

BLM 4 Reader Response Questions: Medicine River

Section One: Chapter One to end of Chapter Four

1. The first two chapters of the novel give some background to the character of Will. Describe him, based on what you have seen so far in the novel. What kind of person is he? What do you think of him? Compare him to another person you know, or another character you have seen in a book or a movie.
2. Chapter Three is all about the birth of Wilma, also known as South Wing. The doctors and nurses at the hospital all make a mistake about Will. What is that mistake? Why do you think Will doesn't correct their mistake for them?
3. Chapter Four is short but tells two very sad stories. Briefly retell those stories. Why do you think King placed those two stories together, and what do you think he wanted you to learn from reading them?

Section Two: Chapter Five to end of Chapter Eight

4. Throughout the novel, we learn more and more about Will's mother, who died just before he moved back to Medicine River. What does the story about Erleen tell us about Will's mother? Does she approve or disapprove of Erleen, and how can we tell?
5. Chapter Seven shows the beginning and the progress of Will and Harlen's friendship. How did they become friends? Why do you think Harlen wanted Will to move to Medicine River so badly? What does Harlen's sickness tell us about how their friendship has progressed?
6. The story of Susan reveals why Will is alone. How do you think the relationship with Susan affected Will? How does his relationship with Harlen help Will?

Section Three: Chapter Nine to end of Chapter Fourteen

7. Chapter Ten tells the story of Will searching for a present for South Wing's first birthday. Discuss the journey he and Harlen take, as well as the significance of the choice of gift.
8. Describe Harlen's relationship with his brother. Why don't Harlen and Will jump off the trestle? What do you think actually happened in the story told by Joe?
9. Discuss the matchmaking process between Harlen and Bertha. Why is there resistance from both of them? What ultimately happens? Why is it so significant that someone is interfering in Harlen's life?

Section Four: Chapter Fifteen to the End

10. Chapter 15 goes back and forth between Will's childhood family photo and the one he is orchestrating at the river. Discuss the similarities and differences between the two family photos. What is the significance of Will's inclusion in the recent one?
11. How much has Will's life changed since he moved back home to Medicine River? How has it stayed the same?
12. This novel is told as a series of intersecting vignettes. How effective do you think this style is for telling the story? Use examples from the novel to support your response.