

Literature Circle Questions

Use these questions and the activities that follow to get more out of the experience of reading *The Young Man and the Sea* by Rodman Philbrick.

1. At the beginning of the story, Skiff says, “Right away I see that what I been afraid of these past few months has finally happened.” Briefly explain what has happened.
2. Describe a fact you learned about bluefin tuna in the story.
3. List two objects Skiff forgets to bring with him on his trip to the shelf. Why are these objects important to have in a boat?
4. In Chapter 18, Skiff recalls how Devlin Murphy once towed his father home when the *Mary Rose* lost power in heavy seas. According to the text, why doesn’t Skiff’s father pay Devlin back, even though both boats were damaged?
5. Describe the relationship between Skiff and Mr. Woodwell. How is this relationship different from Skiff’s relationship with his father?
6. Authors often use personification to make objects in their stories seem human. In this story, the author frequently personifies the *Mary Rose*. Choose one passage from the text and explain how that passage is an example of personification.
7. Describe one way in which another character in the story helps Skiff. Next, imagine you and Skiff are friends. Choose one event from the story and explain how you would help Skiff in his effort to raise money for repairs to the *Mary Rose*.
8. Imagine you are Jack Croft and you have just learned that your son, Tyler, has been cutting Skiff’s lobster traps. What do you think the consequences should be for Tyler’s actions?
9. On page 91, Skiff says, “Can’t fight him no more than you can fight the wind or the tide?” In your own words, explain what is meant by this statement.
10. On page 46, Mr. Woodwell shows Skiff the harpoon made by Big Skiff and refers to it as a memento. According to the text, what does the harpoon symbolize? Briefly describe one memento you have, and explain why it is important to you.
11. Now that you have finished the book, think about Tyler’s relationship with his father. Describe one way in which this relationship is different at the end of the book from the way it was at the beginning of the book. Who do you think has changed more? Be sure to use examples from the story in your answer.

12. What are Skiff's mother's three rules? Describe one way in which Skiff breaks one of these rules and one way in which Skiff follows one of these rules. Which rule do you think is most important in your life?
13. Re-read the passage on page 170 in which Skiff finally catches the tuna. Based on what you've read, how would you describe Skiff's feelings about catching this fish? How does this differ from other fish he has caught?
14. In Chapter 13, Skiff goes to Mr. Woodwell's boat shed and takes the harpoon. As Skiff is taking the harpoon, he wonders whether what he is doing is stealing. In your opinion, is Skiff stealing? Use details from the text to support your argument.
15. As Skiff is making his way to Jeffrey's Ledge, he is having a conversation with another character even though he is alone in the boat. To whom is he talking? Why do you think the author chose to write this dialogue?

Note: These questions are keyed to Bloom's Taxonomy as follows: Knowledge 1-2; Comprehension: 3-5; Application: 6-8; Analysis: 9-10; Synthesis: 11-13; Evaluation: 14-15.

Activities

1. Using colored markers or pencils, draw a picture of a bluefin tuna based on what you read in the story. When you are finished, compare your drawing to your classmates' drawings. How are the drawings different? How are they similar? You may also want to look for a picture of a bluefin tuna in a reference book.
2. Draw a map of Skiff's town and the surrounding area. Begin with any geographic features you remember, including the creek, the harbor, Little Sister Rock, and Jeffrey's Ledge. Then, fill in your map with symbols showing different events and places from the story. For example, you may want to draw a lobster where you think Skiff set his traps or a yacht where you think Mr. Croft may have anchored his boat, *The Fin Chaser*. Be sure to include a legend on your map to show what the symbols mean.
3. At the end of the story, you read a newspaper about Skiff and the fish he caught. Think of something you or someone you know has accomplished in the past and write an article like the one in the book. If you prefer to write about an imaginary event or something you have always dreamed of doing, that's fine, too.

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