

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS FOR "THE GIVING TREE"

1. At the end of the story, are you happy or sad? Why?
2. If you could change one part of the story, what part would you change? Why?
3. How is the tree like a real person?
4. Can you think of people you know who are like the tree?
5. Every time the boy returns, the tree asks him to play; but the boy always has an excuse not to. Why do you think the boy does this?
6. Why does the tree do so much for the boy?
7. Do you think the tree does *too* much for the boy?
8. Each time the boy accepts the tree's help, the narrator tells us, "And the tree was happy." How does this make you feel?
9. When you read it again at the end of the story, how do you feel?

1. The tree loves the little boy.

A. The tree did not say "I love you" to the boy. Sometimes people say "I love you" to their friends, children, husbands, wives, or even to their pet cats and dogs. How do you know your mom loves you even when she doesn't say so? Do you feel better when she does?

2. The tree shows her love for the boy by always trying to make him happy.

A. What shows that the boy loves the tree?

B. Does the boy ever thank the tree? If so, how? If not, why not?

3. When the boy goes away the tree is sad.

- A. Does she love the boy any less when he is not there? What if he had never come back? Can you love someone even when they're not around?
 - B. Why does the tree love the boy in the first place?
4. Every time the tree gives something to the boy she doesn't ask for anything in return.
- A. When the tree gives to the boy she is happy. Are you happier when it's your birthday and people are giving you presents or when it's your friend's birthday and you are giving presents? Why?
 - B. Did the tree want anything? What? Did she get what she wanted?
 - C. A friend forgets her lunch money so you lend her some of yours. What if she also forgets to pay you back? Will you still be friends with her? Why or why not?
5. The tree gives the boy so much that in the end she has nothing left but a stump.
- A. The tree gives her apples, branches, and eventually her entire trunk to the boy. What else does she give him?
 - B. If you don't have any money to buy your friend a gift on her birthday, what else could you give her?
6. The first time the boy comes back he wants money. Did money make him happy? How do you know?

5. Discussion question: Why is the tree lonely when the boy grows up?
6. Discussion question: Why could the boy do for the tree?
7. Discussion question: Do you think the boy is selfish? Explain your answer.
8. Discussion question: How do you think the tree would feel if the boy didn't take all it offered?
9. Discuss the difference between fiction and non-fiction. What parts of the story could be true (non-fiction) and what parts of the story are not (fiction)?
10. Discussion question: How do you feel when you give something to someone? How do you feel when you receive something?

Philosophical topic: Giving and Altruism

The tree keeps on giving to the boy until it has nothing left to give. The boy on the other hand does not give anything to the tree.

1. Is the boy selfish? Why?
2. What about the tree, is the tree selfish?
3. Is there a word for someone who keeps on giving without thinking about him/herself or expecting something in return?
4. Is the tree selfless? Why?
5. Why do you think the tree is not happy after giving her trunk?
6. Have you ever given something away and later wished that you didn't?
7. Is it easier to give something away if the receiver truly appreciates the gift? Why?
8. When we give something to someone, do we expect something in return? Why?
9. When we are given something, do we feel that we owe something to the giver?
10. Would you give something you really need if someone you love needed it, too?
11. Why do we give?
12. Is it right or wrong to keep on giving without getting anything in return?
13. Are there limits to giving?

Philosophical topic: The nature of love

In the very beginning of the book, the author talks about the things that the tree and the boy did together. The author also says that the tree loved the boy.

1. Why did the tree love the boy in the beginning?
2. Why did the tree keep on loving the boy?
3. Did the boy love the tree? Why?
4. Who do you love? Why do you love them?
5. How do you know that you love someone?
6. Do you treat differently people that you love and the ones that you don't love?
7. When you love someone, how do you show him or her that you love them?
8. What is love?
9. Can you love someone even if they are not with you?
10. How could your love be different towards someone who is with you versus someone who is far away?
11. Have you ever been angry with someone you love because they were away for a while, or because they did something you did not like?
12. Can you be angry with someone and still love them at the same time?

Philosophical topic: Happiness

The tree is not really happy after giving the boy her trunk.

1. Is the boy happy at the end of the story?
2. Is the tree happy?
3. If you were the tree would you be happy? Why?
4. How do you know when you are happy?
5. Does it make you happy when others are happy?
6. Have you ever done something just to make someone happy?
7. Does doing things to make others happy necessarily make you happy?
8. Do you need others in order to be happy?
9. What is happiness? (Is it a feeling? Is it a state of mind? Or something else?)
10. Do you need a reason to be happy (e.g. something good happens), or can you be happy without a reason?
11. Can you be happy and sad at the same time?