

In a Handful of Dust
Whole Book Discussion Questions

How are women perceived in the novel? Examine the role of a woman in this novel.

How do different characters view/treat women in this book? Select specific characters and discuss how they are viewed/treated in the novel.

How does Lynn view men in the novel? Discuss specific characters and her views of them.

How does Lucy view men in the novel? Discuss specific characters and her views of them.

In a novel, characters often change for good (or worse). What characters changed for the better and what was the transforming moment? What characters changed for the worst, and what was the transforming moment?

What do you believe is the main conflict in the novel? Define it, discuss how it shapes the book and how it was resolved (or why it wasn't resolved).

Why do you think Mindy McGinnis decided to write the book in the POV of Lucy? How would the story have changed if it were written in the POV of Lynn?

The title of the book is *In A Handful Of Dust*. Analyze and explain the meaning of this title. Why is it important in the story? Cite specific textual evidence to support your analysis.

The lack of water devastates the land, but from that, what other problems and implications arrive? Explain these in detail. Can you hypothesize other problems that weren't addressed in the book that may arise from the lack of water?

How is setting important to this novel? Analyze specific settings and explain its significance using specific examples as to how they contribute to the overall theme/message of the novel.

What statement is the author, Mindy McGinnis, making about family? Explain using specific examples from the text.

Lucy looks at Lynn as a surrogate mother. Do you believe Lynn is a good parent? Evaluate both their good and bad qualities before making a final decision and explaining your view.

Survival is an ever-present concern for the characters. How does this drive the action of the book? How does it affect different characters in the book?

Compare Lynn and Lucy. How are they different? How are they alike?

Examine the character of Lucy. How does she change throughout the course of the novel? Trace her progression from the start to the end and use specific examples to show her transformation.

Examine the character of Lynn. How does she change throughout the course of the novel? Trace her progression from the start to the end and use specific examples to show her transformation.

Explain how Lucy overcomes specific obstacles in the novel (both personal and environmental). Cite specific textual evidence to support your analysis.

Who are the secondary characters in the novel? Explain how each of these secondary characters is important and what they contribute to the novel.

Identify some major themes or the central idea in the book. Where do we see examples of it? How does this theme develop throughout the book and how does it affect the outcome? Cite specific textual examples to support your responses.

Additional Question: Can you think of any other stories, poems, movies, or songs that have this same theme? Describe them.

We read books for enjoyment, but sometimes we discover that books can teach us things. What has *In a Handful of Dust* taught you? Describe in detail.

This guide aligns with Common Core Standards ELA-Literacy.RI.9-10 1, 2, 3, 9, 10 and ELA-Literacy.WI.9-10 1.