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he Bean Trees

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## Prestwick House Response Journal





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Item No. 201569

Response Journal

#### **To The Student**

Although we may read a novel, play, or work of non-fiction for enjoyment, each time we read one, we are building and practicing important basic reading skills. In our ever-more complex society, in which reading has become more and more crucial for success, this, in itself, is an important reason to spend time reading for enjoyment.

Some readers, however, are able to go beyond basic reading techniques and are able to practice higher thinking skills by reflecting on what they have read and how what they read affects them. It is this act of reflection-that is, stopping to think about what you are reading-that this journal is attempting to encourage.

To aid you, we have included writing prompts for each section; however, if you find something that you wish to respond to in the book more compelling than our prompts, you should write about that. We hope you enjoy reading this book and that the act of responding to what you have read increases this enjoyment.

After you read the indicated sections, choose the questions to which you will respond. Keep in mind that there are no right or wrong answers to these prompts, and there is no one direction in which you must go.

The Bean Trees

#### Chapter One

#### The One to Get Away

- 1. Missy admits, "Before that exact moment I don't believe I had given much thought to the future." How much thought have you given to your future? What are your plans after you graduate high school, and where do you see yourself in ten years?
- 2. Many girls in Missy's school get pregnant and have to drop out, but the fathers may continue to attend. Do you agree with this situation or do you see it as a double standard? Support your answer.
- 3. Missy distinguishes herself by wearing bright, bold clothing, and she is proud that she does not fit in with her classmates. What does this behavior tell you about Missy's personality? Can you compare her to someone you know, and how do you feel about his or her refusal to conform? Do you ever wear clothing, or do things, that are out of the ordinary, just to be different? What are they?
- 4. Relate a time when you or a friend were scared to do something and had to gather courage to get it done. Describe the circumstance, the outcome, and whether or not it was worth the effort.
- 5. Imagine you are in Taylor's situation. You have just left home, you're in a strange town with no money, and someone drops a baby into your lap and disappears. What would you do?

Response Journal

# Chapter Four

#### Tug Fork Water

- 13. Why do you suppose Lou Ann hides the divorce from her mother and grandmother? Is it shame, pride, or something else?
- 14. We are told, "Ivy and her mother-in-law were not speaking, on account of one thing or another. Lou Ann could never keep track." Describe two characters from real life, a book, or movie that display this type of hostile relationship. What circumstances lead them to behave in this manner?
- 15. Lou Ann resists the urge to return to Kentucky to be with her family. Do you think she makes the right decision? What advice would you give her?
- 16. Bobby Bingo tells Lou Ann, "Whatever you want the most, it's going to be the worst thing for you." Explain what this statement means to you.

The Bean Trees

### Chapter Seventeen Rhizobia

- 56. Taylor makes a tearful goodbye to Estevan and Esperanza. What is the hardest goodbye you have ever had to make? Why was it difficult?
- 57. Esperanza experiences a "catharsis," meaning she confronted emotions about Ismene that had been repressed. Describe a time when you or someone you know had to confront an issue. How difficult was the situation, and was it resolved?
- 58. Taylor's mother implies that children are influenced more by what they are told than by genetics. Do you believe a person's development is shaped more by their environment, meaning how they are treated by others, or by their inherited traits? Explain your answer.
- 59. Are you satisfied with the novel's conclusion? Why or why not?

#### Wrap-up

- 60. How is Turtle's name symbolic of her behavior throughout the novel?
- 61. What challenges and problems does a single mother face today?
- 62. When you read the last page of this novel, what were your thoughts and/or feelings?
- 63. Write about the things you liked and/or disliked about this novel.
- 64. Many novels that have young people as the main characters are said to be of the "Coming of Age" genre. The term indicates that in the course of the novel the character moves from immaturity to maturity. Describe the ways in which *The Bean Trees* would fit this description.

#### The Bean Trees

- 13. The proverb "Hogs go deaf at harvest time" can be used to describe
  - A. Lou Ann's inability to admit that her marriage to Angel is a mistake and that she is better off without him.
  - B. Esperanza's unhappiness.
  - C. the doctor who first examines Turtle and discovers the extent of her abuse.
  - D. Both A and B
  - E. A, B, and C
- 14. Turtle's first sound is
  - A. the word "bean."
  - B. a laugh, which delights Taylor because Taylor takes Turtle's laugh as proof that she is helping rather than harming the little girl.
  - C. a scream when she is attacked in the park.
  - D. the word "Ma," but she says it to Esperanza rather than to Taylor.
- 15. The end of this novel is ironic because

A. Taylor, who tries hard to avoid early pregnancy, willingly adopts Turtle.

- B. Estevan and Esperanza, who resemble Cherokee Indians and must try to conceal their true origins from the United States Government, are able to use this resemblance to help Taylor legally adopt Turtle.
- C. Taylor and Estevan must hide their feelings for each other.
- D. Both A and B
- E. A, B, and C