Universal Questions for Literature Studies

Relating to the Characters

• In what ways are the belief systems and values of the characters presented in the story?
• Are the characters in the story credible?
• What makes a minor character memorable?
• How do things look for this character at this point of the story?
• Do you disagree with any actions or decisions of the characters?
• Given what the author has already told us about this character, what are the character’s motives at this point?
• Consider the main character: what does he or she believe in? What is he or she willing to fight for?
• What conflicts do the main character face?
• What four questions would you like the main character to answer?
• What three pieces of advice would you give the main character?
• Who were the “winners” and “losers” in this story? Explain.
• What are the most important relationships in the story?
• At the end of the book, what feelings are expressed by the characters?

Engaging the Author

• What does the author mean here?
• Did the author explain this clearly?
• Does this make sense with what the author told us before?
• How does this connect with what the author has told us here?
• What four questions would you like to ask the author?
• What techniques did the author use to develop the characters, plot, and themes?
• What theories do you have about the author’s personality and beliefs?
• What do you think the author wants you to know or learn?
• What do you think the author was trying to accomplish with this story?

Making Personal Meaning

• What have you read that is similar in this story?

• What are some of the major themes of this story?

• Which is stronger in the book: plot or character development? Why? Do you think this was intentional on the part of the author?

• Did you find this story a quick read? Why or why not?

• What are the most revealing scenes?

• Did you find any flaws in the story?

• Were you satisfied with the climax and resolution of this story?

• Do you consider this book to be a “classic”? Why or why not?

• Which events in the story are relevant to your own life?

• How did this story give you a better understanding of human nature?

• What impact has this story made on you?