

2019 *The Secret Life of Bees* Paper Topics

***Challenge Topic

1. During the course of the novel, Lily's idea of a mother changes significantly, wearing many different faces, so to speak. Write an essay in which you **analyze** the nature of the changes of "motherhood."

2. During the Middle Ages, some literature that was written and published dealt with moral issues; plays of such a nature were called "morality plays." It has been said that *The Secret Life of Bees* is similar -- a novel of moral and ethical significance. **Develop this idea, using examples to substantiate your thinking.**

***3. Consider the various ways the novelist displays religion. How would you describe Sue Monk Kidd's "belief system," that is, how people should treat each other? Consider the ways people worship in the novel, how they find healing, how they deal with conflict, how they learn to improve the quality of their lives and how they forgive themselves. You may wish to examine a typical meeting of the group at August's house and how "our Lady of the Chains" figures into this.

4. On page 16, Lily mentions how she wrote "My Philosophy of Life" for a school assignment. Based on what you know so far, **what would be her philosophy?** Think about her philosophy and how it changes in the novel.

***5. Lily has suffered the double loss of her mother when she was a baby and the emotional "loss" of a father who doesn't treat her as though he loves her. On the other hand, between Rosaleen, August Boatwright, Zach and the Daughters of Mary, one might argue that she acquires a new family, one who cares for her, suffers with her and provides her with guidance and support. Organize your essay to explain first how Lily suffers from the loss of her mother and the poor treatment of her by her father, and then how the non-related people in Tiburon, South Carolina become her family. **Discuss and analyze** what does each family member provide for her, and what does she do for them, in return.

5. **Trace and develop** the theme of forgiveness throughout the novel.

7. The novel deals with many negative actions, such as the death of a parent, the mental and physical abuse of another parent, racial prejudice and violence. But it also offers positive actions as well, such as the "kindness of strangers," loyalty of friends, the willingness to trust and support new relationships, and the beginnings of romantic love. Good artistic works often merge the positive and the negative into one interwoven story. Organize your essay to explain how Sue Monk Kidd realistically depicts many evils of the world (all of which actually exist in real life), but also how she offers hope by supplying Lily and the reader with the counter suggestions of how we can overcome such evil with positive actions and beliefs.