

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Created by [Phil Bildner](#), author of "*Shoeless Joe and Black Betsy*"

If you were meeting Casey and Sylvia for the first time, before the events of this story happened:

- ≡ What would most people like about Casey? What would most people dislike?
- ≡ What would most people like about Sylvia? What would most people dislike?
- ≡ Do you think that Casey's behavior made life more difficult for Sylvia?

Put some words on the board that might describe Sylvia's emotions, including isolation, loneliness, fear or scared, desperation, need, sadness, lost, ashamed, wishful, hopeful, trusting.

In what circumstances do these same words apply to Casey during the story? In what way does she learn from these emotions?

Break into groups of three or four to answer these questions. Everyone should be working with pencil and paper to help them think, but one person might be the reporter when the time comes to read your answers to the class.

- ≡ a) Name a character from the story and tell in what way they might represent good or evil.
- ≡ b) What kind of friends would this character be likely to have, whether or not we happened to meet those friends in the story?
- ≡ c) Think of ten to fifteen questions that you could ask this character, if he were in front of you, to find out more about him. Help each other try to phrase the questions so the character could only give a yes or no answer.

For instance, "what is your name?" is not a workable question. But "Is your name Paulie?" is a workable question.

(instructor: this is much more effective if students are encouraged to ask questions of most of the characters in the story, including Fran, Mrs. Clark, Rocco, Razza, Mrs. Gonzales, Mrs. Wisner, the neighbor with the loud radio, Karen, and Leonard, the nerdy

kid who sits between them.)

Did you believe Casey would go through with robbing Mrs. Clark? How did you feel about Casey when she did? Did you feel differently about her at the beginning of the story than after reading the whole story? Did you feel differently about her right after reading the story than you do now when you have had time to think more about the characters and their situations?

What about Sylvia, how did your ideas about her change?

What might either Casey or Sylvia have done that first morning that we saw Casey going off to school to change the way things turned out?

What would it be like to have Casey, Sylvia, or Paulie for a friend? What do you think they learn from each other about being there for each other?

What different behaviors might Casey and Sylvia adopt to show each other how they've changed and that they can be trusted?