**Part Three**

1. In Part Three, six characters die or their deaths are described—Una, Samuel, Charles, Lee's mother, Dessie and Tom. How does the omnipresence of death change the mood and atmosphere of the novel?

2. Samuel, Adam, Cal, Dessie and Tom all lie to protect the feelings of others in Part Three. Is their deception justifiable as a kindness, or is it ultimately a breach of trust? Compare their actions to that of Lee's father. Note also Lee's advice to Adam about telling the boys the truth about Cathy.

3. How are the twins, Cal and Aron, different? Look at the paragraph near the end of Chapter 27, where the difference in the two boys is described by their supposed responses to an anthill. How do Cal's actions accord with that description?

4. In many ways, Lee's mother is the opposite of Cathy. How so? Why is the story of her rape included in the novel? Is the way that Lee's father and then Lee tell the story important?

5. Consider the importance of the automobile and the advent of the ready-made dress. How is technical progress changing life in the Salinas Valley, and what affect does it have on characters such as Will?

6. Some critics have derided Lee as stereotypical—the inscrutable, wise Oriental man. Especially during the discussion of timshel, do you find him convincing? Why does he play so many roles in the novel?

7. What do you suppose Charles' motives were in equally dividing his inheritance between Adam and Cathy?

8. In *Journal of a Novel: The East of Eden Letters*, Steinbeck wrote, "I think you will find that Cathy as Kate fascinates people. … People are always interested in evil even when they pretend their interest is clinical. And they will mull Kate over. They will forget I said she was bad. And they will hate her because while she is a monster, she is a little piece of the monster in all of us. It won't be because she is foreign that people will be interested but because she is not." Why does Cathy begin to show cracks in her façade during her confrontation with Adam? If she seems more recognizably human in her rage and sorrow, is she still a monster as first described? Why would Steinbeck wish to make his readers see Cathy in different ways? If the author is "rereading" Cathy with each encounter, is he also asking readers to reexamine her and their assumptions about evil? Or does she remain fixed throughout the novel-thoroughly evil, unsympathetic and a "monster"?

9. The scene when Adam first confronts Cathy is remarkable. Note how her body is described, her hands. How does Steinbeck convey Cathy's physical decline and Adam's response to her? 1

10. Why does Abra tease the boys? Does she seem admirable?

11. Why is Adam so uncomfortable with the Bacons? Why does he take their advice? In buying a car, does Adam seem suddenly a more resolute character?

**Part Four**

1. In Part One, the story of the Trask family unfolds in the shadows of the Civil War and fighting in the West against Native Americans. In Part Four, the lives of the next generation of Trasks are set against the backdrop of World War I. What is the relationship between the private and public conflicts evoked in East of Eden? What does the story of Cain and Abel have to do with war?

2. Much is made of the differences between Cal and Aron, but what traits do they share? How do they deal with their respective senses of inadequacy?

3. Both Adam in Part One and Aron in Part Four come to hate their fathers. Why

? In what ways are Cyrus and Adam Trask alike in their ambitions for their sons?

4. How is Aron's imagination of Abra similar to Adam's inability to see nothing but what he wants to see in Cathy? What does their infatuation suggest about a state of innocence and purity?

5. Is Aron's obsession with goodness and purity a form of self-indulgence? 6. What is the nature of the despair that makes both Charles (in Part One) and Cal (in Part Four) restless, drawn to borders of respectability? If Charles and Cal—as opposed to Adam and Aron—are the sons who love their fathers, why do their fathers reject them?

7. By presenting Adam with a gift of $15,000, is Cal really acting out of jealousy and trying to buy his father's affection, or is he motivated by virtuous impulses? Why does Adam reject his son's gift?

8. What in Aron does Cathy identify with? Why does she bequeath her ill-gotten fortune only to him? Why does she commit suicide?

9. Has Adam acted properly by not telling his sons the truth about their mother? Is Adam a good father?

10. How is Abra an agent of change in the novel? How is she different from other women in East of Eden?

11. Why does Abra cease to love Aron, and why does she burn his letters? Compare the three scenes of burning paper—Kate's pictures, Cal's money, Abra's letters.

12. What is the nature of the bond between Lee and Abra? Why does he give her a gift of his mother's treasured possession?

13. What is the novel's position on flawed humanity, as instanced by Cal and Abra?

14. How does inheritance—financial and moral—feature in the novel? What are its ramifications for the lives of Charles and Adam, Adam and Cathy, and Aron?

What inheritance does Cal receive from the dying Adam that is unlike any other in the book?

15. What does Adam mean when he utters the word timshel at the novel's conclusion?

16. Why is Lee increasingly important in the novel? Why is the role of surrogate father given to a Chinese character?

17. Why is Samuel Hamilton's memory evoked so often? What does he come to represent in the novel? Does he represent more in death than he does when he's alive?