

Below are some essential questions, themes and topics that will guide our class discussions and activities, so it is important for you to be familiar with them and able to participate in discussions.

Themes for *The Secret Life of Bees* and *The Help*:

Women

Home Life

Oppression

Social Injustice

Challenging the Rules or Expectations

1. Connections: text to text, text to self, text to the world. Compare and contrast your book to others you've read, to situations or people in your own life, to events in history or the news.

2. Characters: Do you like the main characters or not? Why?

3. Social Questions: Look for race, gender, or class inequalities and injustices. Who has the power in the story and how is it used? What do you think? Does it make you think or feel differently about those of another race or gender than your own?

INCOMING FRESHMEN AND SOPHOMORES:

Questions to think about while reading *The Secret Life of Bees*

Lily grew up without her mother, but in the end she finds a house full of them. Have you ever had a mother figure in your life who wasn't your true mother?

What compelled Rosaleen to spit on the three men's shoes? What does it take for a person to stand up with conviction against brutalizing injustice?

Had you ever heard of the Black Madonna? What do you think of the story surrounding the Black Madonna in the novel? What role did the Black Madonna play in that community and in the novel?

Why do people keep secrets?

What do the bees mean in the story? What is the secret life of bees?

Think about the sisters. Who was your favorite? Did you understand May's situation? Why do you think June was cold towards Lily? How would you describe August?

What was your reaction to Lily's relationship with Zach? What do you think happened to them in the future?

How do you feel about T-Ray? What was your reaction to his treatment of Lily in the novel?