

"The Obsolete Man"

Vocabulary

Big Idea: a concept or idea that goes beyond the written word.

Universal Theme: a truth about everything regardless of time, place, or culture

Totalitarian: of or relating to a system of government that is centralized and dictatorial and requires complete subservience to the state

Dictator: a ruler with total power over a country, typically one who has obtained power by force

Obsolete: no longer produced or used; out of date

Characters/Actors

Narrator - Rod Serling

Protagonist: Romney Wordsworth (Burgess Meredith) Symbolizes the individual fighting for human rights

Antagonist: Chancellor - (Fritz Weaver) Symbolizes the state and power

Subaltern: (Josip Elic)

Guided Questions

1. Explain the story's point of view.
2. The main character/protagonist is Romney Wordsworth. Explain why the main character's name has symbolic value.
3. What is the purpose of the hearing?
4. The subaltern requests clarification a term. What is the term and why does he ask for clarification?

Source

5. Explain why there is no need for a Librarian in this society.
6. Explain Mr. Wordsworth's rights in this hearing, according to the state.
7. Explain what Mr. Wordsworth means when he says he is "a very rich man."
8. What does Mr. Wordsworth do when the Chancellor enters his room?
9. What did the Chancellor hope to prove to Mr. Wordsworth by coming to his room?
10. Explain the real reason the Chancellor visits Mr. Wordsworth. Stated by Mr. Wordsworth.
11. State and explain the mistakes made by past dictators *according to the Chancellor*.
12. Explain why Mr. Wordsworth actually invites the Chancellor to his room.
13. Mr. Wordsworth says, "Knowing that you're going to be blown to smithereens in a few moments isn't the happiest thought in the world, is it?" - why does this depend on the individual?

14. Explain the irony about the Chancellor being in Mr. Wordsworth's room, and Mr. Wordsworth's method for liquidation.
15. Explain the only possession of any value to Mr. Wordsworth and why it is the only one of any value to him.
16. Explain how death is the great equalizer.
17. Explain the impact of the Chancellor's reaction as his time diminishes.
18. Mr. Wordsworth expresses a BIG IDEA when he says, "There is precious little to distinguish us." Explain this BIG IDEA in your own life
19. The Narrator says, "Any state, any entity, and ideology that fails to recognize the worth, the dignity, the rights of man, that state is obsolete." – Describe and explain how if and how this true of your world.

Important Quotations - Be prepared to explain what these mean to YOU. They are in the order.

- The Narrator introduces a BIG IDEA when he says, "Logic is an enemy and truth is a menace."
- Mr. Wordsworth: "I'm a human being. I exist."
- Mr. Wordsworth: "If I speak one thought aloud, that thought lives even after I'm shoveled into my grave."
- Chancellor: "Delusions that you inject into your veins with printer's ink."
- Chancellor: "You have nothing but spindly limbs and a dream."

Source

- Chancellor: "Stalin, too. But their error was not one of excess, it was simply not going far enough! Too many undesirables left around, and undesirables eventually create a corp of resistance. Old people for example, clutch at the past and won't accept the new. The sick, the maimed, the deformed, they fasten onto the healthy body and damage it, so WE eliminate them! And people like yourself, they can perform no useful function for The State, so...we put an end to them."
- Mr. Wordsworth: "Knowing that you're going to be blown to smithereens in a few moments isn't the happiest thought in the world, is it?"
- Mr. Wordsworth: "How does a man react to the fact that he is going to be blown to bits in half an hour?
Answer: That depends on the individual."
- Mr. Wordsworth: "Why don't you sit down; we'll have a little chat. Just you and me and the great equalizer, 'cause death is a great equalizer."
- Mr. Wordsworth expresses a BIG IDEA when he says, "There is precious little to distinguish us."
- Narrator: "Any state, any entity, and ideology that fails to recognize the worth, the dignity, the rights of man, that state is obsolete."