UNIT EIGHT

Questions for discussion:

What is the social position of Eugène de Rastignac, the central figure of Balzac's *Père Goriot*. He want "a career". What does he mean by "a career"? He desires "success". What does he mean by "success". If Eugène is the central figure, why is the book called *Père Goriot*? Has it, perhaps, been misnamed? What is the source of the social power of Mme de Beauséant, Eugène's benefactress, that all the women of Paris are desperate to appear at one of her parties? What sort of a character is Vautrin? At one point, Eugène's thoughts divide up the alternatives before him, "Obedience, struggle, and revolt; the family, society, and Vautrin." What does this tripartite division mean and why is one of the choices, "revolt" identified with a person, whereas the other two are identified with social institutions? What are the issues related to "the problem of the mandarin" that Eugène discusses with Bianchon and how does the problem arise in this story? What is Eugène's position at the end of the story? Is he redeemed or has he committed himself to the values that he despises?

What, after all, *is* Ripley's game? What does he mean when he tells Reeves that the game is over or tells Jonathan that helping him was part of the game? Why does Ripley involve Jonathan in Reeves's murderous schemes (even paying half the costs)? And why does he help Jonathan by helping him kill three people on the train? He gives reasons; are they illuminating? Ripley says (to his mistress, who passes in town as his wife) that he is no assassin. Is he? After Jonathan has dispatched his first victim, Ripley asks him to frame a set of prints depicting insects, and we witness Jonathan's increasingly positive response. What is Ripley up to here and what is the point of Jonathan's response? How would you characterize the bond that develops between the two men? The last thing that Ripley sees, we see as well–Jonathan's dying face; and then we (not Ripley) see something more, namely Ripley's face, the last shot in the movie. What does the sequence signify?