Study Questions for January 26-28

1. For Randolph Bourne, what is “youth”? How does one retain it? How does one lose or squander it?

2. For Bourne, what is the difference between “conservative youth” and “radical youth”? What causes young people to become conservative? How can they stay radical?

3. Why is enduring the struggles of life important in retaining youth?

4. Why does Bourne believe planning one’s life is wrong?

5. Why does Bourne dismiss the value of “experience”?

6. What does Bourne mean when he says, “Our ideas are always a generation behind our actual social conditions”? Why does this happen?

7. Bourne believed that “youth” was not exclusively a function of age; it was therefore possible to live in a state of “perpetual youth.” According to Bourne, how might one achieve “perpetual youth”?

8. Bourne acknowledges the young don’t accomplish much. Why is this the case?

9. Why does Addams believe that “organizing work and failing to organize play” is a “stupid experiment” that has “brought about a fine revenge?” Why should play be “organized”?

10. According to Addams, why, in the modern city, has youth’s natural urge to “seek pleasure” led to the pursuit and spread of vice?

11. Why does Addams see the prevalence of urban commercial amusements as a social problem?

12. What distinguished the new dance halls from the old dances “on the village green”? Why does Addams prefer the old setting?

13. Why does Addams dislike modern music?

14. Why does Addams believe reformers focusing on improving recreation should “take a page from the philosophy of the Greeks”?

15. Do you see any similarities between Addams’ views on youth and Randolph Bourne’s?

16. Palladino’s introduction to her book Teenagers presents a very different picture of youth. How does her description and emphasis differ from Bourne’s and Addams’?
17. How has mass marketing and commercialism affected the way we think about and discuss youth in our contemporary culture? What would Jane Addams have to say if she saw the sophisticated marketing techniques targeted at today’s young people?

18. Bourne and Palladino would both argue that youth is important in society. How would their arguments for why it is important differ?

19. Why does Romero say we are a “nation of siblings”?

20. Have today’s adults achieved “perpetual youth” in the way that Bourne hoped people would? Is it a good thing that adults don’t want to “grow up”?

21. What ironies does Males’ article address? Why do adults seem so preoccupied with lamenting the deplorable state of “kids today”?