**“The Bet” by Anton Chekhov**

**Set 1:**

1. Explain the conflict presented in this story.
2. Answer the Banker's question: "Which executioner is the more humane, he who kills you in a few minutes or he who drags the life out of you in the course of many years?
3. Do you agree with the lawyer that "To live anyhow is better than not at all?"
4. Why do you think the lawyer takes the bet? What do you think this says about this life?
5. What is one of the themes of this narrative? Give evidence to support your claim.
6. Why does the narrator call the lawyer an "unhappy man"? Do you think the lawyer is unhappy? Why or why not?
7. In your opinion, who won and who lost the bet? Explain your reasoning.

**Set 2:**

1. Why, after reading the classics for three years, does the lawyer act the way he does (angrily talking to himself, not reading books, throwing his writing away, crying)?
2. When the lawyer speaks of the "unearthly happiness" he feels what does he mean?
3. Why does the banker fear being pitied by the lawyer?
4. A paragraph in the second half of the story begins, "It was dark and cold in the garden. Rain was falling. A damp cutting wind was racing about the garden, howling and giving the trees no rest." How does this language and atmosphere relate to what is going on in the story?
5. Why does the lawyer write that he despises "freedom and life and health, and all that in your books is called the good things of the world"?
6. “The banker sat down. He put his head in his hands and thought for a few minutes.’ Is this direct or indirect characterization?
7. In your opinion, who won and who lost the bet? Explain your reasoning.

**Set 3:**

1. The lawyer writes that he has experienced all kinds of things in books: love, hunting, mountain climbing, storms, miracles, religions, wars, etc. Is reading about something the same as experiencing it? Which is better and why?
2. Is the lawyer proud? If so, is he too proud?
3. The lawyer marvels at those who "exchange heaven for earth"? What does he mean by this?
4. The lawyer once saw the two millions as "paradise," but now he despises the money. Why?
5. What point of view does the narrator use in this story?
6. Discuss the irony found in this story.
7. In your opinion, who won and who lost the bet? Explain your reasoning.

**Set 4:**

1. Wouldn't it have been better to take the money? Why, why not, or present both sides.
2. Why does the banker have contempt for himself after reading the lawyer's letter?
3. What is the theme of this story? Explain
4. Chart the lawyer’s development throughout the text.
5. Chart the banker’s development throughout the text.
6. ‘For the first year of his stay, the lawyer seemed lonely.’ Is this direct or indirect characterization?
7. In your opinion, who won and who lost the bet? Explain your reasoning.