

The Housekeeper and the Professor – Discussion Questions

1. The characters in the novel are nameless. How does the absence of names affect your relationship to them as a reader? Are names essential to identity?
2. How does Ogawa creatively portray a character with only eighty minutes of short-term memory? Which details felt most vivid or moving to you?
3. Though the Professor remains static, the relationships among the three deepen. What does the novel suggest about memory and the foundations of meaningful relationships?
4. The Professor speaks of math proving the existence of God but not the devil. How does this paradox apply to memory, love, or human experience?
5. Many families in the novel are broken. What does Ogawa suggest about the nature of family and belonging?
6. Did your perception of the Professor change as his past was revealed? How would you describe the nature of his relationship with the Housekeeper?