

Here's our Focus, just so you know!

Pairs of Events

Dramatic Foils

Symbols

Theme: Conquering Seemingly Insurmountable Obstacles

## Questions

Opening Scene/Credits:

1. What music is playing during the opening credits/opening shots of this movie?

2. What sound is heard when the family prays before their Sunday dinner?

3. What does the man take from the closet before he leaves the house?

4. Did Wylie (the black boy who was drinking down by the train tracks) intend to cause a tragedy? How did this terrible thing happen?

5. Briefly describe the differences between the two funerals.

6. What do you think of Mose when he leaves Edna Spalding's farm after she is unwilling to give him work?

7. Why do you think Edna chooses to give Mose work when he is brought back to her door?

8. Mose moves into the barn, and Frank (Edna's son) seems eager for his attention, even though Mose is not very friendly to him initially. Why do you think Frank is eager for Mose's attention?

9. What do you think of Mr. Denby (the banker) and his attitude toward Edna when she visits the bank? When he brings Mr. Will to her house as a boarder?

10. Two couples' marriages are in trouble. Wayne and Margaret (Edna's sister who owns the beauty shop) have been friends for a long time with Bud and Viola (the school teacher). But Wayne and Viola are having an affair — unfaithful to their spouses. How does this part of the story make you even MORE sympathetic to Edna who is recently widowed?

11. Why is Mr. Will's victrola so important to him?

12. Why do you think the writer had Edna taking a bath when Mr. Will comes in to complain about the scratched record?

13. If we think of this story in chapters, Chapter 1 was the tragedy in which two men ended up dead. Chapter 2 set the challenge of life as a widow before Edna Spalding. Chapter 3 reveals Edna's plan to survive as a single parent and the team she builds around her to fight against seemingly insurmountable obstacles. What is her plan for survival? Who is on her "team"? What are the seemingly insurmountable obstacles that are against her success?

14. What unexpected tragedy impacts the whole town of Waxahachie one afternoon?

15. Who shows himself to be an unlikely hero at Edna's home during this tragedy? What does he do?

16. When things are quiet and everyone comes out of the cellar, Mose says, "Everything's a little bent, but it's still here." In what way might he be talking about MORE than the physical house that survived the physical storm?

17. When it is time to harvest the cotton, the camera shows us what appears to be endless acres of plants stretching as far as the eye can see. All of those acres mean the chance to earn a big pay-off when it is sold. Why do these shots create an unpleasant, overwhelming mood for the audience rather than one of joyful expectation?

18. During the scenes of picking cotton, what is often the only sound?

19. Why do you think Edna dreams of dancing with her dead husband, Royce?

20. On the last night, who are all the people picking cotton on Edna's farm? List them here. If you do not know a name, describe the person somehow.

21. Which characters do you think deserve real credit for the cotton harvest? List at least 4 and explain how each contributed in his/her own way.

22. What does Mr. Will ask Edna when she is repairing Frank's shoe at the kitchen table? Why do you think Mr. Will wants to know?

23. What does Mr. Will do that unexpectedly changes everything when Mose is in great danger in the barn at night?

24. Another dance is held as the movie draws to a close. What is it about the dances in this movie that seem to be important? Are they perhaps MORE than just a gathering of people and music? Do they show us something important about the people who attend them?

25. The final scene of this movie is very unusual. On the front row, a married couple sits together and the wife has cuts on her hands. Who are they? Why is it particularly moving to see them there?

26. Communion is observed, and as the wine is passed from person to person, what does each say to the next?

27. Some very unexpected characters sit in the pews and share in communion. Which characters were you very surprised to see? Why?