

# *The Wizard of Oz*

## Advanced Comprehension Questions

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*The Wizard of Oz* can be read as a fantastic adventure or as radical literature that questions the norms of our civilization.

For example, Dorothy, the heroine, lives in the grain-belt, the prairies, and her step-parents own a domesticated animal farm. Meat and grains are not good food for humans, so during her journey Dorothy is able to sample different kinds of food, and wherever the people she meets eat fruit, nuts or vegetables she finds good and healthy people.

Secondly, *The Wizard of Oz* symbolizes our political class. Like Dorothy and her three friends, we imagine that politicians can save or just help us, but Oz has no power to help anyone. So, we must conclude that the author meant that political systems are evil and that we should live without them.

Thirdly, Dorothy's three friends clearly possess the qualities they think they need. From this we can infer that the author meant that people do not need all the medicines, surgeries, transplants and technologies that they think they need, they only need to live more in harmony with nature.

Finally, Dorothy should not want to go home, back to the 'real' world, just as we should not want to stay in this world – a world referred to by John Perkins as the “death economy.”

### CHAPTER-BY-CHAPTER QUESTIONS

*INSTRUCTIONS: Please answer questions for each chapter immediately after you finish reading a chapter. Do not read the entire book before starting the questions. Secondly, if some questions require too much time, skip them. You are not required to answer every question, only to answer questions well, with detail and good diction (word choices), punctuation and grammar.*

#### Chapter 1

1. Explain in a paragraph the many reasons Dorothy's home is not a good home.

#### Chapter 2

1. Most heroes kill villains intentionally. How is Dorothy different?
2. Are silver shoes heavy? Explain the joke or irony.
3. What proves that the Munchkins live in a land that's better than Dorothy's home?
4. Prove that the Munchkins are sensitive people.
5. **After you finish reading the story, explain whether Dorothy ever does anything heroic.**
6. **After you finish reading the story, prove that the good Witch of the North was wrong about the Wizard of Oz.**

#### Chapter 3

1. Did Dorothy have a healthy breakfast? Research problems associated with gluten and lactose.
2. Why did Dorothy stop using her leather shoes and start using her newly obtained silver shoes? Would you wear silver shoes on a long journey? Explain.
3. Find and discuss evidence that the Scarecrow is already intelligent.
4. What was the Scarecrow's only fear in the world? Is it wise to think you have only one thing to fear? Explain.

#### Chapter 4

1. Why does Dorothy want to go back home? Is this a good reason? Explain.
2. When the farmer made the scarecrow, what was the first thing he made? Why?
3. Why did the Scarecrow become sad when the farmer & the Munchkin left him alone?

#### Chapter 5

1. What is Dorothy feeding Toto? What's your opinion of this?
2. What lesson should the Tin Woodman have learned before he lost his entire human body?

#### Chapter 6

1. Discuss evidence that the Tin Woodman already has a heart.
2. How did Dorothy feel when she heard the growls from the woods and what does this mean?
3. The Lion tried to eat the food that is right for him, but Dorothy stopped him. Discuss.
3. What kind of real person does the Wizard of Oz represent? Try to make a connection to the real world.
4. Use the words sensitive, over-sensitive and irrational to discuss the Tin Woodman's feelings about stepping on the bug.

#### Chapter 7

1. The Lion says, "your tastes are so peculiar that you prefer cooked food." Are humans peculiar for preferring cooked food? Please research the benefits of a raw food diet and discuss the evidence in the novel that the Tin Woodman and others do not understand nature and natural diet.
2. The Lion knows that the Kalidahs live on the other side of the ditch, and yet he brought his friends there. Is he lacking in courage or in something more important? Discuss.
3. After crossing the tree lying across the ditch, Dorothy enters a land much better than that of her home. Explain.

#### Chapter 8

1. The Tin Woodman thinks his ax and dead trees and creatures are the solution for every obstacle to progress. Human progress does, in fact, seem to require deforestation and biocide. Please elaborate in a paragraph.
2. How did the author hint that humans do not belong on water?
3. The Stork is very helpful. What opportunity did Dorothy miss? Why do you think Dorothy forgot to request the Stork's help?

4. Poppies are the source of opium, heroin, and opioid derivatives that are common in modern day America. Do a little research and comment on the relevance of this chapter to life in 21<sup>st</sup> century America. Use the word *epidemic* in your answer.

#### Chapter 9

1. What proves that the Tin Woodman does not understand the natural order?
2. What proves that the mice have broken the natural order of life for mice? Hint: ants and bees have queens, and mice don't help felines.
3. What proves that the Lion no longer understands the natural order and his natural diet?

#### Chapter 10

1. Dorothy thinks the journey is for nothing if the Wizard of Oz cannot help her and her friends. Do you agree? Has she experienced anything good during her journey?
2. The man with the injured leg lives near Emerald City. Why should this make Dorothy ask some important questions, and what might those questions be?
3. Why could people only see illusions created by Oz? Can you see or hear what your political leaders are actually doing? Why don't they want to talk to the daughters of poor farmers?
4. The green tinted glasses represent the false perspective or illusions we have about cities and rulers. Explain.
5. The color green symbolizes the color of money in America. What does this tell you about the Emerald City and Oz?
6. **After you finish the novel, remark on the meaning of the fact that none of the characters appear to have removed their green-tinted glasses.**

#### Chapter 11

1. The Emerald City is really the City of Death. Explain with reference to animals, plants and some of the elements (Earth, Air, Fire, Water).
2. The Emerald City is also the land of poor health. Explain with reference to food and lifestyle.
3. The Emerald City is also the land of delusion and slavery. Explain with reference to any evidence of a class system and of deception.
4. Discuss evidence that Dorothy has become a spoiled princess and that, all along, she never cared about anyone except herself.
5. In your opinion, not Oz's, why does Oz want Dorothy to kill the Wicked Witch of the West?
6. What is a humbug? Find a few synonyms and provide examples of real humbugs.
7. Oz the great and terrible answers each of the character's questions in different forms. What does it tell us about him?
8. Consider the "great light" hanging in Oz's palace, and check to see when the first electric lights were developed, then reflect on what the author meant by putting such lights in the Emerald City.

#### Chapter 12

1. The Winged Monkeys fear the sign of love. Explain.
2. The author wrote his novel around the year 1900. When were the first successful airplanes flown? How is this relevant?

3. What is unusual about the fights in this chapter? What does it mean?
4. Dorothy was easily enslaved. Comment on this and what she should have done.

### Chapter 13

1. Many creatures obey the Wicked Witch of the West even though they outnumber her and she doesn't appear to have any power of her own. What should her slaves and subjects do? How is the Wicked Witch similar to the Wizard of Oz?
2. Water is usually associated with life. Explain how water is used ironically in this chapter.
3. The Winkies rescue two of Dorothy's friends and provide great gifts to Dorothy and all her friends. Did Dorothy and her friends deserve such generosity? Are they ever generous? Explain.

### Chapter 14

1. Quelala's name suggests that he represents indigenous and 'undeveloped' people, while the Winged Monkeys that know how to fly nearly killed him and appear to be racist. How is this story like true history?
2. What evidence shows that both Quelala and the princess are foolish?
3. The Winged Monkeys were enslaved by Gayelette, the good Witch of the North. What's wrong with this story?

### Chapter 15

1. In what way is Oz like God?
2. Even though Dorothy thinks the great Oz is a humbug, why does she still ask for his help?

### Chapter 16

1. Dorothy's three companions are clearly being duped, bamboozled and conned by the Wizard of Oz. In what way does the Wizard of Oz's solutions resemble the solutions of a surgeon and a doctor? Is this similarity intentional? Try to find evidence on the web that modern medicine (and surgery) is also a fraud.
2. The name "Oz" comes from oz, a British abbreviation of ounce and is used in measuring precious metals like gold and silver, metals that were, in Baum's time, still money. Discuss evidence that the wizard is only interested in profits and money. Remember that his original job probably paid very little.
3. Despite the evidence that the three companions were conned and defrauded, they actually believe that they were treated fairly. Nowadays, many people die while being treated for cancer, and the number of people with cancer is growing, and yet people still believe the treatment is good. Research and comment.
4. Dorothy and the three companions paid the Wizard of Oz by killing his competitor, the Wicked Witch of the West. Traditionally, witches tried to cure diseases with plant-based medicines, but this tradition was killed or destroyed by proponents of modern medicine *because* modern

medicine is more profitable, not because it is better. Briefly research the history of herbalism, naturopathy and allopathic medicine and summarize and comment on your research.

#### Chapter 17

1. How did the Wizard of Oz cheat Dorothy? Was the hot air really responsible for causing the balloon to leave without her? Or, should Oz have waited for Dorothy to come before he filled the balloon with hot air? What other reasons exist for doubting the story?
2. What is the slang meaning of "hot air"?
3. Do you think the Scarecrow will make a good leader for the Emerald City? Explain in a paragraph, or argue both sides in two paragraphs.

#### Chapter 18

1. Why couldn't the monkey king fly to Kansas with Dorothy? Consider the natural diet of monkeys.
2. The Lion says he longs for the forest. Why is this foolish and unnatural?
3. The three companions feel indebted to Dorothy. Explain why they are wrong.

#### Chapter 19

1. Why might the trees living near a big city treat humans as their enemies?
2. What proof do we have the Tin Woodman's new heart is less sensitive than his old one?
3. Do Dorothy and her silly friends ever try to resolve conflict through discussion, understanding and compromise? Explain how they might have made peace with the trees.
4. The Lion said, "I have lost much flesh since I lived there, and now I am anxious for a chance to show the other beasts how courageous I have grown." Explain why this is idiotic.

#### Chapter 20

1. The china people and their animals live beyond the wall. Please explain why walls, or fences, are necessary.
2. Why were most of the townspeople frightened of them? Why might their fragile condition symbolize osteoporosis? How could their fragile condition symbolize their intolerance and over-sensitivity?
3. How did Dorothy reveal or lack of sensitivity when she spoke to the princess?
4. Mr. Joker, a clown, had a message for his people. What was it?
5. What evidence do we have that the Princess is superficial?

#### Chapter 21

1. How did the Lion prove that he doesn't understand where lions belong?
2. How did the Lion prove that he's still a coward?
3. Research *arachnophobia* and discuss how it relates to this chapter. Use the word *irrational* in your answer.
4. Why is it crazy and unnatural for other animals to ask their Lion to rule them?

## Chapter 22

1. "Use your head," is an English expression. Explain how it relates to this chapter.
2. Explain, with evidence from the text, why the Quadlings are fat.
3. Could the Quadlings actually be quadrupeds? Explain with reference to grazing animals, grasses, and the fact that quadrupeds do not have hands.

## Chapter 23

1. Wherever there are kings, there are also poor slaves and subjects. Reflect and discuss in relation to this chapter.
2. Glinda the good witch does not appear to have any supernatural powers. Explain.
3. What does Dorothy's Uncle Henry have in common with the china people? What is the meaning of this similarity? Consider Henry's age.

## Chapter 24

1. Discuss the evidence that Dorothy's aunt and uncle are still poor and still struggling with the wrong foods and the wrong climate.

## Remember

### ELEMENTARY ANALYTICAL ESSAY TOPIC

In each chapter, try to find evidence that 1) Dorothy should not want to go home, 2) The Scarecrow is already intelligent, 3) the Tin Woodman is already caring, already has a heart, 4) the Lion is already brave, and 5) the Wizard of Oz is a liar, a fraud, and a rich man who can't help anyone.

### ADVANCED ANALYTICAL ESSAY TOPIC

In each chapter, find evidence of stupidity. The stupidity can be quality of any of the main characters, any of the secondary characters, and even of the narrator. Here are some hints that will help you identify stupidity in each chapter: bad food choices, fear of imaginary monsters, making 'progress' by cutting down trees, enjoying the pretty clothes and other luxuries produced by slaves or workers but not wanting to be a slave or worker, doing or risking violence to your body to make others laugh, and so on.

### ARGUMENTATIVE ESSAY TOPIC

The novel's message is that a culture based on foods produced by trees is superior to a culture based on annuals and animals, grasses and livestock, grain and domesticated animal products. Find evidence for this claim, do some of your own research and thinking beyond the novel about this claim, and write an argumentative essay.