

## Life on the Fly Discussion Guide

### Chapter 1

- A. There are many sorts of addictions and obsessions. List some of them. As you look back over the list, did you come up with any that are benign or good? Discuss.
- B. Mr. Brandt is one of the characters who doesn't like to change—are you a person who enjoys change or prefers to keep things the same?
- C. As you encounter different characters in the novels, keep track of which ones have had change forced upon them, which ones embrace change, and which ones resist it.

### Chapter 2

- A. You have now met Evelyn Bloomsbury and Bob Swanson, both local entrepreneurs: compare and contrast them.
- B. Do you sometimes find yourself “lost” in the past? Is there a danger of focusing too much on the past? Discuss.
- C. What activities do you have that help you “process the present”?

### Chapter 3

- A. We all feel at certain times as if our lives are tied in knots. How do you untie those knots?
- B. Should some agency of the government prevent valleys such as Prince Creek from being developed with homes?

### Chapter 4

When faced with a challenge, do you prepare details of time ahead or prefer to improvise?

### Chapter 5

“Hillcrest, behind its staid and stolid mask, is a microcosm of human nature: shifting slightly this way and that, but never really changing at its core.” Do you agree with this statement about human nature?

### Chapter 6

Both Mr. Olson and Miss Peabody have some unique views of things such as delegating authority and censorship. Discuss these ideas.

### Chapter 7

- A. Do you feel that Matthew Blake is showing promise as a teacher? Why or why not?
- B. Do you ever struggle with reliving the past—trying to correct past mistakes?

## Chapter 8

You've met some of the students in Hillcrest now. Compare and contrast them. Have you ever known anyone like Kurt? Like Mike? Like Emily? Like Jeanine?

## Chapter 9

A. You've met Jim Marsh a few times now. Have you known anyone like that?

B. Review the major characters: is your opinion of them changing?

C. Discuss the various characters and events that show how people change—or refuse to change.

D. How do you react to change? Why?

## Chapter 10

A. "It's hard to believe that something polluted can get cooled, filtered, and clean again, pure enough to provide life." This can happen in nature—can it happen with people?

B. Discuss the difference between justice and vengeance.

C. Discuss your impressions of Jack Kiln and John Garrison. Are they changing?

## Chapter 11

Matt finally faces his various emotional issues. Is this a necessary step in healing? Discuss this in light of what Alice Dover wrote down from David Browning's lecture: "An unexamined life isn't worth living and unexamined writing isn't worth reading. Examine both."

## Chapter 12

A. "Ignorance sets the stage for accidents and disasters. Ignorance sows the seeds of war, blinding us to the causes that lead to war. Fear, David wrote, has never been our enemy: ignorance is." Do you agree or disagree? Discuss.

B. Look up the famous passage: I Corinthians 13. It will come in later in this novel.

C. Discuss how the relationship between Matt and Meg is progressing.

D. How do you deal with others' expectations? Do they affect your behavior? Do you get "upset because someone else didn't meet your expectations or offended you?"

E. How is Matt growing as a teacher? She and Don exchange challenging smiles. If I force a little competition, I can create a little active learning.

## Chapter 13

A. Pastor Thorsen believes in the stubbornness of the human heart. Do you agree? Discuss how stubbornness can sometimes blind us to changes that would be beneficial to us.

B. Discuss the idea of “flying” – doing what we love. Discuss how this fits in with the themes of the novel.

C. The theme of expectations comes in again. How can parental expectations be a burden on children? How can they be a blessing?

D. For some people, is high school the high point of their lives?

#### Chapter 14

A. Discuss Matt’s methods of finding out the truth. Is he right in aggressively digging into people’s lives?

B. Discuss some of the changes in this chapter. What additional characteristics does Matt Blake show here?

#### Chapter 15

A. Discuss what Matt is learning about himself.

B. Discuss the surprise ending to this chapter. Did you expect it? Looking back, what clues (foreshadowing) were there? Who do you think did it, and why?

#### Chapter 16

A. Discuss the changes in Matt and Meg’s relationship.

B. How do you understand faith?

#### Chapter 17

A. Share some time that others have helped you.

B. To what extent do we blame God for bad things that happen?

C. How do you feel when you look back at photographs or videos from your past?

#### Chapter 18

A. After this chapter, how do you now view Shawn Dixon? Bob Swanson? Matt Blake?

B. Discuss the theme of addiction and all the ways that various characters are addicted to something. How dangerous are addictions? How are these different than obsessions?

C. Why may even “harmless” addictions—Kurt with his computer games or Evelyn Bloomsbury with her books—become harmful?

### Chapter 19

A. The Wilsons are moving back to their “home place” and Matt has renewed a friendship with Meg. Have you experienced a situation where you have repeated something in your life? What’s different? What’s the same? Was it a good experience? Discuss.

B. Are you an organizer—like Jeanine—or a “collector”—like Matt?

### Chapter 20

A. What’s symbolic about what Matt and Meg are doing in the beginning of the chapter?

B. Do you have someone who “thinks the world of you”? How important is that for us?

C. Do you have something that you compete with or against that makes you better in some way?

D. Is Matt doing the right thing in the way he helps/doesn’t help Alice Dover?

E. David said that life intimidates us—is there something that holds you back from doing something you would like to do?

F. Does guilt over the past hold people back? Does it hold you back?

### Chapter 21

A. What does the “football game” say about Matt’s character?

B. What do you think of Matt’s way of handling the Morrison intruders? Any other ideas?

### Chapter 22

Discuss the changes and surprises that occur in this chapter.

### Chapter 23

Discuss all the themes that come together here:

Change

Death and Life; old and new

Addiction

Commitments

Reconciliation

Forgiveness

Pride