

**Man's Search for Meaning**  
by Viktor Frankl

Sophomores, please use these questions to guide your reading of the book. The assessment you will take in September will be based on these questions. Be sure to read all these questions first so you know for what to read. Take good notes so you can easily review when school begins.

Note: Page numbers will vary depending on the edition of the book. You should be able to locate all terms given the approximate location in the book

1) Define existentialism as stated in the book.

2) Page 35 –Frankl explains the stages people experience in horrifying situations:

- 1) a “delusion of reprieve” (pg. 28)
- 2) curiosity (pg. 35)
- 3) apathy –a necessary protective shell; a necessary mechanism of self-defense (pg. 42)
- 4) indignation (pg. 44)
- 5) regression (pg. 47)
- 6) dream illusions (pg. 48)
- 7) a deep religious interest (pg. 54)

- Comment briefly on each stage
- Do you think these only occur in horrifying situations? Can you think of a situation that you or someone you know went through during which you/he/she experienced some or all of these stages? Explain.

3) Page 57 –Two important quotes: “*The truth –that love is the ultimate and the highest goal to which man **can** aspire.*” and “*The salvation of man is through love and in love.*”

Frankl discusses these quotes while contemplating images of his wife during a cold, wet nighttime march in the concentration camp.

- Re-read pgs. **57-58**. Discuss how the power of love uplifted Frankl at this moment.
- Frankl tells us “Love goes very far beyond the physical person.” Do you agree or disagree? Explain.
- If you agree, how can this statement be used as an argument against the free use of sex in our society today? How can it be used as an argument to preserve the sanctity of marriage?
- On pg. 58, this passage ends with the statement, “Set me like a seal upon thy heart, love is as strong as death.” Find out where this statement is from and what it means?

4) Page 64 –Read the paragraph that begins: “*The attempt to develop a sense of humor and to see things in a humorous light is some kind of trick learned while mastering the art of living.*” It ends, “*Therefore, the ‘size’ of human suffering is absolutely relative.*”

- Discuss the value of a sense of humor.
- Focus on the sentences that discuss suffering. Discuss what you think the value of suffering is. How

may suffering help us to grow? Give an example from your own life experience.

• The next paragraph begins: *“It also follows that a very trifling thing can cause the greatest of joys.”* Give an example of how this would be true for those in the concentration camps. Then, give an example of how this is true from your own experiences.

5) Page 97—On this page, Frankl quotes the words of the great philosopher, Nietzsche, who said, ***“He who has a WHY to live for can bear with almost any HOW.”*** (continue to read to p. 101)

• Frankl saw this statement as a guiding motto for those imprisoned in the concentration camps, and he continues to comment on the meaning of life on p. 98. Explain how his ideas apply to other types of prisoners; for example, those who are imprisoned by a serious illness or the elderly, who sometimes become prisoners in their own homes.

• How would you apply these ideas to those imprisoned in a bad relationship? Which of Frankl’s statements from pgs. 97-101 do you feel would be applicable to those with marital problems or those in a difficult boyfriend/girlfriend relationship? Fully explain why they would apply.

6) Define **Logotherapy** as stated in the book. What is its ultimate goal? (Frankl uses the simile of an eye doctor).

7) How did prisoners know when a fellow prisoner was giving up on life/no longer had the will to live?

8) What kinds of experiences did Viktor Frankl consider so personally demeaning/dehumanizing?

9) What freedoms were the concentration camps not able to take away from the prisoners?

10) What are the three ways in which Frankl believes people find meaning in life?

11) As a result of his experiences, Frankl believes that we can’t directly go out in life and “find” happiness or love or the key to being truly human. So, how does Frankl think that we eventually come to experience those things?

12) Does Frankl believe that the “meaning of life” is the same for all people? Is the meaning of one’s life the same for one’s entire life or not?

13) Finally, be able to give your reaction to the book and to the ideas presented in this project. Include in this the most important revelations for you personally from reflecting on these questions and reading this book.