

Freshman English

THE FIVE PEOPLE YOU MEET IN HEAVEN by Mitch Albom

Choose any ten of the following discussion questions and respond appropriately. (Typed, double-spaced, Times New Roman, 12pt.) Assignments will be collected the first full week of school at which time further evaluation may take place.

- 1.** At the start of **The Five People You Meet in Heaven**, Albom says that "all endings are also beginnings." In general, what does this mean? How does it relate to this story in particular? Share something in your life that has begun as another thing ended, and the events that followed.
- 2.** What initially grabs your attention in **The Five People You Meet in Heaven**? What holds it?
- 3.** How does counting down the final minutes of Eddie's life affect you as a reader? Why does Albom do this? Other storytelling devices Albom uses include moving from past to present by weaving Eddie's birthdays throughout the story. How do these techniques help inform the story? What information do you learn by moving around in time? How effective is Albom's style for this story in particular?
- 4.** What does Eddie look like and what kind of guy is he? Look at and discuss some of the details and descriptions that paint a picture of Eddie and his place of business. What is it about an amusement park that makes it a good backdrop for this story?
- 5.** Consider the idea that "no story sits by itself. Sometimes stories meet at corners and sometimes they cover one another completely, like stones beneath a river." How does this statement relate to **The Five People You Meet in Heaven**?
- 6.** How does Albom build tension around the amusement park ride accident? What is the significance of Eddie finding himself in the amusement park again after he dies? What is your reaction when Eddie realizes he's spent his entire life trying to get away from Ruby Pier and he is back there immediately after death? Do you think this is important? Why?
- 7.** Describe what Albom's heaven is like. If it differs from what you imagined, share those differences. Who are the five people Eddie meets? Why them? What are their relationships to Eddie? What are the characteristics and qualities that make them the five people for Eddie?
- 8.** Share your reactions and thoughts about the Blue Man's story, his relationship

with his father, and his taking silver nitrate. What, if anything, does this have to do with Eddie? Why does he say to Eddie, "This is not your heaven, it's mine"?

9. How does the Blue Man die? What affect does it have on you when you look at the same story from two different points of view -- his and Eddie's? Can you share any events that you have been involved in that can be viewed entirely differently, from another's point of view? How aware are we of other's experiences of events that happen simultaneously to us and to them? Why?

10. Discuss what it means that "That there are no random acts. That we are all connected. That you can no more separate one life from another than you can separate a breeze from the wind." Even though Eddie hasn't been reincarnated, consider karma in Eddie's life (where Eddie's actions would affect his reincarnation). If it isn't karma, what is Albom telling us about life, and death?

11. Think about Eddie's war experiences and discuss your reactions to Albom's evocation of war. What did Eddie learn by being in war? How did he "come home a different man"? Why did the captain shoot Eddie? Explore what it means when the captain tells Eddie, "I took your leg to save your life." Why does the captain tell Eddie that sacrifice is not really a loss, but a gain? Examine whether or not Eddie understands this, and the significance of this lesson.

12. Discuss what you might say to Eddie when he asks "why would heaven make you relive your own decay?".

13. Examine whether or not you agree with the old woman when she tells Eddie, "You have peace when you make it with yourself," and why. Consider what she means when she says, "things that happen before you are born still affect you. And people who come before your time affect you as well." How does this relate to Eddie's life? Who are some who have come before you that have affected your own life?

14. What is Eddie's father's response each time Eddie decides to make an independent move, away from working at the pier? Examine how Eddie's father's choices and decisions actually shape Eddie's life. Why does Eddie cover for his father at the pier when his father becomes ill? What happens then? Share your own experience of a decision your own parents made that affected your life, for better or for worse.

15. Who tells Eddie that "we think that hating is a weapon that attacks the person who harmed us. But hatred is a curved blade. And the harm we do we do to ourselves"? What is the significance of this particular person in Eddie's life? Why is

this important for Eddie to understand? Is it important for all of us to understand? Why? Discuss whether or not you agree that, "all parents damage their children. It cannot be helped." How was Eddie damaged?

16. Why does Marguerite want to be in a place where there are only weddings? How does this relate to her own life, and to her relationship and life with Eddie?

17. Discuss why Eddie is angry at his wife for dying so young. Examine what Marguerite means when she says, "Lost love is still love. It takes a different form. You can't see their smile or bring them food or tousle their hair or move them around on the dance floor. But when these senses waken, another heightens. . . . Life has an end. Love doesn't." Why does she say this to Eddie? Do you think he gets it? Discuss whether or not you agree with her, and why.

18. Why does Eddie come upon the children in the river? What does Tala mean when she says "you make good for me"? Discuss whether or not Eddie's life is a penance, and why. What is the significance of Tala pulling Eddie to safety after he dies? Why is it Tala that pulls him to heaven and not one of the other four?

19. What would you say to Eddie when he laments that he accomplished nothing with his life? Discuss what has he accomplished.

20. Briefly recall the five lessons Eddie learns. How might these be important for all of us? Share which five people might meet you in heaven, and what additional or different lessons might be important to your life. Discuss how Algom's **The Five People You Meet in Heaven** has provided you with a different perspective of your life.