

Socratic Seminar Questions: Short Story Unit

"The Veldt" by Ray Bradbury

- What aspects of contemporary family life do the "HappyLife Home" and nursery satirize? What has the family purchased for their home and what do the amenities of "HappyLife Home" offer them?
- In what ways has the house infantilized (to treat like a child) the Hadleys? How does Bradbury depict this as dangerous?
- Have you noticed the allusion to *Peter Pan*? How is Wendy's name ironic in this story? Why does Peter's name fit?
- Do Lydia and George view the nursery the same way? How do their views change over the course of the story?
- How is childhood represented in this story? What are the effects of the house and nursery on the children? In what ways does Bradbury depict these effects as dangerous (to the children, to society)?
- What does the story suggest as the source of the children's murderous hatred for their parents? How are George and Lydia shown to have failed their children?
- Try to explain one of the following:
 - George's chewed wallet in the nursery
 - Lydia's bloody scarf
 - Screams that sound familiar
- Has society helped or hindered human relationships?
- Why didn't the parents see the children imagining evil from the beginning?
- If you had the opportunity to have a room like this, would you? Why?

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"A Good Man is Hard to Find" by Flannery O'Connor

- How does this short story reflect significant lessons and experiences that we can apply to our own lives? What do the authors' characters teach us about our own lives or society?
- How is the audience supposed to react to The Grandmother? What may she signify thematically?
- What does the grandmother's relationship to her family tell us about her personality?
- How is the audience supposed to react to The Misfit? What might he signify thematically?
- What is the function of the cat as a plot device and what might it symbolize? Is this an allusion to anything? What significance does the cat carry?
- Identify and discuss O'Connor's use of religious symbols and allusions in the story. How do they impact the reader's understanding of the story's theme or tone?
- Morally ambiguous characters - characters whose behavior discourages readers from identifying them as purely evil or purely good - are at the heart of many works of literature. Discuss how any character from *A Good Man is Hard to Find* can be viewed as morally ambiguous and why his or her moral ambiguity is significant to the work as a whole.
- Why does The Misfit shoot the Grandmother?
- If the old woman had kept her mouth shut, not revealing that she recognized The Misfit, would the family be alive at the end of the story? Or did The Misfit intend to kill all the family members when he pulled up alongside the car?
- What has The Misfit's life been like? Why was he put in jail? He says he kills for pleasure. Is there another reason?
- Explain the problem The Misfit has with Jesus. How is his religious conviction different from the grandmother's?