Analysis: Part B Group Discussion

Excerpts from the book	Group discussion questions	Group answers/conclusion
Now I had to distill [benzene] *a second time in the presence of sodium.*	A distillation separates one substance from another. Why would he do it twice? What might the sodium do?	
It [sodium] *is not shiny or, better, it is shiny only if preserved with maniacal care, since otherwise it reacts in a few instants with air, covering itself with an ugly rough rind.*	What reaction takes place? What are the products? How must sodium be stored?	
[Sodium] *reacts with water, in which it floats (a metal that floats!).*	Why does sodium float on water? What reaction takes place?	
[Potassium] *is sodium's twin, but it reacts with air and water with even greater energy.*	Why does the author consider potassium and sodium as “twins”? Why does potassium react with more energy than sodium? (Look at a periodic table)	
In contact with water it [potassium] *not only develops hydrogen but also ignites.*	Is it correct to say that potassium ignites?	
I placed it [the residue of potassium] *on a piece of dry filter paper, wrapped it up in it, went down into the Institute's courtyard, dug out a tiny grave, and buried the little bedeviled corpse.*	What is the proper way to dispose of an excess of potassium?	
Adhering to the glass of the flask there must have remained a minuscule particle of potassium, all that was needed to react with the water I had poured in and set fire to the benzene vapors.	Why did a fire begin in the flask? What was the immediate cause of this fire?	
By looking closely, one could see, barely visible, a tiny white fleck. I tested it with phenolphthalein: it was basic, it was potassium hydroxide. The guilty party had been found...	What is the nature of potassium hydroxide? In the episode described, was the potassium hydroxide formed only during the cleaning of the flask?	
Sodium is almost the same as potassium, but with sodium nothing would have happened.	Is it correct to say that with sodium nothing would have happened?	

Conclusion: