Discussion Questions

For each question, make sure that you are able to refer to specific details from the story to support your answer.
1. From their descriptions on the first page of the story, what assumptions can you make about Jack and the bride?
2. How do the staff and other passengers react to and interact with Jack and his bride? Give at least 3 examples.
3. Why is Jack Potter nervous?
4. Why is Potter described as a “traitor to the feelings of Yellow Sky”?
5. What seems unusual/odd about Scratchy when he is first described in the beginning of Part III?
6. Discuss the significance (as it relates to Realism) of Scratchy being described as “about the last one of the old gang that used to hang out along the river here” and “a simple child of the earlier plains”.
7. Explain what is meant by the bride being described as “a slave to hideous rites gazing at the apparitional snake”.
8. What is the significance associated with the bride never being referred to by her name? What symbolic role might she play in the story?
9. How is this story a parody (something making fun) of the American West (think about what we think the “Old West” is like)?
10. Pay attention to and think about the following things:
   a. Water/boat imagery
   b. Indications of progress/change in the town
   c. Loss of the “way things used to be”
   d. “New” vs. “old” Jack Potter
   e. Significance of the color yellow/colors in general

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The Pullman Car:
The Pullman Car was included as part of President Lincoln’s funeral train in May 1865, both Pullman and his car received national publicity and soon became famous for luxury train travel. In 1867, at the age of 36, Pullman established the Chicago-based Pullman Palace Car Company. The luxuries of a Pullman Palace Car included freshly prepared gourmet meals, dining cars, chandeliers, electric lighting, table lamps with silk shades, leather seating, and advanced heating and air conditioning systems. As the railway network and cross-country travel increased, the desire of passengers to travel in one of these luxury cars grew too, just as Pullman had predicted.


Jack Potter:
In "The Bride Comes to Yellow Sky," Crane relies on America’s growing awareness of a commonly shared popular culture. Readers would have recognized the historic and literary context of the first and last names of the Texas marshal, "Jack Potter." Both names had a longstanding connection with Texas in fact and fiction. Reuben Marmaduke Potter, a key figure during the Texas Revolution and the Mexican War, immortalized San Antonio and the Battle of the Alamo in his famous "Hymn of the Alamo." Similarly, Potter County in the Texas Panhandle is named after Robert Potter, an important political figure who signed the Texas Declaration of Independence. Among the most colorful figures was Andrew Jackson Potter, whose exploits included working as a trail-herd driver, prospecting for gold, and serving as a Methodist minister and circuit rider. Along with his son Jack Potter, he laid out the Potter-Blocker Trail, a version of the Western Trail, in northeastern Texas. In 1888 Archibald Clavering Gunter combined the exploits of various Potters from Texas in his enormously best-selling novel Mr. Potter of Texas, a romantic adventure about a Mr. Sampson Potter, the stereotypical rugged frontiersman with the clichéd heart of gold, who had been a ranger, Congressman, cattleman, and sheriff[. . .]. There were other dramas like the enormously popular The Scouts of the Prairie--first staged in 1872 by Buffalo Bill, Ned Buntline, and John B. Omohundro, better known as “Texas Jack”--as well as Buffalo Bill's Wild West, which began touring in 1883 and which included Texas Jack in the cast. In addition to his stage appearances, Texas Jack was fictionalized as a hero in dime novels such as Prentiss Ingraham’s Texas Jack, the Mustang King (1882) and Arizona Joe, Boy Pard of Texas Jack (1887).