

The Secret Sharer, by Joseph Conrad
British Literature Summer Reading Guide

Directions: Answer the questions, using textual evidence and citing page numbers. You may record your answers on a separate piece of paper or type your answers.

Simple questions of fact – cite the page number and passage from which you glean the answer.

1. What year is it in the narrative?
2. Is a “sleeping suit” the same thing as pajamas?
3. “Homeward journey” is mentioned several times —where is home for the captain?
4. List two ways that the Captain feels alone.
5. How does the crew feel about the Captain? Give at least two specific descriptions.
6. Why does the Captain pretend to be hard of hearing when the Captain of the *Sephora* arrives?
7. What purpose does the Captain’s hat serve at the end of the short story?

Interpretive questions – cite the page and passage which helps you formulate your answer. These answers will be opinion based, but must be supported with textual evidence.

1. Are these events really happening or is the captain hallucinating? Does Leggatt exist?
2. When the Captain encounters him, he describes him as being dead. Why do you think he is described as being “dead”? What might this be saying about the Captain’s feelings at that moment?
3. Why do you think the Captain is having trouble on his ship? Do you think that he is to blame for the issues or is there another reason?
4. Does Leggatt resemble the Captain as much as the Captain thinks? (Remember he is constantly referring to the guy as both a “double” and a “Ghost.”)
5. Clearly the narrator sees some of himself in Leggatt; what exactly does he see?
6. Why does the Captain think it was okay for Leggatt to murder somebody?
7. How truthful do you think Leggatt is in his tale?
8. Why does the Captain take so quickly to the Leggatt?
9. Why isn’t the Captain more concerned with getting the support of his crew rather than stowing away this other man?
10. Why would the Captain risk grounding his ship in order to get the stranger safely aboard – why risk so much for someone you don’t know, and will never see again?
11. What effect does the fugitive’s safe escape from the captain’s ship have on the captain? How does his relationship with his crew change