

Eden Middle and High School
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Eden, NY 14057

Dear English 11 Honors Students and Parents/Guardians,

Welcome to your junior year. An expectation for Honors 11 English is that you will read novels outside of class in addition to novels taught as a whole. Reading books during the summer helps develop lifelong habits. Also, it assists students in preparing for the New York State Common Core Exam that will be taken in **January**, as well as the SAT that students often take during their junior year.

The summer reading title for Honors English is The Bean Trees by Barbara Kingsolver. Read the novel and complete the attached questions. We will begin our year with a socratic discussion of this book.

We are looking forward to working with you next year!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Amber M. Klausen".

Mrs. Klausen

The Bean Trees

Chapter 1: **The One To Get Away**

1. What connotations does the title of the chapter have?
2. Describe the personality and character of Missy. What things does she say or do that reveal these qualities? What makes her “escape” possible?
3. How does Missy’s mother influence her?
4. Who are Newt Hardbine and Jolene Shanks? Why is their story relevant?
5. What are the two promises that Missy makes to herself when leaving Kentucky? What is significant about these promises?
6. Discuss Taylor’s acquisition of the child; who do you think placed the child in Taylor’s car?
7. There are a few different story lines woven into this novel...what are they so far?

The Bean Trees

Chapter 2: New Year’s Pig

1. What evidence exists to support the notion that Angel and Lou Ann’s marriage is in trouble?
2. Barbara Kingsolver is described by critics as a political activist who expresses her ideas about political and social issues in her stories. Cite an incident in this chapter that illustrates Kingsolver’s views on racial prejudice. State what you believe she is saying about race.

3. One of the themes in this novel explores a woman's role in society. What do each of the following incidents from this chapter suggest about Kingsolver's views on this issue:

A. Lou Ann thinks "it would not be so bad to go through life as a pregnant lady" (

B. Lee Sing compares feeding a girl baby with feeding a New Year's pig

C. The nightclub Fanny Haven has a woman in a bikini painted on its front door.

4. Lou-Ann must walk past two large pictures on the walls of her home. One is a large picture of Jesus and the other is a bikini-clad woman. How does she feel about each of these?

5. What does the last paragraph of this chapter reveal about Lou-Ann's character?

Chapter 3: Jesus is Lord Used Tires

1. Why is the narrative at the beginning of the chapter structured as a flashback?

2. Briefly describe Mattie. What elements of her personality make Taylor and Turtle like her? In what ways is Mattie similar to Taylor's mother?

3. Explain the significance of the name of the tire store. How is Taylor's appearance at this tire store ironic from what we learned about her in Chapter 1?
4. Describe the importance of the beans in Mattie's backyard.
5. Kingsolver writes: "In Tucson it was clear that there was nobody overlooking us all. We would just have to find our own way." Explain the significance of this quote, in what ways will life in Tucson be different than living in Kentucky.

Chapter 4: Tug Fork Water

1. Describe Lou Ann's relationship with her mother and grandmother, and their relationship with each other. What is the prevailing mood of the chapter? Explain how this situation affects Lou-Ann.
2. What is Bobby Bingo's advice to Lou Ann?
3. How does Lou Ann's dead father continue to influence members of Lou Ann's family?
4. Describe how Lou Ann's attitude toward Angel is changing.
5. What is the symbolic meaning of Tug Fork Water? What does Angel's pouring it down the drain symbolize?
- 6.

Chapter 5: Harmonious Space

1. Describe the "Burger Derby incident" at the beginning of the chapter. How is it consistent with Taylor's established personality? In what ways is this scene a kind of social commentary?

2. Discuss Taylor's interview with the Bean Curd people. What bothers Taylor about Fei? What is the significance of the conversation ending with Taylor's comment about Cherokee skipping a generation.

3. What factors make Lou Ann and Taylor a good match for each other?

4. What signs are there in this chapter that show that Turtle's psychological condition is not improving? What connection does Lou Ann's cat, Snowboots, have with Turtle?

Chapter 6: Valentine's Day

1. What is ironic about the job that Taylor takes? How is it an appropriate development in terms of the themes and messages of the novel? How does Mattie respond to Taylor's revelation, and what effect does this seem to have on their relationship?

2. What further foreshadowing is there in this chapter regarding the Spanish-speaking people living with Mattie?

3. Describe Lou Ann's mental state and attitude toward life. How does the expression "hogs go deaf at harvest time" apply to her? How is she different from Taylor, and what doesn't Taylor like about their current situation? What do Lou Ann's attitude toward drinking and her story about going to see the meteor shower show about her and her relationship with Angel?

4. Discuss how both the motto “live free or bust” and the “man in the maze” Indian symbol apply to the novel.

Chapters 7&8

1. Who are Estevan and Esperanza? Where are they from?
2. What does Taylor mean, “It seemed to me that Turtle had to take practically everything on faith”?
3. Who are Edna Poppy and Virgie Mae Parsons? Which is the more outspoken of the two?
4. Based on Mattie’s TV appearance, what can you conclude about Mattie’s Spanish speaking “visitors”?

Chapter 8

1. What does Mattie say happens to illegal immigrants who are sent back home?
2. What is the significance of Estevan’s parable (story) on pages 107 and 108?
3. What disturbing news does Edna bring to Lou Ann in the park? What does Lou Ann do as a result?
4. Where do you think Mattie goes when she tells Taylor she is going birdwatching?
5. What does Dr. Pelinowsky’s exam reveal about Turtle?

Prediction: Before you read the next chapter, make a prediction about what might happen based on the information you have read so far. DO NOT give “yes” or “no” answer only – EXPLAIN your reasoning.

What will Estevan tell Taylor about his and Esperanza's life in Guatemala?

The Bean Trees

Chapters 9-10

Ismene is a character in ancient Greek drama. She is the last survivor of Oedipus' house after the death of her sister, Antigone, Ismene nonetheless seems to vanish at the end, her identity lost in the culmination of the tragedy.

1. Consider the significance of Ismene's name; what is ironic about her story?
2. In what way has Taylor's life been "running along on dumb luck"? Why hasn't Taylor seemed to notice?
3. During her conversation with Estevan, Taylor thinks "this man is way beyond me." What does she mean by this?
4. Why does Taylor tell Estevan stories about Scotty and the "nutters"? How or why is this significant?
5. What is the significance of the meaning of Esperanza's name?
6. Re-read Taylor's conversation with Esperanza on pages 154-156. Summarize this conversation and explain how it shows evidence of maturity in Taylor.

Chapter 11: Dream Angels

1. "Having a job of her own seemed to even out some of Lou Ann's wrinkled edges." Why do you think Taylor likes Lou Ann better since she began working at Red Hot Mama's?

2. State a generalization about life based on the following passage from the story: “You were just looking for a disaster, that’s all. You can’t deny you hunt for them, Lou Ann, even in the paper. If you look hard enough you can always come up with what you want.”

3. Taylor believes Lou Ann will eventually decide to follow Angel to Montana. Do you agree or disagree with Taylor’s prediction about Lou Ann? Cite specific incidents from the story to support your opinion.

4. What evidence is there in this chapter that Taylor is an optimist? How is her optimism about the world shaken by the plight of Esperanza and Estevan?

Chapter 12: Into The Terrible Night

1. When do the Indians celebrate New Year’s Day?

2. Kingsolver is praised for her vivid descriptions of the Southwest. List two examples of unique natural phenomena Taylor experiences after the first summer rain.

3. Why do you think Taylor decides to chase the bird out of the house instead of holding and comforting Turtle?

4. In what way is Taylor's disillusionment about her ability to help Turtle similar to Taylor's disillusionment about the world's unwillingness to help people like Estevan and Esperanza?
5. Assume the last paragraph in the chapter is an example of foreshadowing. What do you think Taylor might do to try and correct Turtle's and Estevan's problems?

Chapter 13: Night-Blooming Cereus

1. What does the narrator say is the difference between sadness and depression? Kingsolver incorporates important political and social issues into the plot of this novel. What facts does she reveal to the reader about child abuse in this country?
2. In what ways does Cynthia help Taylor look for a way to adopt Turtle? What do you think the cameo brooch Cynthia wears might represent in this story?
3. Kingsolver gives the reader a vivid description of a night-blooming cereus. Lou Ann thinks the cereus blooming just before Taylor leaves on her journey is a sign of good luck. Taylor believes it is an omen of good wealth. In what ways does the story of the cereus help the reader understand the reasons for the journey Taylor, Turtle, Esperanza, and Estevan are about to undertake?
4. Explain the symbolic meaning of the dead blackbird mentioned in the last paragraph of this chapter.

Chapter 14: Guardian Saints

1. What do Estevan and Esperanza have in common with Taylor?
2. Why do you suppose Estevan and Esperanza decide to accompany Taylor on her search for Turtle's relatives instead of going directly to the arranged destination in Oklahoma?

3. When a person believes in 'providence' he or she is trusting himself/herself to the care of a higher power, God or nature. What evidence is there in this chapter that Taylor believes in 'providence'?

Chapter 15: Lake O' the Cherokees

1. This novel is written in first person narration. One of the advantages in this style of storytelling is that Taylor adds her own colorful metaphors to help describe feelings. For example, she describes the disappointment she felt on her first trip through Oklahoma with the story of a woman who discovers her diamond necklace is made of rhinestones. Find another metaphor in this chapter which helps to describe her feelings.

2. How do you think Taylor feels about Turtle's and Esperanza's growing attachment for each other?

3. What two wishes do you think Taylor makes when she and Estevan go for a boat ride? Which one does she think is very unlikely to come true?

4. For what reason does Turtle bury her Shirley Poppy doll in the dirt and want to leave the doll buried?

5. At the end of this chapter, Taylor asks Esperanza and Estevan for a favor, which they quickly grant. What two possibilities might this favor be?

Chapter 16: Soundness of Mind and Freedom of Will

1. What details does Kingsolver include in this chapter that help the reader to believe that it is so easy for Taylor to legally become Turtle's mother?

2. Describe the moment when Taylor comes close to losing Turtle. How does Taylor react? How does Turtle react?

3. After finishing with Mr. Armistead, Taylor, Turtle, Estevan and Esperanza all leave his office. Taylor says, "I could see the relief across Estevan's back and shoulders. He held Esperanza's hand. She was still drying tears but her face was changed. It shone like a polished thing, something old made new."

Why do you suppose Esperanza shines "like a polished thing" after pretending to give Turtle away to Taylor?

4. In what way is it ironic that Estevan and Esperanza are the best equipped people to help Taylor legally adopt Turtle?

A catharsis is a purging of emotions that brings relief or new understanding. For instance, when a person sobs for hours after a sad event, the physical process allows them to work through and process some of their grief. One speaks of protest rallies and even riots as being cathartic events, because they help to direct and dissolve strong emotions.

How Do You Identify Catharsis in Writing?

Aristotle, the Greek philosopher and playwright, addresses the role of catharsis in his work, *Poetics*. He believed that a main purpose of drama and comedy is to purge and purify the audience's feelings, especially those of pity and fear. By imitating dramatic circumstances, a work of literature allows its reader to live vicariously through the situation and process their own feelings. Although Aristotle does not

explicitly say this, many now feel that catharsis also allows the reader to arrive at a greater understanding of the world as well.

The showdown or dramatic climax of a work is where one most often achieves catharsis, though any event that evokes strong emotions — such as the death of a character — may also be cathartic.

Examples of Catharsis

1. When Romeo drinks the poison he thinks Juliet has already taken, the reader achieves catharsis, feeling pity both for the characters and for themselves.
2. After the unjust deaths of several young black men due to police brutality, #blacklivesmatter was born as a cathartic means of sharing and processing a collective experience.
3. In the film *Cast Away*, there is dramatic catharsis when Tom Hank's character becomes separated from Wilson, the soccer ball who has been his only companion; the viewer not only has pity for the character but also experiences the terror of the situation.

Directions:

Search through chapter 16 and locate and record a passage that serves as an example of a literary catharsis.

Passage:	
Page Number:	
Character who undergoes catharsis	
Impact of catharsis on other characters:	

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Chapter 17: Rhizobia

1. “I don’t think blood’s the only way kids come by things honest. Not even the main way. It’s what you tell them, Taylor. If a person is bad, say, then it makes them feel better to tell their kids that they’re even worse. And then that’s just exactly what they’ll grow up to be.” What generalization about life can be drawn from this passage?

2. Explain the symbolic nature of rhizobia. Why is this an appropriate name for this chapter?