

## Questions for Chapters 61-70

1. Shu-t'ung's theft of money and goods as he escapes from the household (in Ch. 64) is the first time a servant has done something quite this brazen, and with no apparent consequences. How does this reflect the chaotic state of household management during the funeral services for P'ing-erh?
2. The death of P'ing-erh is immediately preceded by Hsi-men's steamy visit with Wang Liu-erh, and is soon followed by his fling with the wetnurse Ju-i. Do these appear to vitiate his seemingly heartfelt grief, or simply show how intemperate he is in all things, whether sacred or sensual?
3. The sumptuous entertainment of the Defender-in-Chief Huang Ching-ch'en comes just as the splendor of Ping-erh's funeral procession reaches its height, as do the references to the immense cost and labor of the Mt. Ken Imperial Park. Why do you think these are all juxtaposed so closely?
4. Is Tai-an's assessment of the character of the various wives—P'ing-erh, Chin-lien, Yueh-niang, in particular—reasonably accurate? Should we trust him, given his demonstrated partiality?
5. How does Hsi-men Ch'ing's seduction of Lady Lin—or rather of him, by her—echo the way he began his affair with P'ing-erh over fifty chapters earlier (e.g., having him “look after” a wayward son or husband, respectively)?
6. By this point in the novel, is it clearer than ever that things are going to end badly for the family? What hints do you see that the end is nigh, for Hsi-men Ch'ing as well as his wives and the family compound?