

## STUDY QUESTIONS

**DIRECTIONS:** *These questions are meant to guide your reading. Your responses should be written out on your own lined paper (do not type them). NONE of these questions should be answered superficially. I expect in-depth, specific responses. Be ready to discuss the questions and answers in class. The more specific your answers are here, the better you'll do during class discussions. The reading of this novel will provide an essential foundation to all subsequent assignments.*

### Introduction

1. What is a “Faustian bargain” (p. xii)? Where did that phrase originate?
2. What does Foster mean by the phrase “language of reading”?
3. How does a literature professor read differently from a lay reader?
4. What are the three “items that...separate the professorial reader from the rest of the crowd”?

### Chapter 1: Every Trip is a Quest (Except When It's Not)

1. What five things does a quest consist of?
2. What is the real reason for a quest (always)?
3. What is Foster's overall point about journeys or trips in literature?

### Chapter 2: Nice to Eat with You: Acts of Communion

1. What does “communion” mean?
2. For what reason does Foster suggest that authors often include meal scenes?
3. What does a *failed* meal suggest in literature?

### Chapter 3: Nice to Eat You: Acts of Vampires

1. What is literal vampirism?
2. What is symbolic vampirism?
3. What are the “essentials of the vampire story” and what do they represent?

### Chapter 4: If It's Square, It's a Sonnet

1. Visually speaking, why is a sonnet roughly “square”?
2. How can recognizing that a poem is a sonnet help us understand the poem's meaning?

### Chapter 5: Now, Where Have I Seen Her Before?

1. What does Foster mean when he says that “there's no such thing as a wholly original work of literature”?
2. What does Foster mean by the term *intertextuality*?
3. What is the benefit, or value, of picking up on the parallels between works of literature?

### Chapter 6: When In Doubt, It's from Shakespeare...

1. Why do so many writers allude to Shakespeare?
2. What are some of the ways that Shakespeare influences writers?

### Chapter 7: ...Or the Bible

1. Why is the Bible so often alluded to in literature?
2. What are some of the ways that writers allude to the Bible?
3. What's the benefit of knowing/understanding Bible allusions in literature?

### **Chapter 8: Hanseldee and Greteldum**

1. Why do writers borrow from "kiddie lit" in their works?
2. What are some of the ways writers allude to "kiddie lit" in their writings?

### **Chapter 9: It's Greek to Me**

1. What does Foster mean by the term *myth*?
2. Why do writers allude to mythology?
3. What are some of the ways that writers allude to mythology?

### **Chapter 10: It's More Than Just Rain or Snow**

1. How can weather be symbolic in literature?
2. How can weather serve as a plot device in literature?
3. What are some of the common "meanings" of various types of weather?

### **Interlude: Did He Mean That?**

1. What are the reasons Foster provides that lead him to believe that most writers do not accidentally create the symbols, allusions, and patterns we find when we read critically?
2. Whether we believe a writer intended to do something or not, what's the benefit of noticing that it happened anyway?

### **Chapter 11: ...More Than It's Gonna Hurt You: Concerning Violence**

1. Why does violence occur in literature?
2. What are the two categories of violence in literature?
3. What questions should a reader ask about the violence found in a piece of literature?

### **Chapter 12: Is That a Symbol?**

1. What's the difference between symbolism and allegory?
2. What impacts a readers' understanding of symbolic meaning?
3. What, besides objects, can be symbolic?
4. How should a reader approach symbolism in a text?

### **Chapter 13: It's All Political**

1. In what ways do authors include social criticism in their writings?
2. Why do authors include social criticism in their writings?
3. What are some of the common "political" issues that writers tackle?

### **Chapter 14: Yes, She's a Christ Figure, Too**

1. What are the characteristics of a “Christ figure”?
2. Does a character need to resemble Christ in all ways to be considered a “Christ figure”?
3. Why do writers use Christ figures?

### **Chapter 15: Flights of Fancy**

1. Why do so many writers “toy with flight” in their works?
2. In what ways might flight be symbolic in literature?
3. What is the symbolic deal with interrupted or failed flight?

### **Chapter 16: It’s All About Sex...**

1. What are some of the things that symbolize sex and/or gender?
2. Why does sexual symbolism exist/occur in literature?

### **Chapter 17: ...Except Sex**

1. When writers write directly about sex, what are they really writing about?
2. Why don’t writers usually write actual sex scenes?

### **Chapter 18: If She Comes Up, It’s Baptism**

1. When and how is water symbolic of baptism in literature?
2. What does it mean when a character drowns?

### **Chapter 19: Geography Matters...**

1. How can geography reinforce theme?
2. How can geography define/develop character?
3. How can geography *be* character?
4. How can geography play an important plot role?
5. What are some patterns of symbolism with regard to geography?

### **Chapter 20: ...So Does Season**

1. What are the symbolic implications of each major season: spring, summer, fall, winter?
2. What is the symbolic implication of the progression of season (from spring through winter)?

### **Interlude: One Story**

1. What does Foster mean when he says “there’s only one story”?

### **Chapter 21: Marked for Greatness**

1. What might physical marks or imperfections symbolize?
2. How can landscapes be “marked” as well? What might it mean?
3. Beyond the individual, what can imperfection or deformity indicate?
4. What are some of the symbolic indications of monsters in literature?

### **Chapter 22: He’s Blind for a Reason, You Know**

1. What can physical blindness mirror?
2. What is often the irony behind a blind character?
3. How are darkness and lightness related to sight?

### **Chapter 23: It's Never Just Heart Disease...**

1. What are some of the symbolic possibilities associated with the heart?
2. Why?

### **Chapter 24: ...And Rarely Just Illness**

1. What things make a "prime literary disease"?
2. What are some of the conventional symbolic meanings of various illnesses?

### **Chapter 25: Don't Read with *Your* Eyes**

1. Why did I italicize "your" in the chapter title, above?
2. What is Foster's main point in this chapter?
3. Do we have to accept the values of another culture to accept the impact those values had on the writing?

### **Chapter 26: Is He Serious? And Other Ironies**

1. What does Foster mean when he says, "Irony trumps everything"?
2. How can you tell if something is ironic?
3. What does Foster mean when he says, "Irony doesn't work for everyone"?

### **Chapter 27: Test Case**

1. What does a story signify?

### **Envoi**

1. Why does Foster apologize to the reader?
2. What final suggestions does Foster offer?