“The Cactus” Analysis Questions:

1. This story is written during a time period in which courtship was not always easily navigated—people, in other words (especially women), did not always speak their minds plainly about how they felt but rather insinuated it. In what ways is verbal or written language, or lack thereof, responsible for the main character’s situation? Could this outcome have been avoided?
2. Give an example of foreshadowing in the story. Use direct quote from the text and explain how we know it is foreshadowing.
3. What elements of realism do we see in this story? Explain/ give textual evidence.
4. Find a literary device in “The Cactus” and explain how it enhances the text. (saying “it creates a picture in my mind” or something similar is not an acceptable answer)
5. What viewpoint is used in this short story and do you think it was the best choice? Why/why not?
6. How would you describe Trysdale’s character? For example, is he egotistical, or is this just a coverup? Give details from the text and explain fully.
7. What do you think will be Trysdale’s reaction in the end? Why? Explain your prediction based on evidence from the text.
8. What is the significance of the cactus as a symbol? What might it symbolize?
9. Compare Trysdale to his friend. What do their similarities or differences tell us about them? Why are they significant?
10. Why do you think Trysdale would lie about speaking Spanish? What does this say about his character?
11. What is the most prominent theme in the story? Give at least one piece of evidence that highlights that theme for the reader.
12. Explain how the first paragraph functions for the entire piece--what is highlighted in the introduction, in other words, that carries through the rest of the piece? Explain fully.
13. Explore how the woman is described throughout the story. How would you describe her and why? How does she highlight ideals of womanhood in the 1800’s-- docile, submissive, humble, patient, passive?
14. Most of this story is a flashback. Do you think that this chosen structure creates an effective story? Why/why not?