

Literature Circle Questions

Use these questions, and the activities that follow, to gain more from the experience of reading *Shakespeare's Secret* by Elise Broach.

1. Hero is named after a character in a play. What is the name of this play? Who wrote this play?
2. What expression does Mrs. Roth use that makes Danny think of his mother?
3. Whose initials do Hero and Mrs. Roth believe they have found on the back of the Pembroke pendant?
4. Why is Hero late to class on the first day of school? Whom has she taken the time to help?
5. What is the connection between the Murphy diamond and Arthur Murphy? Briefly explain how it came to be in his possession.
6. What advice does Beatrice give Hero about fitting in at a new school? Do you agree with this advice? If you were Beatrice, what advice would you give Hero about making friends?
7. Imagine you are going to hide one valuable item in your house. What item would you hide? Where would you hide it? What hint would you leave behind to help the right people find the hidden item?
8. Reread the poem by Dylan Thomas on page 75. Then, reread the conversation on page 183 in which Danny and Hero discuss the meaning of the poem, particularly the line "rage against the dying of the light." Do you believe "the dying of the light" refers to darkness, to death, or to something else?
9. Why do you think Danny chose to send the Murphy diamond to his mother in California? Do you support his decision to send the diamond away without asking Mrs. Roth and Hero? What would you have done if you were Danny?
10. On page 5, the narrator explains that Hero's walls are bare. What is the author trying to tell the reader about Hero by describing her walls this way? Name one item you have hanging on your wall, and explain what this item says about you.
11. On page 6, Hero thinks, "Every school had its own customs and fashions." In your own words, explain the difference between fashions and customs. Name one thing in your life that is a custom and one thing that is a fashion.

12. Reread the author's note on pages 244 and 245. List one piece of evidence that suggests Edward de Vere was the real author of Shakespeare's plays and one piece of evidence that suggests he was not. Do you think Edward de Vere could have been the real author of Shakespeare's plays?
13. On page 156, Mr. Netherfield tells Hero, "Sometimes the best way to defend one's honor is to simply behave honorably." Using evidence from the text, describe an event in the story in which you think a character behaves honorably.
14. On page 119, Mrs. Netherfield explains that Hero is brave, gentle, and faithful, and therefore like her namesake. Do you agree with this statement? Choose one of these traits and explain why the trait you have chosen does or does not describe Hero Netherfield.
15. Now that you have finished the story, think about the title of the book and about William Shakespeare. Do you think the author chose an appropriate title for her book? In your opinion, what was Shakespeare's secret? Hint: Remember that the word "secret" does not always mean something you keep or hide from other people.

Note: These questions are keyed to Bloom's Taxonomy as follows: Knowledge: 1-3; Comprehension: 4-5; Application: 6-7; Analysis: 8-9; Synthesis: 10-12; Evaluation: 13-15.

Activities

1. Imagine that Mrs. Roth and Hero are correct that Edward de Vere is actually the son of Queen Elizabeth. Using the timeline in the back of the book, build a family tree that includes the following people: Elizabeth, Henry VIII, Anne Boleyn, and Edward de Vere. You will get bonus points if you correctly add other important historical figures to your timeline.
2. Near the end of the story, Mrs. Roth writes a letter to her daughter, Anna, in California. How do you think that letter begins? Remembering how Mrs. Roth speaks, write the first three sentences of that letter. Be sure to mention Danny!
3. Hero and Mrs. Roth enjoy doing crossword puzzles together. Create a simple crossword puzzle using names, places, and key words from the story. Examples might be diamond, Hero, and play. After you have written clues for each word, show the puzzle to a friend and see if he or she can solve it.

Also by Elise Broach

Desert Crossing, Henry Holt and Co. (May 2006)