
The Razor's Edge by W. Somerset Maugham
Junior Summer Reading Assignment

Read the novel **on your own** with no help from any print or electronic study aid. Please make thoughtful responses (in complete sentences) to the following questions in your own handwriting, legibly on lined paper; write on one side of each page. This assignment is to be done **entirely on your own** (no group work or collaboration); any evidence of plagiarism of any kind will result in a 0 grade on the assignment. The assignment is due on the first day of school and is worth 25 points.

Part 1

1. List the following characters and tell what seems to be important to each one (what they value): The Narrator, Elliott Templeton, Isabel Bradley, Larry Darrell.
2. How does the account of what happened to Larry during the war help explain Larry's attitude and why he feels he needs to leave Isabel for a while?
3. What conflicts do you see developing by the end of part 1? What do you think might be the *main* conflict?

Part 2

4. Elliott's values become more sharply focused in this section. What is his opinion of Larry, especially of Larry's behavior in Paris?
5. Isabel's values also become more apparent in this section. Why does she choose not to marry Larry?
6. What does Isabel do at the end of part 2 that shows a darker, perhaps evil, side of her character?

Part 3

7. Briefly describe Larry's experience with Kosti.
8. What did Larry learn from his time with Kosti?
9. Describe Isabel and Gray's marriage.
10. What is the effect of the stock market crash on Gray and Isabel? On Elliott? On Larry?
11. Find an article on the internet that concerns the stock market crash of 1929 and its impact on the world economy. Highlight any information that you think could apply to what is happening in the novel. Staple this article on the back of your responses to these questions.
12. Even though Elliott is still vainly connected to high society, we begin to see some very positive qualities in his character. List several things Elliott does that show he is actually a pretty decent individual.

Part 4

13. Ten years have gone by since the last time the narrator has seen Isabel. What changes have come over her since then?
14. How does Isabel feel about her husband? About Larry?
15. How has Larry changed? How has Larry stayed the same?
16. Briefly describe Suzanne Rouvier's life and her connection to Larry.

Part 5

17. Review Sophie Macdonald's life: What was she like as a young girl? How was she with her husband? How did she react to his and her baby's death? What kind of life is she living in Paris?

18. How are Larry and Sophie's wedding plans ruined?
19. What does Elliott fret (worry) about in this section?
20. How does Elliott's life end?

Part 6

21. Describe Larry's experiences with the Benedictine monk (including his questions about God and Christianity).
22. What kinds of experiences does Larry have when he first gets to India?
23. Who is Sri Ganesha, and what does he teach Larry?
24. Try to describe the nature of Larry's enlightenment up on the mountain.
25. What conclusions does Larry come to as a result of these experiences?

Part 7

26. What effect does Sophie's death have on your view of Isabel's character?
27. The narrator says that this is a "success story" for each of the characters. List the following characters and tell how this is a "success story" for each of them: Elliott, Isabel, Gray, Suzanne, Sophie, Larry.