Directions:

When reading a novel, paper, or prose section, try the golden line strategy. You first highlight the most important line, idea, or phrase in the passage. Then you put an annotation next to that golden line: *why is it important? What does it mean? What do you notice?*

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At the corner is the store known as Soul Scrolls. It’s a franchise: there are Soul Scrolls in every city corner, in every suburb, or so they say. It must make a lot of profit.

The window of Soul Scrolls is shatterproof. Behind it are printout machines, row on row of them; these machines are known as Holy Roller, but only among us, it’s a disrespectful nickname. What the machines print is prayers, roll upon roll, prayers going out endlessly. They’re ordered by Compuphone, I have overheard the Commander’s Wife doing it. Ordering prayers from Soul Scrolls is suppose to be a sign of piety and faithfulness to the regime, so of course the Commander’s Wives do it a lot. It helps their husband’s careers.

There are five different prayers: for health, wealth, a death, a birth, a sin. You pick the one you want, punch in the number, then punch in your own number so your account will be debited, and punch in the number of times you want the prayer repeated.

The machines talk as they print out the prayers; if you like, you can go inside and listen to them, the toneless metallic voices repeating the same thing over and over. Once the prayers have been printed out and said, the paper rolls back through another slot and is recycled into fresh paper again. There are no people inside the building: the machines run by themselves. You can’t hear the voices from outside; only the murmur, a hum, like a devout crowd, on its knees. Each machine has an eye painted in gold on the slide, flanked by two small golden wings.

I try to remember what this place was when it was a store, before it was turned into Soul Scrolls. I think it was lingerie. Pink and sliver boxes, colored pantyhose, brassieres with lace, silk scarves? Something lost (166-167).

Discussion: Write down 3-4 things worth discussing from this passage with the class…