

## *The Pigman*

### Discussion Questions: Themes, Motifs, Lessons

*There was no else to blame anymore...*

*Our life would be what we made of it--nothing more, nothing less.*

*Baboons.*

*Baboons.*

*They build their own cages, we could almost hear the Pigman whisper as he took his children with him.*

These last lines of the Pigman are profound, poetic, and strangely beautiful. With complete sentences, answer all parts of these questions:

1. What does John mean when he says there is no one else to blame? Who is responsible for what happened? What important lesson has he learned?

2. Why is the word *Baboons* repeated? To whom is John referring? Why is this a valid comparison or symbol? How are the characters in this book like baboons or monkeys? (Remember their visit to the pet store.)

3. What does *They build their own cages* mean? How did John and Lorraine build their own cage? How did the Pigman build his own cage?

4. Who are the Pigman's children? Why? Explain.

5. Where is the Pigman going and how does he take the children with him? What part of John and Lorraine has died as a result of the experience with the Pigman?

### *The Pigman*

A symbol is an object or action that stands for itself yet also suggests another (deeper) meaning. Match each of these symbols from *The Pigman* with the appropriate meaning below. Explain your choices.

- A. roller skates
- B. monkeys and apes
- C. the Pignatis' clothes
- D. Lorraine's Ben Franklin sunglasses
- E. wine
- F. beer
- G. smiling faces
- H. nurses
- H. exotic food
- J. pigs

Meanings: Fun, Sharing, Escape, Youth, Death, Conformity, Vulnerability, Loneliness, Sophistication, Individuality

### Essay Questions

(Choose *one* about which to write an essay.)

*The Pigman* is a story about a unique friendship between two teenagers and an older man. **What is it that each of these characters needed that would allow such a friendship to develop?** Devote a paragraph to each of the main characters. Without re-telling the story, describe the conditions of the characters' lives and the reasons they would each need such a friendship. (Make sure that you name the specific need of each character.)

*The Pigman* is one of the most frequently banned books of recent years. Many people feel that the book treats serious adult issues in a non-serious way and that there is no literary value to the novel and no worthwhile lessons to be learned from it. Some claim that John and Lorraine are bad role models to whom students should not be exposed (even in a work of fiction). What do you think? **Should *The Pigman* be taught in schools? Why or why not?** If yes, what value is there in reading the book? (Come up with three reasons it is worthy of study and devote a paragraph to each.) If you don't believe *The Pigman* should be taught in schools, explain why. (Come up with three reasons students should not be exposed to it and devote a paragraph to each.) Keep in mind that your reasons need to deal with the content and themes of the book, not just whether or not you liked it.

**Explain the final lines of *The Pigman*.** Devote one paragraph to explaining the lessons that John claims they have learned. Devote another paragraph to the repetition of the word *Baboons*. (Why is it repeated? What does it symbolize? Why is it a valid comparison?) Finally, write a third paragraph explaining the significance of the final sentence. (Who builds their own cages and how? How does this line apply not just to the characters in the novel, but to all of us as well? Who were the Pigman's children and how could he take them with him?)