandma. What are those differences and why might they be significant?
9. 5 Boy: Tom mentions Bernoulli's Theorem in this section. Why? How does this idea clarify his view of his future?
10. 5 Girl: What contrasts are shown in Zooey's relationships with her parents? Is one better than the other? Why or why not?
11. 6 Boy: How does his father's letter change Tom's prospects, and view of the world?
12. 6 Girl: Why does Zooey steal?
13. 7 Boy: What most attracts Tom to being 'over there'?
14. 7 Girl: How does meeting the old man on the bus clarify Zooey's thinking?

15. 8 Boy: What does *estocada* mean? How is the term relevant to this section?
16. 8 Girl: What is 'the beautiful thunder'? How has Zooney's attitude changed in this section?
17. 9 Boy: Why does Tom take his mother to the island? Is the trip just for her, or is it also important for him? Explain your answer.
18. 9 Girl: Why does Zooney reject her mother at this point? Is it the right decision? Explain your answer.
19. 10 Boy: How does Tom's letter demonstrate his increased maturity? Use quotes to support your answer.
20. 10 Girl: 'Dad, you polish the oxygen that I breathe.' What does Zooney mean by this?

Some Big Questions

1. Consider the title of this novel which comes from a song by Brisbane band, The Go-Betweens. Have Tom and Zooney finally found Spring rain? If so, how?
2. This work is classified as a verse novel. What does this mean? How poetic is the writing? Give examples with your answer.
3. Both Tom and Zooney experience intense romantic relationships in the novel, and both relationships fail. Why? What goes wrong?
4. Pick any point in the novel's action, and write a poem or piece of reflective text from the point of view of one or more of these characters:
 - a) Callie
 - b) Mrs Stephens (Tom's mother)
 - c) Zooney's father
 - d) Zooney's mother
 - e) Emma
 - f) Russell McGinty
 - g) Captain Maguire
5. Imagine that *Spring Rain* is being turned into a TV mini-series. Write the script for the trailer (you may have to research this genre). What key images would you include in the trailer? Why?

Essay Topics

- In *Spring Rain*, both characters must escape in order to progress. Discuss.
- Callie and Emma are let down by the selfishness of Zooney and Tom respectively. Discuss, citing examples from the novel.
- As characters, the parents in *Spring Rain* develop significantly. Discuss, citing examples from the novel.