Name\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ #6

*Read and annotate the text*

On the lawn, he stood sucking in a great lungful of the wet morning air, his face turned away

from the house he hated. But he hated the other houses around there too, and he hated the

pavement and the sidewalks and the lawns and everything that was on Cimarron Street.

It kept building up. And suddenly he knew he had to get out of there. Cloudy day or not, he

had to get out of there.

He locked the front door, unlocked the garage, and dragged up the thick door on its overhead

hinges. He didn’t bother putting down the door. I’ll be back soon, he thought. I’ll just go away

for a while.

…

Things rank and gross in nature possess it merely, he thought as he walked slowly across the

cemetery lawn.

The grass was so high that the weight of it had bent it over and it crunched under his heavy

shoes as he walked. There was no sound but that of his shoes and the now senseless singing of

birds. Once I thought they sang because everything was right with the world, Robert Neville

thought, I know now I was wrong. They sing because they’re feeble-minded.

He had raced six miles, the gas pedal pressed to the floor, before he’d realized where he was

going. It was strange the way his mind and body had kept it secret from his consciousness.

Consciously, he’d known only that he was sick and depressed and had to get away from the

house. He didn’t know he was going to visit Virginia.

But he’d driven there directly and as fast as he could. He’d parked at the curb and entered

through the rusted gate, and now his shoes were pressing and crackling through the thick grass.

How long had it been since he’d come here? It must have been at least a month. He wished

he’d brought flowers, but then, he hadn’t realized he was coming here until he was almost at the

gate.

His lips pressed together as an old sorrow held him again. Why couldn’t he have Kathy there

too? Why had he followed so blindly, listening to those fools who set up their stupid regulations

during the plague? If only she could be there, lying across from her mother.

Don’t start that again, he ordered himself.

Drawing closer to the crypt, he stiffened as he noticed that the iron door was slightly ajar. Oh,

no, he thought. He broke into a run across the wet grass. If they’ve been at her, I’ll burn down

the city, he vowed. I swear to God, I’ll burn it to the ground if they’ve touched her.

He flung open the door and it clanged against the marble wall with a hollow, echoing sound.

His eyes moved quickly to the marble base on which the sealed casket rested.

The tension sank; he drew in breath again. It was still there, untouched.

Then, as he started in, he saw the man lying in one corner of the crypt, body curled upon the

cold floor.

With a grunt of rage, Robert Neville rushed at the body, and, grabbing the man’s coat in taut

fingers, he dragged him across the floor and flung him violently out onto the grass. The body

rolled onto its back, the white face pointing at the sky.

Robert Neville went back into the crypt, chest rising and falling with harsh movements. Then

he closed his eyes and stood with his palms resting on the cover of the casket.

I’m here, he thought. I’m back. Remember me.

He threw out the flowers he’d brought the time before and cleared away the few leaves that

had blown in because the door had been opened.

Then he sat down beside the casket and rested his forehead against its cold metal side.

Silence held him in its cold and gentle hands.

If I could die now, be thought; peacefully, gently, without a tremor or a crying out, if I could

be with her. If I could believe I would be with her.

His fingers tightened slowly and his head sank forward on his chest.

Virginia. Take me where you are.

A tear, crystal, fell across his motionless hand...

1. Who do you think Virginia is? Why is she buried in the crypt and not the burning pit?

2. “If I could die now…if I could be with her…” In your opinion, why does Robert Neville stay alive? What is keeping him from joining Virginia?