

# ***I Am Legend* Reading and Interpretive Questions**

## **Part 1, Chapter 1**

1. Explain the use of the pronoun they in the first sentence.
2. Describe Robert Neville: age, history, experiences, where he lives, interests, etc.
3. What has Robert done to keep the vampires out of his home?
4. What is on Robert's living room wall? How might it be read as a symbol?
5. Why do the women present a greater temptation to Robert than anyone/thing else? Why is it important that he resist them (and no I don't mean because he will turn into a vampire)?
6. What does Robert smash in Chapter 1? Why?

## **Chapter 2**

1. Explain a typical day in Robert's life. Why is this "schedule" an important step for Robert?
2. Robert's thoughts have a particular theme in Part I, Chapter 2. Outline his thoughts in simple form and describe the assumptions he makes from his analysis.
3. Robert goes to the pit when he arrives at the field. What was the most likely reason for the pit 6 months ago? What is it now? How are these two uses connected?
4. What seems to be Robert's purpose in life? Is it something that *must* do?
5. In what ways are the vampires of *I Am Legend* similar to and different from our common conceptions?

## **Chapter 3**

1. Robert is reading Bram Stoker's *Dracula*. His attention is drawn by the quote, "The strength of the vampire is that no one will believe in him." What do you think Stoker meant by this quote, and why does it seem preposterous to Robert in his present situation?
2. How does Neville deal with his dissatisfaction and frustration over his current life?
3. Summarize the thesis about vampires that Neville pontificates upon. What are the strengths/weaknesses to his argument?
4. Referring to the thesis mentioned in question number 3, to what does Robert compare the vampires?
5. In Chapter 3, several things drive Robert to despair. Describe one.

## **Chapter 4**

1. What is wrong with Robert when he wakes up?
2. How is the sky described throughout the chapter? Why is this important in relation to the last line of the chapter?
3. Why does Neville leave his house? What does he hope to gain?
4. How fast does Robert drive in Part I, Chapter 4? Where does he drive to? What does he do when he gets there?
5. What is Robert's silent wish?
6. What is the new method of killing vampires that Neville discovers? Why is this discovery an important turning point for Robert?
7. What part of a vampire does Robert think the more effective method of killing affects? Why does he believe this, and what does he intend to do about it?
8. As Robert drags the female vampire's body into his station wagon, what does he discover that strikes terror in his heart?
9. Identify who Virginia and Kathy are in relation to Neville.

## **Chapter 5**

1. What is Robert afraid the vampires will destroy in Part I, Chapter 5? Why is it important to his survival?
2. Describe Neville's journey home and how he finally gets into his house.
3. What other item (other than the answer to #1) did the vampires destroy? Why was it important, literally and metaphorically, to Neville?
4. How does Robert react to the vampire attack after he gets back in his house? What does Robert get out of his dresser drawer after he sees the vampires destroying his personal property? What happens after Robert realizes that the vampires are basically immune to his latest weapon?

## **Part 2, Chapter 6**

1. As part 2 opens, how much time has passed?
2. What changes has Neville made to his house? Include a description of the mural and what its significance may be.
3. Why does Matheson delay the reveal of what the mural is about? Suspense is not an acceptable answer.
4. What literary technique is involved in the second section of the chapter?
5. What happened during that war to begin all of the “trouble”? Who won the war? Other than the plague, what else happened as a result of the war?
6. Based on the information about Virginia, what symptoms did victims of the plague suffer from?
7. Where did Virginia and Robert consider sending Kathy? Why? Why does Neville ultimately decide to keep Kathy at home and going to school like always?

## **Chapter 7**

1. Explain the experimental process Neville uses to test the effectiveness of both garlic and the crucifix on vampires. What are his results?
2. Outline Robert's experiments on the female vampire in this chapter. Why does he only choose females?
3. When defending his behavior to himself, what does Robert say has "fallen with society"?
4. At what time does the female vampire “awaken”? What is unique about her process of rising? Speculate on how she knows that it is the right time?

## **Chapter 8**

1. Describe the additional experiments Robert performs on the vampires. What are the results of his experiments?
2. Why might a Mohammedan vampire be affected differently by a crucifix than the “average” vampire?
3. The vampires appear to be stalking their prey. What is their prey? What seems to be their motivation? Focus specifically on Cortman and the female vampires' behaviors throughout the novel.
4. Describe the two ways of vampiric deaths and Robert's suppositions about why there are different ways of dying for vampires.
5. Describe Robert's relationship with Ben Cortman before he became ill. Of whom does Cortman begin to remind Robert, and what is Robert's reaction to this realization?

## **Chapter 9**

1. In this chapter Matheson reveals what the authorities believe is the cause of the vampire plague. What is it?
2. This entire chapter is a flashback to the day of Virginia's death. Describe Neville's reaction in the moments directly after her death.
3. Contrast Neville's reaction to the death of Virginia to his reaction to the death of Kathy. Why might he feel and behave differently? Provide multiple reasons.
4. Virginia is the first in the family to fall ill and yet Kathy dies before her. What does this suggest about the pathology of the illness?
5. What does Robert do in defiance of the law after Virginia dies? Why?
6. What does Neville discover in Cortman's house? What does this suggest about the creation of vampires?
7. What happens after Robert buried Virginia in a shallow grave?

## **Chapter 10**

1. Explain why Robert finds the library both valuable and valueless.
2. What does Robert discover about the lymphatic system, and why do his discoveries leave him more
3. disturbed than before?
4. What does Robert think explains the musty odor given off by vampires?
5. Why does Neville seem so obsessed with ordering things and making lists (i.e. he keeps repeating the phrase “the first step”)?
6. What is Neville's 3 am epiphany?
7. Despite knowing statistically that vampirism could spread over the full world within months, Matheson goes out of his way to suggest a third method of rapid-transmission. Why?

### **Chapter 11**

1. Why does Robert acquire a microscope, and what does he see once he gets it to work?
2. Consider the description that Neville is forced to build a shelter over his bench of slides and experiments. This parallels to an earlier shelter that Neville built. What does it suggest about the importance of his research to him?
3. What appears to be Neville's "new" goal in this chapter?
4. Describe the hypothesis Robert forms about the two different types of vampires.
5. What other epidemic does Robert might be explained by vampires? How would this knowledge redefine our knowledge of the world and its history?

### **Chapter 12**

1. Neville states very early in the chapter that "certain things are established"—meaning he assumes them to be fact. Go back and reread his established facts; which are definitive facts, which seem to be facts based on observational data, and which are proven to be false. Why do these assumptions reveal about Neville's state of mind and his likelihood of finding a cure?
2. Explain the lists that Neville makes concerning vampires.
3. Neville, during one of his drinking binges, slashes at one of the murals on his wall. Speculate which one it is and why he would slash at it at this moment.
4. What does Robert find on the third day of his drinking binge? What is his reaction to this find?
5. Go back and re-read the last two paragraphs which are about Robert praying. What were Neville's religious beliefs before the plague? After the plague? At the precise moment of prayer?

### **Chapter 13**

1. Explain what happens between Robert and the dog. Explain what ultimately happens to him and what new hope the dog represents for Neville.
2. To what does Neville compare shopping for the dog? How is this an evolution from his behavior with the microscope.
3. Who was Androcles and how does he relate to Robert's interactions with the dog?
4. What "yearning" does the dog satisfy in Neville?
5. What have the vampires not done that surprises Robert?
6. How might Neville's actions actually have caused the dog to become more susceptible to vampirism?

### **Chapter 14**

1. During this chapter, what event does Robert recall during the final days of the plague? How does he feel about the people involved in this event?
2. In chapter 14, Robert comes up with a psychological explanation as a new perspective on the way vampires act. What is it and to what does he compare this psychological explanation?
3. Why might yellow journalism and "revival meetings" be very prevalent in such a crisis?
4. What does Neville believe is symbolically buried with the dog?
5. Describe the revival and explain why Neville was there and what his perceptions of the people involved are like.

### **Part 3, Chapter 15**

1. What has become Neville's favorite pastime?
2. Explain the irony of Ben Cortman's existence (at least according to Neville)?
3. What is Neville's "new" purpose in life?
4. Who does Neville meet running near his house? Describe her physically and emotionally.
5. How does chapter 13 serve as a parallel for this encounter? What predictions might you make about Ruth as a result?
6. Do some research on the biblical Ruth. How might her name be a significant allusion?
7. The end of the chapter is meant to be a biblical parallel. To what and why?

## Chapter 16

1. How is Neville disappointed with his meeting with Ruth? Why?
2. In Chapter 16, Neville brings Ruth back to his house. What does he think about her? Would you characterize his behavior as wondering or fearing? Is his reaction reasonable? Explain some of the methods Robert uses to try to detect test Ruth. What are her reactions?
3. Choose a tone word that would describe what note the relationship between Robert and Ruth begins upon.
4. What does Robert ask of Ruth that makes her angry?
5. What does Ruth claim has happened to her family?
6. What does Ruth say she doesn't care about? Speculate why she doesn't care. What earlier comment in the chapter by Neville shows that they feel similarly to one another?
7. Imagine this chapter from Ruth's point of view. How would she perceive the actions of Neville?

## Chapter 17

1. What do Robert and Ruth discuss over supper?
2. What does Ruth agree to allow Robert to do? Why?
3. What does Robert promise to do for Ruth if she is infected? Do you believe him? How does his decision affect how he interacts with Ruth?
4. Why does Neville think he is immune to the plague? Do you believe it? Is there real-world evidence that immunity can be passed cross-species?
5. What does Robert do in Chapter 17, to show Ruth that he does trust her?
6. Summarize Neville's research on the vampire bacteria.
7. What does Robert tell Ruth is the only way to fight living vampires?
8. Why do some vampires bleed to death while others dissolve into ashes?

## Chapter 18

1. The chapter begins with Neville calling out for "Virge" (Virginia). What emotion do you think is present in his voice? Why?
2. Where is Ruth when Robert wakes up in Part III, Chapter 18?
3. What story does Neville tell Ruth about his wife?
4. Neville says to Ruth, "I know what you feel, I know. I didn't at first, I didn't trust you. I was safe, secure in my little shell. Now—In a second, it's all gone. Adjustment, security, peace—all gone." What does he think Ruth feels?
5. Ruth asks the question "Why were we punished like this?" of Neville. What does Neville think she means? Why is her statement later to be found ironic?
6. What does Ruth tell Robert as he embraces her? What does Robert do to Ruth as he embraces her? Despite this involving a kiss, the scene is far from sexual. What is Neville hoping to gain from it?
7. What promise does Neville make to Ruth regarding the results of the blood test?
8. What happens when Ruth finally lets Robert draw blood from her to test?

## Chapter 19

1. Summarize the note that Ruth leaves for Robert. Include her purpose, why she specifically was chosen, what the purpose of the vampire society, and her description of the events in the dark (chapter 18).
2. Ruth says in her letter, "We're going to do away with all those wretched creatures whom death has cheated." Who are the wretched creatures that she refers to?
3. How does Neville react to Ruth's note?
4. Why is "the framework" of Neville's life collapsing around him?
5. At the end of the chapter, what does Robert berate himself for forgetting?

## Chapter 20

1. How much time has passed since Ruth left? Why did Neville not leave as she urged him to do?
2. Who are the men in the dark suits? What are they doing to the other vampires? Why?
3. What happens to Ben Cortman? What is Neville's reaction to the situation?
4. What has Robert resolved to do when the vampires of the new society come for him? Why?
5. Summarize the scene in which Neville is taken by the new society of vampires. Explain Neville's actions and why they differ from how he expected to behave.

**Chapter 21**

1. Where is Robert when he wakes up? Who is with him? Why is she referred to simply as “her” until over a page later?
2. Why has Robert been brought to his current location by the new society?
3. In what way is Neville responsible for his current conditions?
4. As Robert dies, what is his epiphany? Explain.