**“The Life You Save May Be Your Own” by Flannery O’Connor**

Study Guide Questions

*Read the background information on* ***grotesque characters*** *(text p. 981):*

* *Bizarre or twisted, usually through some kind of obsession*
* *Expressed through physical appearance; hidden, visible only through actions/emotions*
* *Southern Gothic – borrowed from traditional gothic 🡪 foreboding atmosphere and characters*

Answer the following questions in detail:

1. Describe the character of Mr. Shiftlet. What does his name suggest about him?
2. To what is Mr. Shiftlet compared as he turns his back and faces the sunset?
3. Describe the old woman and her daughter. What does the name Crater suggest?
4. Why isn’t Mrs. Crater worried about Mr. Shiftlet? Should she be? What do you think O’Connor is trying to say about Southern women of this particular time?
5. How does Shiftlet initially answer the questions Mrs. Crater asks him? Why do you think he does this? (HINT: the human heart)
6. What is Mr. Crater’s current profession? Why do you think it might be significant?
7. What might the fact that Shiftlet and Crater frequently change the subject reveal about them?
8. What is Lucynell’s role in the story? What does she mean to her mother? To Shiftlet?
9. What skills does Mrs. Crater say Lucynell has? Why does she say this?
10. What does Mr. Shiftlet say he is not interested in? Do you believe him? Why? Why not?
11. What improvements does Shiftlet make around the farm? What does this tell you about him?
12. Describe Shiftlet’s smile after Mrs. Crater says he can get the car painted. What does this image bring to mind?
13. What did Lucynell, Mr. Shiftlet, and Mrs. Crater do on Saturday that left Shiftlet feeling “bitter”?
14. Where does Shiftlet abandon Lucynell? What does the waiter call Lucynell? What is the name of the place?
15. What evidence is there that Shiftlet’s conscience is bothering him after he deserts Lucynell?
16. What is the irony of Shiftlet’s appeal to God to “wash the slime from the earth”?
17. How could the story’s title be interpreted?