**TOPIC QUESTIONS:**

**Virginia Woolf’s *Mrs. Dalloway* (1925)**

1. Why did Clarissa marry Richard Dalloway instead of Peter Walsh, and why, after all the intervening years, does she still think wistfully about Peter?
2. How does Virginia Woolf contrast Clarissa at age 18, living in Bourton, with Clarissa in her early 50s, living in London after experiencing a serious illness?
3. The narrator notes that Clarissa’s “only gift was knowing people by instinct.” What does this imply, and to what extent does Clarissa reveal this talent in the novel?
4. Why is Clarissa’s mind drawn to her memory of Sally Seton at significant times?
5. What impact does the First World War still have on Clarissa and the English people in the mid 1920s?
6. How does Clarissa differ from her husband, Richard, in terms of their priorities in life?
7. Why does Clarissa sometimes wish she could be someone like Lady Bexborough?
8. Why does Woolf associate Septimus Warren Smith with an important but never identified person prominent in the British Empire whose face is barely seen behind the blinds of a motor car?
9. What causes Septimus to feel so agitated when he sees the motor car?
10. How does the passing of the motor car affect Clarissa and the shop clerks on Bond Street?
11. How do Septimus and his Italian wife, Lucrezia, differ in their reactions to the sight of an “aeroplane” advertising a product by inscribing the letters of its name in the sky with its exhaust?
12. How does Woolf suggest that Septimus is in danger of losing his mind?
13. What makes Lucrezia’s predicament so difficult for her?
14. What does Carrie Dempster mean by “the loss of roses”?
15. Why does Mr. Bentley associate the aeroplane with St. Paul’s Cathedral?
16. Why does Lady Millicent Bruton’s luncheon invitation to Richard affect Clarissa so deeply?
17. Why does hosting a party in her home where everyone has a good time mean so much to Clarissa?
18. What is Peter’s attitude toward Clarissa and the marriage she has made?
19. Why does the sight of young men marching in military uniforms give Peter a bittersweet feeling?
20. What is the significance of Peter’s following a young woman he sees while walking across Trafalgar Square?
21. What goes through the mind of Septimus when Lucrezia tells him she has had to take off her wedding ring because her hand has become too thin?
22. How did the First World War and the death of his comrade Evans affect Septimus?
23. What does Woolf mean by the “Goddess” “conversion”?
24. Why is Clarissa so hurt when Peter criticizes the parties she hosts?
25. Why does Doris Kilman envy and even resent Clarissa?
26. Why is Doris drawn to Westminster Cathredal, and what does she hope to find there?
27. Why does Septimus react so desperately when he hears Lucrezia speaking with Holmes on the staircase?
28. How does Clarissa react to the arrivals of Peter, Sally, and the Prime Minister at her party?
29. What goes through Clarissa’s mind when Lady Bradshaw tells her about the suicide of a young man?
30. Why does Clarissa, to a certain degree, identify with the dead man?
31. Why does Sally sympathize with Peter at the party?
32. How should we interpret the last few paragraphs of the novel, and from whose point of view do we see Clarissa at the end?