



**DIRECTIONS: GIVE A THOROUGH WRITTEN RESPONSE TO EACH QUESTION. ALL RESPONSES MUST BE TYPED. THIS ASSIGNMENT IS AN INDEPENDENT READING ANALYSIS. THE ASSIGNMENT IS NOT A GROUP/ COLLABORATIVE PROJECT. COPYING RESPONSES FROM YOUR PEERS IS PLAGIARISM.**

**Interpretive**

1. From what point of view is the story told? How does that affect our perception of the events?
2. What are two major conflicts in the novel? Consider both internal and external conflicts.
3. Is the setting of the novel important to the theme(s)? If so, why? If not, why not?
4. Over what period of time does the actual action of the novel take place?
5. What indications do we have that Deborah is somehow connected to the calendar sisters, even before Lily realizes it?
6. Give two examples of flashback and two examples of foreshadowing used in the novel. What do these techniques add to the novel?

**Critical**

7. How does Lily's relationship with Rosaleen change throughout the novel? What events bring about these changes?
8. What role do parents, grandparents, and guardians play in this novel? List pairs of "grownups" and younger characters in the novel, and briefly describe the influence each grownup had on the corresponding younger character.
9. Describe two "signature" things about each of these characters: Lily, T. Ray, Rosaleen, August, June, May, Deborah, and Zach.
10. What are T. Ray's good qualities as a parent? What are his worst ones?
11. Describe the relationship among the calendar sisters. How does the relationship affect the plot of the novel?
12. Why are the Daughters of Mary important in the story?
13. What objects belonging to Lily's mother are a part of the story? What do they symbolize?
14. Why might the Daughters of Mary be described as "Orthodox Eclectic"?
15. Compare and contrast August and Rosaleen.
16. What does Our Lady of Chains become to Lily?
17. Compare and contrast Deborah and Lily.
18. What is Neil's purpose in the novel? What would the novel lack without his character?
19. How does Lily change as a result of her experiences with the calendar sisters, and how do they change as a result of their experiences with her?
20. Explain the title of the book: The Secret Life of Bees.
21. Why are the bees important in the novel?
22. What purpose do the epigraphs serve in the novel? Would the novel have been as good without them? Explain your answer.
23. Compare and contrast Rosaleen's relationship with May to June's relationship with May.
24. The author could have made May be any kind of a person at all. Why did she choose to make May the way she did? What did May add to the novel?
25. Does T. Ray love Lily? Support your answer.
26. What are Rosaleen's best qualities? Her worst?
27. Why do Rosaleen and May get along so well?
28. What comments about religion does the author make through the events with Our Lady of Chains and the Daughters of Mary?
29. The issue of "mother" and motherhood is a big part of the book. What mothers and mother figures are present in the book? What points does the author make about mothers and motherhood? Explain.
30. There are many references to praying and religion in the book. What points does the author make about religion through the events in the book? Explain fully.
31. What is The Secret Life of Bees ultimately about? What is or are the main idea(s) we are supposed to get from reading it? Support your answer with examples from the text.
32. What comments does the author make about race and race relations through the events of the book? Support your answer.
33. Compare and contrast August and June.
34. Compare and contrast Neil and Zach.
35. The truth, in the end, was that Lily did kill her mother by accident when she was as small child. This event is very much a part of the whole story. Why? What does it have to do with the theme(s) of the story?
36. Discuss the theme of "freedom" as it relates to the novel.
37. Discuss the theme of wisdom in the novel. To whom do people go to for advice and help? Who is wise, and who is not? Explain.



38. People get angry in this book. Lily has issues with anger, as do Zach and T. Ray. Explain what causes each of these characters to be deeply angry. Does being angry help their situations? When do they make their best decisions, when they are angry--or not?
39. Discuss how the author symbolically uses water in the novel. Give at least three examples and explain each.

### **Critical/Personal Response**

40. Why do you think Lily waits to talk to August even after she learns about her mother's history with the calendar sisters?
41. Do you think Lily is a "typical" teenager? In what ways is she "typical," and in what ways is she unusual or extraordinary?
42. Who is your favorite character in *The Secret Life of Bees*? Why? Find a passage from the novel that demonstrates the quality you most admire in that character.
43. Discuss two events from the novel that give us a taste of real life in the south in the early 1960's.
44. Was Lily right to run away with Rosaleen? Did she do the right thing? Support your answer.
45. Is it believable that the calendar sisters would take in Lily and Rosaleen? Why or why not?
46. August seems to be a very special person. What are her best qualities? Does she have any negative traits? If so, what are they?
47. Discuss the theme of forgiveness in the novel.
48. Who was responsible for Deborah's death? Justify your answer.

### **Personal Response**

49. August gives Lily some of her mother's items toward the end of the novel. Do you own any items that are special to you because they once belonged to someone else? What are they, and why are they special?
50. Our Lady of Chains and the Daughters of Mary figure prominently in this novel. What ceremonies exist in your own culture and family? List and explain any religious and non-religious examples.
51. Which character from the novel would you most like to meet in person and become friends with? Why?
52. What else would you like to know about any of the characters in the novel after the end of the book?
53. What is your favorite scene, moment, or line from the novel?
54. Do you think everyone should have a "wailing wall"? Why or why not? Would you like to have one?

### **FRIENDLY REMINDERS**

1. **ALL RESPONSES MUST BE TYPED. HANDWRITTEN RESPONSES WILL NOT BE ACCEPTED AND WILL RESULT IN AUTOMATIC ZEROS. NO EXCEPTIONS!**
2. **THIS ASSIGNMENT IS DUE FEBRUARY 22, 2010 AT THE BEGINNING OF CLASS.**
3. **FAILURE TO DO THE ASSIGNMENT WILL COUNT AS TWO INCOMPLETES OR TWO AUTOMATIC ZEROS.**
4. **YOU ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR YOUR OWN COMPUTER ISSUES. NO EXCEPTIONS OR EXCUSES.**
5. **THIS ASSIGNMENT IS NOT A GROUP PROJECT AND YOUR RESPONSES MUST BE ORIGINAL!**
6. **YOUR RESPONSES MUST BE THOROUGH AND DEMONSTRATE SUBSTANTIVE THINKING.**
7. **THERE WILL BE A MULTIPLE CHOICE TEST ON FEBRUARY 22, 2010.**
8. **LATE SUBMISSIONS WILL BE PENALIZED -10 POINTS PER DAY LATE. NO ASSIGNMENTS WILL BE ACCEPTED AFTER THE 3<sup>RD</sup> DAY or FEBRUARY 24<sup>TH</sup>.**