*White Noise* – The Airborne Toxic Event

1. Discuss what Jack means when he says, “It won’t come this way,” and where have you seen this approach to a dramatic situation before in the story?
2. Explain why the broadcaster continues to have an ever-changing vocabulary regarding the “feathery plume” and the entire situation as a whole.
3. “That’s a little more accurate, which means they’re coming to grips with the thing. Good,” is Jack’s reaction to the “black billowing cloud.” Why do you think it took this description of the event for him to have a reaction?
4. Jack’s identity crisis. “I’m not just a college professor. I’m the head of a department. I don’t see myself fleeing an airborne toxic event. That’s for people who live in mobile homes out in the scrubby parts of the country, where all the fish hatcheries are.” How does this statement contradict how Jack first introduces himself? *Hint: Think of his discussions on his own socioeconomic standing.*
5. The use of language and linguistic control dominate a massive portion of Part II *The Airborne Toxic Event*. Provide an example of where you notice either Jack or Babette’s absolute control of language (Think of the scene in the station wagon while the family is driving to the Red Cross camp.)
6. Explain the irony of Jack’s encounter with the SIMUVAC technician.
7. Adding to the irony of *The Airborne Toxic Event*, what is ironic about how Jack is feeling and acting while driving a second time compared to his reaction to the “feathery plume” at the beginning of Part II.
8. Social commentary. “Don’t we deserve some attention for our suffering, our human worry, our terror? Isn’t fear news?” Analyze this comment and related it to current events.