

Notre Dame Preparatory English I Summer Reading  
Study Guide for *The Bean Trees* by Barbara Kingsolver

1. How does Alice Greer compare to/contrast with Mr. Hardbine or Mr. Shanks in terms of parenting skills?
2. Why does Taylor leave Kentucky?
3. Describe Taylor's reaction to the Cherokee Nation.
4. What is a "home"? How does Taylor's definition of "home" change in Chapter One? (Think in terms of the comment she made in the letter to her mother about taking her "head rights" with her.)
5. How are women (or girls) treated in Chapter One?
6. Describe the shift in narration in Chapter Two. Who is telling the story now?
7. Why is it relevant that Lou Ann came from Kentucky?
8. How is Lou Ann different from Taylor?
9. Describe Angel.
10. How did Taylor react to Arizona? What made her decide to stay there?
11. Why does Taylor find "Jesus Is Lord Used Tires" and "1-800-THE-LORD" so humorous?
12. Describe Fei, La-Isha, and Timothy. How are they different from Lou Ann? Why does Taylor choose to live with Lou Ann instead of the others?
13. How is Estevan different from the other male characters we've seen?
14. What does Mattie do for people like Estevan and Esperanza? What clues earlier in the story hinted at her activities?
15. What does the "Miracle of Dog Doo Park" refer to?
16. What does Taylor learn about Estevan and Esperanza's past? How does this affect Taylor?
17. How does Taylor feel about Estevan?
18. How does Lou Ann demonstrate more confidence in herself in Chapters Ten and Eleven?
19. What does Taylor learn about Turtle from the doctor?
20. How does Taylor respond to the news that she has no legal claim over Turtle? How does Lou Ann respond? What perspective does Mattie bring to Taylor about parenting?
21. Describe what happens at the routine immigration check in Chapter Fourteen.
22. What changes have taken place at the Broken Arrow Motor Lodge?
23. What does Taylor discover about the Cherokee Nation in Chapter Fifteen that changes her impression of the area?
24. Why does Turtle bury her doll?

25. Why does Taylor decide to call 1-800-THE-LORD? How does she feel about the conversation she has?
26. What does Taylor discover about wisteria?
27. What is a "family"? How does this novel ask you to question your definition of "family"?
28. How is "home" defined in terms of geography? How is it defined in terms of people?

Vocabulary:

1. presume
2. ornery
3. indelible
4. repulse
5. transient
6. connoisseur
7. ascendant
8. reticent
9. apoplectic
10. meager
11. dilapidated
12. reverence
13. aptitude
14. pandemonium
15. picayune
16. invocation
17. perturbed
18. prudish
19. compulsion
20. gumption
21. deprivation
22. incarnate
23. dormant
24. pungent
25. noncommittal
26. befuddled
27. cantankerous
28. meandering
29. catharsis
30. rigamarole