

Herman Hesse. Siddhartha. From “With the Samanas”

In the evening of this day they caught up with the ascetics, the skinny Samanas, and offered them their companionship and—obedience. They were accepted.

Siddhartha gave his garments to a poor Brahman in the street. He wore nothing more than the loincloth and the earth-colored, unsown cloak. He ate only once a day, and never something cooked. He fasted for fifteen days. He fasted for twenty-eight days. The flesh waned from his thighs and cheeks. Feverish dreams flickered from his enlarged eyes, long nails grew slowly on his parched fingers and a dry, shaggy beard grew on his chin. His glance turned to ice when he encountered women; his mouth twitched with contempt, when he walked through a city of nicely dressed people. He saw merchants trading, princes hunting, mourners wailing for their dead, whores offering themselves, physicians trying to help the sick, priests determining the most suitable day for seeding, lovers loving, mothers nursing their children—and all of this was not worthy of one look from his eye, it all lied, it all stank, it all stank of lies, it all pretended to be meaningful and joyful and beautiful, and it all was just concealed putrefaction. The world tasted bitter. Life was torture.

A goal stood before Siddhartha, a single goal: to become empty, empty of thirst, empty of wishing, empty of dreams, empty of joy and sorrow. Dead to himself, not to be a self any more, to find tranquility with an emptied heart, to be open to miracles in unselfish thoughts, that was his goal. Once all of my self was overcome and had died, once every desire and every urge was silent in the heart, then the ultimate part of me had to awake, the innermost of my being, which is no longer my self, the great secret.

Define Each Word

wane: _____

parched: _____

contempt: _____

putrefaction: _____

ultimate: _____

Write the Correct Word from the Vocabulary

1. Wrapping his _____ lips thirstily around the canteen, the hiker chugged down an entire liter of crisp, cool water.
2. Steven bought what he considered to be the _____ electronic gaming device, a holographic projector that allowed him to fight a holographic image of an on-line opponent.
3. When physical attraction _____, couples sometimes have a difficult time maintaining their relationship.
4. The stench of _____ emanating from the car caused many people to wonder if there was a dead animal or person in the trunk.
5. The politician exhibited great _____ for his constituents when he refused to meet with them and answer their questions about his trip to Tahiti over the holidays.

Comprehension and Discussion: Answer Each Question in Complete Sentences

1. What one goal “stood before Siddhartha”? How did he plan to accomplish this goal?

2. Why did Siddhartha’s mouth twitch “with contempt” as “he walked through a city of nicely dressed people”?

