



## Gentlemen and Players

By Joanne Harris  
ISBN: 9780060559151

### Questions for Discussion

1. The favorite book of the young Snyder is *The Invisible Man*. Poe's law is also quoted: "The object that is hidden in plain sight remains unseen longest." Through childhood and into adulthood, how does Snyder, in fact, become invisible?
2. Early in the novel, young Snyder says, "I felt cheated, as I often did when faced with the threat and assurances of the adult world, which promises so much and delivers so little." What does this say about the character? Give some examples of ways in which the adult world has cheated Snyder. Which do you feel has the longest lasting impact on Snyder as an adolescent? As an adult?
3. Throughout the novel, Snyder remembers days as a student in Sunnybank Park—and the desire then to be a student at St. Oswald's. What do you believe would have happened had Snyder been enrolled at St. Oswald's as a student? Would such a student have thrived academically? Been accepted socially? How might things have played out differently, if at all?
4. While at Sunnybank Park, Snyder had a young student teacher, Miss Potts, who "liked to be popular-to be important." She goes about this by taking an active interest in her students and especially their problems—things the older teachers do not notice. She realizes something is wrong with Snyder. How might things have been different if there had been more teachers who took notice of the pupils' problems early on?
5. "Fallow offends me," Snyder says of St. Oswald's current day groundskeeper. It is not the occupation that offends Snyder, but how Fallow executes his tasks: sluggish, ignoring his duties, not taking pride in his work. The exact opposite of the way Snyder's father worked. What does this contempt of Fallow say about young Snyder's filial feelings?
6. Snyder says of Anderton-Pullitt: "there is one of his kind in every year. Shunned even beyond being bullied." Could Snyder be identifying with Anderton-Pullitt? Which student, if any, at St. Oswald's most resembles the young Snyder? Do any resemble Leon?
7. Early in his life, Snyder developed a feeling of entitlement for "that childhood. The one I deserved," a life of privilege. Where do you think the roots of these sentiments began?
8. "I can identify with a boy like Knight," Snyder says. "I was nothing like him—ininitely tougher, more vicious and more streetwise—but with money and better parents I might have turned out just the same." What does this say about Snyder's decision to use Knight-of all boys—in the plan to destroy St. Oswald's? Is it because Knight is weak or because Knight is a reminder of who Snyder could have been?
9. Straightly comments on how "St. Oswald's has a way of eating those things. The energy; the ambition; the dreams" of its faculty. In light of this, or perhaps in spite of it, Straightly's goal in life is clear: to reach his Century and retire with honor. Why do you suppose this is so important to him?
10. A continual theme throughout the novel is nature vs. nurture. Do you believe a person is born evil or do the circumstances of that person's upbringing cause these traits? When talking about Leon, Straightly seems to believe some kids are just born bad. How is this different from Snyder's belief?