

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS FOR TROUBLE IN THE AIR

1. Describe the social climate of Jackson, Mississippi in 1954 as depicted in TROUBLE IN THE AIR. _____
 2. In this segregated society how did the races (black and white) co-exist? Consider the behavior of Star grocery owners toward Mama Lee and her children, the tension between black and white children, the rules governing rights of the races public spaces, etc. _____
 3. Describe the two narrators in the story. How does each of the main narrative voices contribute to the story's plot? _____
 4. List two or three major themes in the book. _____
 5. Brown v Board of Education is an event in the background. How does the author's referencing it contribute to the plot. _____
 6. Describe the structure of the story. Do you consider the structure to be straightforward or complex? Explain. _____
 7. What role does the media (TV, music, newspaper) play in the story? _____
 8. What is the definition of "passing". What do you think of Walter sharper's decision to pass at times? _____
 9. Describe each of the three sisters—compare and contrast. Are their characters sufficiently drawn? _____
 - 10 describe the parenting styles of Mama Lee and Daddy Clayton. _____
 11. Do you think the role the Ellisons played in the Civil Rights Movement was typical? Do you think the family contributed to the "brighter coming day" they anticipated? _____
 12. Make a list of racially charged situations the main characters found themselves involved in and imagine worst case scenarios they escaped. Write down what happened and what could have happened in each case. Do you think the outcomes are realistic? _____
 13. Why do you think Lizzie lacked confidence in her academic ability when she was a straight A student? _____
 14. Do you agree that past history explains the present? If so, do you think Mama Lee's stories were well chosen to give her girls helpful insight into their present day issues that were rooted in past history? How relevant do you think her stories are to an analysis of modern day problems? _____
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