



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS FOR THE CURIOUS CASE OF BENJAMIN BUTTON BY F. SCOTT FITZGERALD

1. How does Fitzgerald use tone and style to create a world that is fantastical and dreamlike, yet realistic?
2. How does Fitzgerald employ humor in the story? In what ways is the idea of someone aging in reverse inherently humorous?
3. By the time Benjamin takes over his father's company, his relationship with his father is dramatically different. Fitzgerald writes, "And if old Roger Button, now sixty-five years old, had failed at first to give a proper welcome to his son he atoned at last by bestowing on him what amounted to adulation." Benjamin's reverse aging is responsible for many of the highs and lows of his relationships with his father and his son. Do you think these relationships in some ways parallel those of all fathers and sons?
4. How does this story, though written almost a century ago, reflect our society's current attitude toward age and aging?
5. What is ironic about Benjamin marrying a "younger" woman? What does the story reveal about our perceptions of age and beauty?
6. The happier Benjamin becomes in his career, the more strained his marriage grows. Fitzgerald writes, "And here we come to an unpleasant subject which it will be well to pass over as quickly as possible. There was only one thing that worried Benjamin Button: his wife had ceased to attract him." Why does he fall out of love with Hildegard?
7. How does Fitzgerald use Benjamin's condition to ridicule social norms?
8. How does Benjamin's reverse aging ironically mirror the modern midlife crisis?
9. When Benjamin returns from the war, Hildegard, annoyed with his increasingly youthful appearance, says, "You're simply stubborn. You think you don't want to be like anyone else....But just think how it would be if everyone else looked at things as you do—what would the world be like?" Later Fitzgerald writes of Roscoe, "It seemed to him that his father, in refusing to look sixty, had not behaved like a 'red-blooded he-man'...but in a curious and perverse manner." What is significant about their attitudes? How is it ironic that Hildegard and Roscoe seem to believe that Benjamin should control his aging?
10. Why do you think that fantasy and stories that manipulate time are so popular in our culture at the moment? What are some of the films, TV shows, and books that reflect these trends? Are you a fan of fantasy and stories that play with time, or do you prefer more traditional forms of storytelling?

Questions issued by the publisher.



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