

Just a Drop of Water by Kerry O'Malley Cerra

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. A cover can tell a lot about a story. Study the cover of *Just a Drop of Water*. What stands out? What do you think the story will be about?
2. Some book titles are very commercial and tell you exactly what the book will be about. Others are more literary and make you think. Before reading the book, think about the title *Just a Drop of Water*. Does it give you any clue to what the book will be about?
3. From the very first chapter on, it's clear that Jake longs to be a hero. In what ways do you see him try to fulfill this desire? Do you think he's successful in the end?
4. Have you ever longed to be a hero? Describe what makes you heroic. What else have you longed to be?
5. In what ways does the author keep the tension rising as the book moves forward? Cite specific examples.
6. The author chose Jake to narrate the story. How do you think the book would have been different if it had been told from Sam's point of view? Is there another character you wish had told the story? Why?
7. The book is set in a small Florida town. Why do you think the author chose this setting? How important is this to the book?
8. Compare and contrast the siblings Sam and Amber, especially noting their actions following September 11th. Also compare and contrast Jake and Sam. Which character do you relate to most? Why?
9. The author states that the purpose of history is to learn from past mistakes and successes. Cite examples used in the text to make this point. Do you agree or disagree with the statement?
10. Based on the above question, examine the placement of Japanese Americans into Internment Camps during WWII. Compare and contrast this to the detainment of Sam's dad in *Just a Drop of Water*.
11. Describe the difference between tolerance and acceptance. Cite specific examples of intolerance, tolerance, and acceptance throughout the book. Where does Jake's mom stand on this? How does her stance on this change throughout the book?
12. Explain how Jake responds to changes as the plot moves forward. Cite specific examples from the beginning, middle, and end to show his progression.
13. Evaluate how Jake and Sam's friendship changes throughout the book.

14. Jake and Sam endure much during the course of the book. Do you believe they'll stay friends? Why or why not?

15. What statement is the author making about prejudices?

16. What themes does this book explore? (help: fear, friendship, loyalty, peace) Choose one. Cite examples of this theme in the text. Why do you think the author chose to write about this? How does the theme progress throughout the book? How does this theme affect different characters? How does the theme affect the outcome of the book?

17. Cite different examples of cause and effect in throughout the book.

18. The author arranges each chapter by calendar date rather than titles. Why do you think that is? Create your own chapter titles for the book and explain your reasoning for each.

19. Though Matt may seem like a small supporting character in the book, why do you think the author included him? What importance does he play?

20. Near the end of Chapter 8, Jake's mom is referring to Sam's family when she says, "No. But how well do we really know them?" What do you think propels her to say this? What do you think she means by it?

21. In fiction, it's important for a character to arc (change/grow) by the end of a book. Make a list of the characters that help Jake arc. Pick your favorite and study in detail their role in Jake's growth.

22. Now that you've read the book, how appropriate do you think the title is? How does the author's explanation of Just a Drop of Water differ from what you inferred it to mean before you began reading? What might be a good alternate title for this book?