

### Questions on “The Gernsback Continuum” by William Gibson:

1. What exactly is Merv Kihn’s explanation for what happens to the narrator in Bolinas? How might the rest of the story either validate or complicate his explanation?
2. Why and how might it matter that the story begins in England, but takes place mainly in the American West? that the conversation with which the story ends takes place on Castro Street in San Francisco?
3. In addition to making evocative use of setting, what might “The Gernsback Continuum” have to say about setting or about the worlds created in and by fiction (among other things)?
4. “Gernsback Continuum” tells the story of Parker, a photographer who sees an imagined future that never was. Since this story is about an alternative future, why does Gibson have the narrator start out by framing the story as a remembrance before moving into the present tense? What is Gibson suggesting about time and perception?
5. The people from this alternative future are presented as very Aryan. Parker describes them as white, blond, and blue-eyed: just after this description he asserts this alternative future Tuscon, Arizona, “had all the sinister fruitlessness of Hitler Youth propaganda.” What is Gibson suggesting about the future imagined in the 1930’s? Consider also his discussion with the non-white proprietor of the newsstand at the end of the story.
6. In his interview with Maximus Clarke, Gibson speaks about “the speculative novels of last Wednesday.” Through close reading of both the interview and “Gernsback Continuum,” apply this concept to the story.