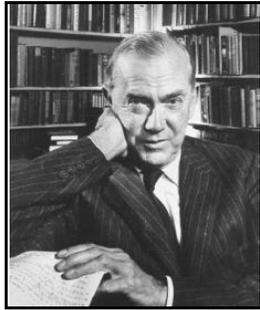


THE QUIET AMERICAN

by Graham Greene



THE AUTHOR

Graham Greene (1904-1991) was born in Berkhamsted, England. He had a very troubled childhood, was bullied in school, on several occasions attempted suicide by playing Russian roulette, and eventually was referred for psychiatric help. Writing became an important outlet for his painful inner life. He took a degree in History at Oxford, then began work as a journalist. His conversion to Catholicism at the age of 22 was due largely to the influence of his wife-to-be, though he later became a devout follower of his chosen faith. His writing career included novels, short stories, and plays. Some of his novels dealt openly with Catholic themes, including *The Power and the Glory* (1940), *The Heart of the Matter* (1948), and *The End of the Affair* (1951), though the Vatican strongly disapproved of his portrayal of the dark side of man and the corruption in the Church and in the world. Others were based on his travel experiences, often to troubled parts of the world, including Mexico during a time of religious persecution, which produced *The Lawless Roads* (1939) as well as *The Power and the Glory*, *The Quiet American* (1955) about Vietnam, *Our Man in Havana* (1958) about Cuba, *The Comedian* (1966) about Haiti, *The Honorary Consul* (1973) about Paraguay, and *The Human Factor* (1978) about South Africa. His work with British Intelligence in Africa during World War II is reflected in *The Heart of the Matter*. Many of his novels were later made into films. Greene was also considered one of the finest film critics of his day, though one particularly sharp review attracted a libel suit from the studio producing Shirley Temple films when he suggested that the sexualization of children was likely to appeal to pedophiles. He even wrote film screenplays, the most successful of which was Orson Welles' award-winning version of *The Third Man* (1949). Despite his profound Catholic faith, his own life was marred by bouts of despair and moral inconsistencies – struggles with alcohol and drugs, sexual dalliances of all sorts, and eventual separation from his wife after almost twenty years of marriage. He died in Switzerland at the age of 87.

The Quiet American is a novel drawn from the personal experience of the author. Greene served as a correspondent for *The London Times* in French Indochina from 1951 to 1954. He observed the conflict in what would later become Vietnam firsthand and, despite being impressed by Ho Chi Minh and disgusted with the fact that the Catholic Church had withdrawn from the northern part of the country, clearly discerned the follies of those fighting on all sides: the Vietnamese themselves, whether warlords or communists, the French who were trying to maintain their colonial possession, or the Americans who were so confident that they knew how to solve the problems of the country better than anyone else. An actual encounter with an American aid worker

is believed to have suggested the basic story line to Greene, which he turned into a novel after his return from Southeast Asia. While the novel has a clear antiwar perspective, it also deals with deeper moral questions about human relationships and their meaning and whether the end ever justifies the means.

PLOT SUMMARY

PART ONE

Fowler, the narrator, has been waiting in his Saigon apartment for the arrival of his friend Pyle, who is two hours late for their meeting. He goes down into the street and meets a girl named Phuong, who used to be his mistress but is now keeping company with Pyle. They go up to the narrator's room and Phuong prepares an opium pipe for him, at the same time admitting that she has never been able to get Pyle to smoke one. When the narrator asks if Pyle loves her she doesn't answer, but insists that he is going to marry her. Suddenly a policeman knocks at the door and tells Fowler he and Phuong are wanted at the French office of the Sûreté. There an officer named Vigot questions them about Pyle, but Fowler can say little beyond his nationality, age, occupation and general character – he is “a quiet American,” unlike many of his countrymen. He then reminisces about his first meeting with Pyle at a Saigon café. Vigot then tells Fowler that Pyle is dead, his body discovered in the water under a bridge. After reciting his alibi, he tries to keep the truth from Phuong at least for the moment, but Vigot asks him to identify the body at the morgue. He finds that Pyle had a wound in his chest, but that his death had been caused by drowning in the mud. He stops on the way home to cable a report to his newspaper office. When he returns to his apartment he finds that it has been searched by the police, and he finally gets up enough courage to tell Phuong in French (she understands virtually no English) that Pyle has been assassinated. She then fills another opium pipe for him and spends the night in his bed.

Fowler then recalls his early acquaintance with Pyle; he was unlike other Americans, not brash or noisy, but quiet, serious, unassuming, and intensely interested in conditions in Vietnam. On the morning after his death, Fowler and Phuong don't speak of him, but Fowler asks if Phuong will be moving back into his apartment. She says she will, and the two head for Pyle's apartment to get her things. Fowler finds Vigot in Pyle's apartment and the two discuss the murder. Fowler quickly enumerates eight theories about who could have killed Pyle and why. Vigot isn't really interested in finding the murderer; he simply wants to be able to report that the death was an act of war and therefore outside his jurisdiction. Fowler gathers Phuong's few possessions along with one of Pyle's books and returns to his own flat.

Fowler then describes the night he first introduced Phuong to Pyle. They were in the Continental hotel and casino, patronized mostly by boorish Westerners. Pyle was profoundly embarrassed that his countrymen should behave so badly in front of Phuong; most of them clearly thought she was a prostitute. Fowler felt a sort of protective affection for him because of his naivety and invited him to join him and Phuong for the evening. As Phuong dances with Pyle, Fowler reminisces about his first meeting with her in a similar setting and the affair that began four months later. Soon Phuong's older sister Miss Hei joins them; she resents Fowler for sleeping with Phuong without a proposal of marriage. Pyle again dances with Phuong, but insists that they leave when bawdy female impersonators take the stage.

Next we find Fowler looking back to when he was in the besieged town of Phat Diem, observing the battle going on all around him from the bell tower of the cathedral. The entire population of the town is crowded into the cathedral precincts seeking safety from enemy artillery. The priest and nuns are serving as surgeon and nurses to the sick in the multitude. Fowler leaves the cathedral, finds some French and German soldiers, and asks to accompany them into battle. They reach a canal that is choked with corpses, and this makes Fowler think thoughts of mortality, concluding that he both longs for death and fears it. They cross the canal and soon come upon the bodies of a woman and child lying in a ditch. After getting word that the town would be attacked that night, they return to Phat Diem. Fowler sleeps in the soldiers' barracks, but in the middle of the night he is awakened by someone entering the room; much to his surprise, it is Pyle, who had bought a boat and rowed down the river alone, much to Fowler's consternation. When Fowler asks him why he undertook such a dangerous journey, Pyle confesses that he has fallen in love with Phuong and wanted to tell Fowler before approaching her because it was the honorable thing to do. He tells Fowler that he intends to ask Phuong to marry him. Fowler says he can't marry her himself because he has a wife at home who doesn't believe in divorce. He does, however, want to keep Phuong because he enjoys sleeping with her. Pyle assumes that he will win Phuong's love, but the whole situation seems bizarre as Fowler thinks back on it after Pyle's death while Phuong lies in his arms.

When Fowler gets back from Phat Diem three weeks later he finds that Pyle has already made his way home to Saigon. Pyle had left a note in Hanoi assuring Fowler that he wouldn't try to see Phuong until he got back; Fowler noted that Pyle was still blithely assuming that he would win Phuong. While in Hanoi, Fowler attends a press conference in which the French officials stonewall about how badly the war is going while being badgered by Granger and others. He also gets word that he has been promoted to foreign editor, which will necessitate his return to London.

PART TWO

After Fowler returns from Hanoi, Pyle invites himself to dinner. Rumors are spreading around Saigon that Pyle is engaged in some form of espionage, and Fowler tries to find out what he is importing and why, meanwhile trying to convince his editor that he needs to stay in Vietnam rather than returning to the supervisor's desk in London. Pyle arrives clearly intending to see Phuong, but she has left to be with her sister, so Fowler begins to question him about the plastic he is importing. He avoids the question, and the two engage in small talk until Phuong arrives; apparently her sister had not been home. Pyle then asks Fowler to translate for him while he speaks to Phuong, who understands little English. In the conversation that follows, Pyle expresses his love for Phuong and asks her to marry him. Needless to say, Phuong is astonished. Fowler then speaks to her about their relationship, telling her honestly that he cannot marry her because he has a wife at home. Pyle then tells her that he expects to inherit fifty thousand dollars when his father dies. He offers her security and respect and hopes that she will come to love him in time. After a heated exchange between Pyle and Fowler, Phuong rejects the former's offer of marriage. After Pyle leaves, Fowler writes another letter to London, this time to his wife, indicating that he is accepting the job as editor of the foreign desk and asking her for a divorce, admitting that he has fallen in love with a girl with whom he has been living for two years. He then tells Phuong about the letter, acknowledging that the chances of the divorce being granted are slim. She offers to go with him to London even if his wife refuses to divorce him, but her dreams of America and its marvels are becoming increasingly evident.

The next chapter begins with a description of the Caodaists, who practiced a syncretistic religion combining elements of Christianity, Buddhism, and Confucianism; their holy city was Tanyin, they had a pope and female cardinals, worshiped Christ and Buddha, and recognized Victor Hugo as a saint. They also had a ragtag army of twenty-five thousand men who fought on the French side when they felt like it. Above Tanyin stood a mountain on which General Thé hid out, an enemy to both the French and the Vietminh. Fowler goes to Tanyin to cover the Caodaist annual festival. Pyle is there too, trying to get his car started; he seems to turn up everywhere Fowler goes. After the festival ends, Fowler prepares to return to Saigon and offers Pyle a lift. On the way back the car runs out of gas; the Caodaists had siphoned the tank in Tanyin. They climb a watchtower near where the car stops and find two young Vietnamese soldiers there. They have no gasoline to sell, so Fowler and Pyle decide to spend the night in the tower. In the tower, the two speak of God and politics; Pyle is a liberal Unitarian and Fowler believes neither in God nor in political ideologies, but is simply an impartial observer – a reporter who refuses to take sides. Soon they hear a Vietminh attack between their watchtower and Saigon and see a tank patrol passing on the road below. They try to seep but are unable to do so, and they soon begin talking about Phuong. Their conversation is interrupted by a voice beneath the tower, speaking Vietnamese and demanding that the guards hand over their foreign visitors. Fowler and Pyle seize the guns from the guards and quickly climb down the ladder into the rice paddies, with Fowler twisting his ankle on the way down. No sooner do they reach the ground than a bazooka shell demolishes the watchtower. A piece of wood from the tower fractures Fowler's leg, but Pyle returns to drag him to safety. Fowler, unhappy with his life and wanting nothing more than to die in peace, shows Pyle no gratitude, but tells him he should have left him alone in the wreckage of the tower. The Vietminh soldiers finally leave, but set fire to Fowler's car on the way out. Pyle then pulls Fowler out of the rice paddy and goes off to find a French patrol. Fowler then passes out, but is revived by Pyle hours later, returning with the patrol and some badly-needed morphine.

After some time recovering in the hospital, Fowler returns to his apartment in Saigon. Phuong is there to greet him, and when he asks for the new she tells him her sister has gotten a job with the Americans. A letter from his wife had arrived while he was gone; not surprisingly, she refused to give him the divorce he had requested. He lies about his wife's decision, both to Phuong and to Pyle, in order to keep her close to him for a while longer.

Fowler has an assistant, Dominguez, who does a lot of his legwork and passes on intelligence from his Asian friends, who becomes ill. Fowler visits him almost daily to bounce ideas off of him. One day Dominguez sends him to visit a Chinese friend named Monsieur Chou who has a story in which Fowler might be interested. Chou lives in a junk-strewn flat with his extended family. He clearly is an opium addict, and soon his manager, Mr. Heng, arrives to speak for him. Heng takes Fowler down to the warehouse and shows him a drum and a mold with American markings. The drum contained plastics that were to be shaped in the mold, and Heng told Fowler that the plastics were supplied by Pyle for the use of General Thé. At this point Fowler still doesn't understand the purpose of the plastics or the mold, but Heng tells him that he might understand in time.

A few days later Pyle visits Fowler. He is angry because of the lying letter Fowler had sent; the lies were revealed by Phuong's sister, who knew Fowler had been called home. While they discuss their different visions of life with Phuong, she sits by perusing a book, seemingly unconcerned with their conversation.

PART THREE

Almost two weeks after Pyle's death, Fowler meets Vigot in a café and is told by the policeman that they had located Pyle's dog, which had also been killed by the murderers. The two men play dice as they talk, briefly banter about Pascal's Wager, then Vigot indicates that an examination of the dog's paws had revealed some interesting information that he wants to discuss with Fowler at his apartment.

Fowler then thinks back to the days before Pyle's death – his uncertainty about his relationship with Phuong, a bizarre incident of bicycle bombs going off all over Saigon (set by General Thé but blamed on the Communists), his journey to the auto repair shop where the bombs were made, and, worst of all, his return home to find that Phuong had taken her things and left. Charging into Pyle's office does no good since he isn't there at the time, but he blows off steam at Phuong's sister, whom he holds responsible for the loss of his lover. Fowler then returns north to see the war firsthand, including going out on a dive-bombing raid. The bomber made fifteen dives, and each time Fowler was convinced that his stomach would remain behind on the earth below. The pilot then takes him to an opium den to help him unwind after the ordeal. In his sorrow at the loss of Phuong, Fowler takes a prostitute to his room but is unable to consummate the union.

Fowler returns home, depressed because Phuong will no longer be there to meet him. He is surprised to find Pyle waiting in his apartment. He quickly checks his mail and finds a letter from his London office agreeing that he should remain in Vietnam for at least another year; sadly, the letter came too late to keep him from losing Phuong. Pyle informs him that he intends to take Phuong back to America, marry her, then leave her in the care of his family while he returns to Vietnam to complete his work. Fowler's longing for Phuong is so great that he decides to find a new apartment, but on the other hand he wonders whether Pyle might be able to give her a better life. He wants to hate Pyle but cannot bring himself to do so. As the latter leaves, Fowler warns him not to trust General Thé, who is nothing but a bandit who should not be mistaken for a harbinger of democracy at the head of some Third Force. Two weeks later Fowler visits a French planter who is leaving for home and wants to sell his apartment. Fowler finds the decor appalling and crosses the street to a small café. As he muses on his predicament, the place is shattered by a huge explosion. Fearing that Phuong is in her usual haunt in the milk bar across the street, he tries to reach her, but the police refuse to let him through. Pyle then appears, seemingly from nowhere, and assures him that Phuong is in no danger because he warned her not to come to the milk bar that morning. Fowler realizes, of course, that this implies that Pyle had prior knowledge of the explosion. Pyle grows ill at the carnage surrounding him; this is his first real direct experience with the consequences of war. The intention had been to detonate the bomb during a military parade with the hope of eliminating some prominent officers, but clearly General Thé didn't care whom he killed as long as it generated publicity. Pyle shakes his head as he leaves the scene, insistent that the general on whom the Americans had pinned their hopes could never do such a barbaric thing.

PART FOUR

One night after Pyle's death, Fowler sends Phuong to the movies while he waits for a visit from Vigot. The policeman has done his homework and has already discovered that Fowler has decided to stay in Vietnam rather than going back to England. Vigot still thinks that Fowler had something to do with Pyle's death. Fowler tells him that the real culprit is York Harding, a

diplomatic correspondent who, after a week-long visit to Vietnam, wrote about a Third Force that would be able to deliver the country from both the French and the Communists. Pyle, sadly, had taken the man seriously and tried to put his ideas into practice through General Thé, which got him killed. Vigot assures Fowler that he does not think he killed Pyle, though he accuses him of lying to him when he denied that he had seen Pyle the night of his death. Fowler insists that he has no one to say, though he did indeed see Pyle the night he died, and Vigot leaves with his case unsolved.

Fowler then recalls to himself what had happened the night of Pyle's death. After the massacre in the square engineered by General Thé, Fowler had gone to Mr. Heng and asked what could be done to stop the bloodshed. He knows that the police will do nothing, but Heng has an interest because his people are being blamed. Heng suggested that Fowler invite Pyle to dinner at a particular restaurant, telling him that his men would take matters from there and promising to treat him as gently as possible. Fowler reluctantly agreed and left a message for Pyle at the Legation. When Pyle arrived he told Fowler that he had met with General Thé and expressed his disapproval of the "demonstration." Fowler told him he should have cast off the old bandit, but Pyle continued to insist that he was the only hope for the country. He told Fowler that the American government would take care of the families of those who had been killed by the bomb, but that the matter would be forgotten in a few days. Fowler then invited him to dinner. As they continued making small talk while having a drink, Fowler considered whether he should warn Pyle of the danger awaiting him, but every time he tried to give Pyle an excuse for not coming to dinner the latter rejected it. Fowler then went to the restaurant and waited for Pyle, hoping that Heng and his men would not do what he feared they would do. As he waited, Granger came over and told him his son had been diagnosed with polio; Fowler offered to write his article for him, then left and went home. Pyle never appeared, so he went out to find Phuong.

After Vigot leaves, Phuong comes back from the movie theater and tells him about the film. Granger was there, drunk and boisterous, apparently because his son is out of danger. Meanwhile a telegram arrives announcing that Fowler's wife has decided to divorce him after all. Phuong is overjoyed because now she can marry her lover.

MAJOR CHARACTERS

- Thomas Fowler – The narrator, a cynical British foreign correspondent who insists that he will only report events but will never become personally involved in them.
- Alden Pyle – His friend, a "quiet American" who works for the Economic Aid Mission but is really a spy. He is found murdered at the beginning of the book - a murder carried out by the communists but facilitated by Fowler, who wants to stop the deaths of innocents caused by Pyle's political activities.
- Phuong – Fowler's former mistress who leaves him to live with Pyle, whom she hopes to marry, she returns to Fowler after Pyle's death.
- Miss Hei – Phuong's older sister, she resents Fowler for conducting an affair while refusing to propose marriage to the young beauty.

- Helen Fowler - Fowler's estranged wife, she refuses throughout the book to grant the divorce he wants but finally gives in at the end.
- Granger - A loud and obnoxious American journalist who is despised by Fowler, though Fowler takes his place on a dangerous assignment and later sympathizes with him when he finds that Granger's son is seriously ill.
- Vigot – An officer of the French Sûreté, he suspects Fowler's involvement in Pyle's death but is unable to prove anything.
- Mr. Heng - A Vietnamese Communist who arranges the murder of Pyle.
- General Thé – A Vietnamese general who opposes both the French and the Vietminh in hopes of taking over the country, Pyle views him and his revolutionaries as the Third Force that can bring peace to Vietnam.
- Dominguez – Fowler's assistant at the newspaper who gathers information for him and attends to various other minor tasks.
- York Harding - An American diplomatic correspondent who had written extensively on the political situation in Southeast Asia despite very limited experience there, his ideas shape Pyle's beliefs and the actions in which he engages in Vietnam.

NOTABLE QUOTATIONS

“He didn't even hear what I said; he was absorbed already in the dilemmas of democracy and the responsibilities of the West; he was determined – I learned that very soon – to do good, not to any individual person, but to a country, a continent, a world. Well, he was in his element now, with the whole universe to improve.” (Fowler, Part I, ch.1, p.13)

“It had been an article of my creed. The human condition being what it was, let them fight, let them love, let them murder, I would not be involved. My fellow journalists called themselves correspondents; I preferred the title of reporter. I wrote what I saw; I took no action – even an opinion is a kind of action.” (Fowler, Part I, ch.2, p.27)

“I envied those who could believe in God, and I distrusted them. I felt they were keeping their courage up with a fable of the changeless and the permanent.” (Fowler, Part I, ch.3, p.50)

“It's a strange poor population God has in his kingdom, frightened, cold, starving; you'd think a great king would do better than that. But then I thought, it's always the same wherever one goes – it's not the most powerful rulers who have the happiest populations.” (Fowler, Part I, ch.4, p.56)

“Perhaps that’s why men have invented a God – a being capable of understanding. Perhaps if I wanted to be understood or to understand I would bamboozle myself into belief, but I am a reporter; God exists only for leader-writers.” (Fowler, Part I, ch.4, p.73)

“A man becomes trustworthy when you trust him.” (Pyle, Part II, ch.2, p.107)

“I cannot be at ease (and to be at ease is my chief wish) if someone else is in pain, visibly or audibly or tactually. Sometimes this is mistaken by the innocent for unselfishness, when all I am doing is sacrificing a small good – in this case postponement in attending to my hurt – for the sake of a far greater good, a peace of mind, when I need think only of myself.” (Fowler, Part II, ch.2, p.147)

“What’s the good? He’ll always be innocent, you can’t blame the innocent, they are always guiltless. All you do is control them or eliminate them. Innocence is a kind of insanity.” (Fowler, Part III, ch.2, p.215-216)

“He gets hold of an idea and then alters every situation to fit the idea.” (Fowler, Part IV, ch.1, p.220)

“One has to take sides – if one is to remain human.” (Captain Trouin, Part IV, ch.2, p.230)

“I had judged like a journalist, in terms of quantity, and I had betrayed my own principles; I had become as engagé as Pyle, and it seemed to me that no decision would ever be simple again.” (Fowler, Part IV, ch.2, p.242)

“Everything had gone right with me since he died, but how I wished there existed someone to whom I could say that I was sorry.” (Fowler, Part IV, ch.3, p.249)

ESSAY QUESTIONS

Discuss the following in a five-paragraph essay:

1. When Graham Greene’s *The Quiet American* was first published in the United States in 1956, it was panned by critics and the public because it was perceived as anti-American. Do you agree with this assessment? Why or why not? Support your conclusion with specifics from the novel.
2. Graham Greene’s *The Quiet American* has often been considered an antiwar novel, but it can also be viewed as a critique of European colonialism. Which theme do you think is more central to the purpose of the author? Why do you think so? Support your decision with specifics from the novel.
3. Compare and contrast Graham Greene’s *The Quiet American* and Joseph Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness* as critiques of European colonialism. Which do you think is the more effective critique? Why? Support your arguments with details from both novels.

4. Compare and contrast Graham Greene's *The Quiet American* and Joseph Conrad's *Lord Jim* as critiques of European colonialism. Which do you think is the more effective critique? Why? Support your arguments with details from both novels.
5. Compare and contrast Graham Greene's *The Quiet American* and Alan Paton's *Cry, the Beloved Country* as critiques of European colonialism. Which do you think is the more effective critique? Why? Support your arguments with details from both novels.
6. Compare and contrast Graham Greene's *The Quiet American* and Rudyard Kipling's *The Man Who Would Be King* as critiques of European colonialism. Which do you think is the more effective critique? Why? Support your arguments with details from both novels.
7. Thomas Fowler, the protagonist of Graham Greene's *The Quiet American* is a journalist who prefers to refer to himself as a reporter, emphasizing the distance he prefers to place between himself and the events about which he writes. How successful is Fowler at maintaining this aesthetic distance? To what extent does the novel argue that such isolation from one's surroundings is both unhealthy and impossible? Use specifics from the novel to support your arguments.
8. The main characters in Graham Greene's *The Quiet American* are exceedingly complex and are difficult to characterize in clear moral categories. Choose one of the three main characters and evaluate him or her from a moral perspective, being sure to incorporate biblical principles in your assessment.
9. Some critics have suggested that the three main characters in Graham Greene's *The Quiet American* can be seen as metaphors for the nations from which they come, with Fowler personifying Britain, Pyle standing for the United States, and Phuong for Vietnam. Evaluate this interpretation of the novel. In what ways does it communicate truth about Greene's message and in what ways does it fall short?
10. Many critics have suggested that the three main characters in Graham Greene's *The Quiet American* serve as symbols of the nations from which they come, but Greene is too skillful a novelist to present them as mere allegorical figures. They also come across as real people with individual personalities and struggles. Choose one of the three main characters and demonstrate how that character comes across as a living, breathing individual rather than as a mere stereotype.
11. If Alden Pyle is intended to represent the United States in Graham Greene's *The Quiet American*, to what extent is the representation an accurate one? Write an essay describing ways in which Pyle portrays genuine aspects of American character and attitudes and ways in which he is a mere caricature so often presented by European critics.
12. In Graham Greene's *The Quiet American*, Captain Trouin says to Fowler, "War and Love – they have always been compared." To what extent is the novel based on this comparison? What do war and love have in common, and how does Greene bring out these connections in his story? Be sure to support your arguments with details from the novel.

13. Discuss the view of innocence portrayed in Graham Greene's *The Quiet American*. Does the author view innocence as something positive or something harmful, or both? Support your arguments with quotations and specific incidents from the book.
14. What is the significance of the title of Graham Greene's *The Quiet American*? How does this description of Pyle incorporate major themes of the novel? Is it intended to be serious, ironic, or both? Support your conclusions with details from the novel.
15. In Graham Greene's *The Quiet American*, evaluate the motives of Fowler in betraying Pyle to the Communists. Which motive was the strongest, preventing more deaths or regaining Phuong? Was either motive justifiable? Why or why not?
16. In Graham Greene's *The Quiet American*, the narrator moves backward and forward through time in a way that is often hard to follow. Why do you think Greene does this? What advantages may be obtained from treating the element of time in this way? Be sure to use specific examples to support your arguments.
17. To what extent is the critique of Western interventionism in Graham Greene's *The Quiet American* prophetic of problems later encountered by the United States in the Vietnam War? Be sure to use quotations from the novel to support your argument.
18. The theme of guilt plays a significant role in Graham Greene's *The Quiet American*, both in Fowler's deep sense of guilt over his actions and Pyle's lack of guilt over his. Analyze the author's treatment of this theme. What are the consequences of someone like Pyle being totally devoid of a sense of guilt? Will Fowler ever be able to find redemption or forgive himself for what he has done?
19. Evaluate the ideas about love professed or demonstrated by the three central characters in Graham Greene's *The Quiet American* from a biblical perspective. What aspects of their thinking and behavior cause each of the main characters to fall short of Christian love? Be sure to cite specific examples and use quotations from the novel and the Bible to support your arguments.
20. Discuss the extent to which Fowler is a reliable narrator in Graham Greene's *The Quiet American*. Why do you think the author chooses him rather than another character to narrate the story? Does his evaluation of the other characters tell the reader more about them or more about himself? Why do you think so?
21. Discuss the extent to which Fowler changes in the course of Graham Greene's *The Quiet American*. What indications of change do we see as the narrative progresses? Be sure to consider the flashbacks and what they indicate about these changes.

22. In Graham Greene's *The Quiet American*, after the terrorist bombing in Saigon, Pyle says of the dead, "They were only war casualties . . . Anyway, they died in the right cause." Can the deaths of innocents be justified by "the right cause"? Why or why not? Apply your conclusions both to those killed by the bomb because of Pyle's actions and death of Pyle as facilitated by Fowler. Support your arguments from the novel and from Scripture.
23. In Graham Greene's *The Quiet American*, Fowler fears the innocent. He speaks of Pyle with lines like "Innocence is like a dumb leper who has lost his bell, wandering the world, meaning no harm," and "What's the good? He'll always be innocent, you can't blame the innocent, they are always guiltless. All you do is control them or eliminate them. Innocence is a kind of insanity." Choose incidents from the novel that support Fowler's analysis and describe how they illustrate the dangers of innocence in a complicated world.
24. Graham Greene's novels usually contain a priest of some kind through whom the author communicates his moral and religious views and the dilemmas associated with them, but *The Quiet American* contains no religious figure at all. In fact, most of the characters claim to be atheists, though they often wish they could believe in what they consider to be convenient fables. How does the author then incorporate spiritual truth into the novel? Cite specific passages to support your argument and evaluate from Scripture the accuracy of his religious observations.
25. In Graham Greene's *The Quiet American*, Fowler and Pyle have very different ideas about love. Describe their views, citing specific quotations, and evaluate the extent to which they really live by the words they speak on the subject.
26. In Part IV, chapter two of Graham Greene's *The Quiet American*, Captain Trouin says to Fowler, "One has to take sides - if one is to remain human." By the end of the novel Fowler has set aside his neutral stance to take a side in the conflict swirling around him. In your opinion, does this choice lead to his redemption or his destruction? Support your conclusion with specifics from the novel.
27. In Graham Greene's *The Quiet American*, Pyle's views are shaped by the writings of American diplomat York Harding, for whom Fowler has no respect whatsoever. How would you summarize the essence of Harding's ideas, and how do they shape Pyle's actions and his ultimate fate?
28. In Graham Greene's *The Quiet American*, do you consider Pyle's attempts to bring democracy to the people of Vietnam wise or foolish? Why? Support your argument with specifics from the novel, incorporating insights from the later history of the region as appropriate.

29. A famous poem by John Donne contains the words, “No man is an island entire of itself; every man is a piece of the continent, a part of the main . . . any man’s death diminishes me, because I am involved in mankind. And therefore never send to know for whom the bell tolls; it tolls for thee.” Would Fowler, the narrator of Graham Greene’s *The Quiet American*, agree with Donne’s sentiments? Why or why not? Support your conclusions with specifics from the novel.
30. To what extent does the reality of sin inform the political discussions in Graham Greene’s *The Quiet American*? What dangers are posed by those who naively think they have no sin? How will their policies differ from those who openly acknowledge their sins as well as the sins of others? What implications do these issues have for the possibility of solving the complex problems of places like Southeast Asia or the Middle East?
31. Critic Zadie Smith, describing the work of Graham Greene, argues that “there is no real way to be good in Greene, there are simply a million ways to be more or less bad.” To what extent is this an accurate assessment of the moral universe created by Greene in *The Quiet American*? Does the book contain any “good” characters? Do you find this disturbing or satisfyingly realistic? To what extent is it biblical?
32. In Graham Greene’s *The Quiet American*, the author clearly sympathizes with the Communists against European colonialists and American busybodies. What does Greene like about the Communists? To what extent does his view of them share the naivety for which he so openly criticizes the Americans?
33. In Part I, chapter three of Graham Greene’s *The Quiet American*, Fowler speaks of his attitude toward religion when he says, “I envied those who could believe in God, and I distrusted them. I felt they were keeping their courage up with a fable of the changeless and the permanent.” What in Fowler’s experience would have led him to be suspicious of anyone who believed that anything could be changeless or permanent? Are these sentiments with which the author agreed? Why or why not? Support your conclusions with specifics from the novel.
34. In Part IV, chapter one of Graham Greene’s *The Quiet American*, Fowler describes Pyle as a man who “gets hold of an idea and then alters every situation to fit the idea.” How is this true of Pyle? Does Fowler rightly view such a way of thinking as dangerous, or does the assessment of such an approach depend on the nature of the idea in question?
35. In the last sentence of Graham Greene’s *The Quiet American*, Fowler says, “Everything had gone right with me since he died, but how I wished there existed someone to whom I could say that I was sorry.” What does he mean by this? Discuss the roles played by guilt and contrition in the novel, and evaluate the author’s treatment of those ideas from the standpoint of Scripture.