

*Quote for the day:* “I fully realize that an endless number of morons, who never become aware of their own feelings, will barely grasp the philosophical system that I am establishing—but who cares about those imbeciles!? It’s not they I’m speaking to” (p. 155).

1. Explain: “the corruption of virtuous young virgins had been a staple of [European] pornography since the Renaissance” (p. vii).
2. If you understand this work—and, indeed, the entirety of the Marquis de Sade’s writings—as parodic, satirical, and ironic (like *The Onion*), does that make it any different for you as a reader?
3. What was the Marquis de Sade’s family like (pp. viii-x)? Do you think this libertinage was the norm rather than the exception among the 1st and 2nd Estates in France on the eve of the Revolution? Were the aristocracy and the clergy actually that bad?
4. Explain: “don’t only think eighteenth century if you want to understand Sade, think also tenth century” (p. x).
5. What did the Marquis de Sade do in prison, especially in the Bastille—he was one of the five prisoners liberated on Bastille Day, famously (p. xi-xii)?
6. Explain: “the author meant it to be a parody of revolutionary principles... the most perverse aspect of *Philosophy in the Boudoir*, in fact, may well be Sade’s vicious subversion of Rousseau... Sade sees all governments as evil because they thwart and curb humankind’s innate cruelty” (p. xiv).
7. Explain: “one of the most maddening and modernist aspects of Sade’s writing is that he has programmed himself to foil most methods of decoding and typification” (p. xvi).
8. What, if we are to take the Marquis de Sade’s stated goal in this text to be serious, does he actually want to teach young ladies? Would this not then be one of the most radical feminist texts ever written—even more radical than Olympe de Gouges?
9. Explain: “you girls who have been tied down too long by the absurd and dangerous bonds of an imaginary virtue and a disgusting religion: imitate ardent Eugénie. Destroy, trample, as swiftly as she, all the ridiculous precepts inculcated by moronic parents” (p. 1).
10. Did you think before, even for a second, that pornography only exists in the present-day world of post-sexual revolution global industrial capitalism? Why would anyone be surprised by something like this being written about 225 years ago, when pornography has been a staple of human consumption since humans began using media?
11. Do you suspect that you learned more about sexuality from reading a few short selections from the Marquis de Sade for today’s class than you ever formally learned about sexuality in K-12? Why not assign this book to high school students across the US as an educational ‘classic’ (which it absolutely is)?
12. Why do libertines, according to the Marquis de Sade, always prefer anal sex (pp. 15-17)?
13. Explain: “a pretty girl should concentrate only on fucking, and never on bearing children. We will skip everything connected with the lowbrow mechanism of reproduction, and we will chiefly and uniquely align ourselves with the libertine delights, whose spirit never cares about breeding” (p. 16).
14. What are the revolutionary gender implications of this statement: “it is to pleasure alone that a girl must sacrifice everything, and nothing shall be as sacred to her eyes as [her own] pleasure” (p. 19).
15. Explain: “they are happy and respectful creatures who are always ready to submit, either for their temperament or for their profit. They are happy and respectful creatures who are stigmatized by public opinion but crowned by pleasure. More crucial to society than any prudes, they have the courage to serve it and to sacrifice the good reputation that society dares to deprive them of unjustly. Hurray for the women who feel honored by that title! They are truly lovable, the only real philosophers of the Enlightenment!” (pp. 22-23).

16. Explain: "there is no action, however bizarre you may picture it, that is truly criminal; or one that can really be called virtuous. Everything depends on our customs and on the climates we live in. What is considered a crime here is often a virtue a few hundred leagues away; and the virtues of another hemisphere might, quite conversely, be regarded as crimes among us. There is no atrocity that hasn't been deified, no virtue that hasn't been stigmatized. Because of these purely geographical differences, we pay little heed to men's esteem or contempt" (p. 31).
17. Explain: "it is precisely in a century when the rights of man have been so carefully widened and deepened that girls must stop believing themselves to be the slaves of their families" (p. 32).
18. Explain: "is there anything more ludicrous than the sight of a fifteen- or sixteen-year-old girl, blazing with desires that she is obliged to squelch, and waiting—in worse than hellish torments—to please her parents?" (pp. 32-33).
19. Explain: "as soon as a girl attains the age of reason [puberty], she should leave her paternal home after receiving a governmental education. She must then, at fifteen, be her own mistress and become whatever she wishes" (p. 33).
20. Explain: "let's hope that people will open their eyes and that, in achieving the freedom of all individuals, they won't forget the fate of unhappy girls. But if girls, lamentably, are forgotten, then they themselves should surpass habit and prejudice and boldly trample the shameful chains that hold them down" (p. 33).
21. Explain: "fuck, Eugénie, fuck away, my dear angel! Your body belongs to you, to you alone. You are the only person in the world who has the right to enjoy your body and to let anyone you wish enjoy it" (p. 35).
22. Were you surprised to discover that the Marquis de Sade was such a truly radical and revolutionary feminist in 1795? Why or why not?
23. Explain: "of all the chains to break, the one I would shatter first is certainly marriage... those absurd laws are the handiwork of men, and we must not submit to them!" (p. 36).
24. Explain: "she fucks in any case, my darling, for we are born to fuck; and, when fucking, we are following the laws of nature, and every human law that flouts natural laws merely deserves our contempt" (p. 40).
25. Explain: "no desire can be termed outlandish, my dear; all desires can be found in nature. When nature created human beings, it delighted in differentiating their sexual leaning as much as their faces; and we should no more be astonished by the diversity of our features than by the diversity that nature has placed in our affections" (p. 41).
26. Did you notice the sheer amount of knowledge that the Marquis de Sade, as an educated aristocrat, has of birth control and abortion in 1795 (pp. 42-43 and 46)? You do realize that people of elite social status, in every historical society of which we have record, have always had similar knowledge—and that people of lower social status, with rare exceptions like midwives, never did? Comment.
27. Explain: "it is truly alluring to thumb one's nose at reproduction and to thwart what morons call the laws of nature" (p. 43).
28. Where does the Marquis de Sade fall on the essentialist/social constructionist spectrum of viewing sexuality in this statement—"fucking a woman's ass is a halfway measure; nature wants a man to carry out this fantasy in another man" (p. 44)?
29. Explain: "the history of mores of all the nations in the world will show you the universality of this custom and convince you that it is pure nonsense to regard this utterly indifferent action as wicked" (p. 62).
30. Explain: "*the fear of monotony prevents us from repeating the expressions that are all alike in such instants*" (p. 83).
31. How does De Sade explain Sodom and Gomorrah historically (p. 84)?
32. Explain: "all men resemble each other, as do all women. There is absolutely no love that resists the effects of sound reflection" (p. 94).
33. Explain: "you must aim at fucking, at multiplying and frequently changing your fuckers—above all, at fighting anybody who tries to capture you" (p. 95).
34. How satisfying is it to see the sexual double standard thrown back with contempt in the face of patriarchy?