

Discussion Questions: The Help, by Kathryn Stockett

Version 3

1. Who was your favorite character? Why?
2. Hilly is terribly cruel to many people in the book. What motivated Hilly in her various roles?
3. Skeeter's mother is a prime example of someone deeply flawed yet somewhat sympathetic. She seems to care for Skeeter— and she also seems to have very real feelings for Constantine. Yet the ultimatum she gives to Constantine is untenable and most of her interaction with Skeeter is negative. Do you think Skeeter's mother is a sympathetic or unsympathetic character? Why?
4. How much of a person's character would you say is shaped by the times in which they live? What other factors shape people? Can people's ideas evolve? How?
5. Did it bother you that Skeeter is willing to overlook so many of Stuart's faults so that she can get married, and that it's not until he literally gets up and walks away that the engagement falls apart?
6. Do you think that Mae Mobley will grow up to be racist like her mother, given what she's learned from Aibileen?
7. The author manages to paint Aibileen with a quiet grace and an aura of wisdom about her. What are characteristics that define Aibileen?
8. Do you think there are still vestiges of racism in relationships where people of color work for people who are white?
9. What did you think about Minny's pie for Miss Hilly? Why did her mother buy Hilly the pie at the auction?
10. What character types are shown with each main character – Hilly, Elizabeth, Skeeter, Aibileen, Minny? How would these character types behave today?
11. Explore the hypocrisy in working to help starving children in Africa, while not helping blacks across town. Why did people do this in our history? Does it still happen today?
12. In the section at the end of the book called "Too Little, Too Late," the issue of different perspectives between white employers and black help is addressed. It's common that white employers say "we were all family," but whether that view would be fully shared by the help is questioned. In general, how wide is the gap between these perspectives?
13. The Help has been a very successful best selling book. If the author had been black, how would the book have been received? Would it still have been a best seller?