

Even More Possible Discussion Questions for *Blindness*

Role of humor (Marion's question)— As Saramago is such an amazing writer, so tight, controlled, everything for a purpose - what is his intent in introducing humor when and where he does? I particularly liked the first sentence of chapter 15 (I think!) that starts: "Leaving aside the household dust that takes advantage...." [note from Tyler: I've marked anything with an "!" that amused me and found something humorous or satiric in almost every chapter. Perhaps just randomly take a chapter and find the humorous moment. And then together we will try to answer Marion's good question.]

Role of the religious allusions (Marion's question)--If Saramago is atheist or agnostic, what is the reason for all of those religious allusions? Does it speak to who he considers his audience to be? Is it part of growing up in a culture steeped in Catholicism? [See also #2 below]

Specific question re narrator (Marion's)--Re: the narrator - in chapter 8 on maybe the 4th page (it's page 108 in my book), [page 120 in Tyler's] - what's up with the sentence that begins, "From this point onwards..."

Is the man with the eye patch the narrator? Is it a role that gets passed from one person to the next with "the woman nobody knows" and "the blind man" that isn't described in any more detail, presumably the man the girl with the dark glasses had sex with two of the "carriers"? Is it the "writer"? [note from Tyler: this is one of the most puzzling passages in the novel IMHO!!! But it may be helpful to us all in determining the narrative voice.)

The narrative voice challenge: to figure out his/her character, attitude, and beliefs.

Some passages from my book with Narrator's voice: 120*, 197, 217, 244, 250*, 265*, 280, 281, 324*

The symbolic meanings of "blindness" and "sight" in the novel—if you feel we haven't fully covered this: 193, 209, 210, 276, 296, 297, 317, 324, 326, epigraph (my page #s)

Saramago's core beliefs? (Bob began to list these at the end of the last class. I hope he will repeat and continue.)

Comparison of the two books

1. Compare the two texts from a philosophical point of view. Both present us with ways of examining what it means to be human and what it takes to preserve humanity. Both also seem to leave us with messages about the meaning of life and what makes life meaningful. What unites and what divides the two writers and their messages? Is one more persuasive than the other?
2. The role of the church and/or religion in both novels.
3. The role of words and language (writing) in both novels.
4. The endings of both novels

Bob's question What can we take from both books that will help us during the pandemic we are living through (and the rest of our lives)? The response to this question should be your own.