

Discussion Questions for *Old Filth*

1. Edward Feathers almost seems a stereotype... but are there truths in such characters? Why do authors create them?
2. So much of the story of his life was told in an oblique manner and there were so many gaps in it... you had to read between the lines to sort things out... which were the most surprising things you learned? Why do you think the author left it that way? Was it a symbol of the gaps in his life?
3. Do you think his first 5 years of life, when he lived among the villagers, were happy? Do you think he would have been sent back “Home” if his mother had not died?
4. What did you think of his father’s actions during those early years? As well as when Edward was Home?
5. The whole notion of the Raj Orphans is a bit alien to us as American readers... what do you think of that custom? And of the British upper class tendency to send their children away to boarding school?
6. Tell me what you think of his two aunts! Why do you think they behaved the way they did?
7. Why do you think his father never really was in contact with him? Why would he choose to evacuate his son to keep him safe from the war?
8. What did you think of his friendship with Pat Ingoldby and his family? Did it mean as much to the family as it did to Edward? What was the breaking point in the relationship?
9. What did you learn of Edward and Betty’s marriage? Did they love each other? Why do you think Betty had the affair with Veneering? Why do you think they never had children? Perhaps because of the syphilis Edward contracted?
10. Many people thought Old Filth/Edward led a quiet, non-eventful life... would you agree? Why would he have kept his past so secretive?

(Continued on reverse side)



Discussion Questions for *Old Filth* continued

11. Do you think he was a man who adapted well? Could he have survived if he hadn't?
12. How did Old Filth view women? What framed those views?
13. This book also covers the aging process... what happens to us as our bodies begin to give out yet we feel as young as ever... do you think the author did a good job of painting that picture?
14. How would you describe the mood of this book: Somber? Funny? Realistic? Tragedy?
15. Were there parts that made you smile or laugh? His never remembering his housekeeper's name? The school dean whose assistants were always called Smith no matter what their name?
16. What do you think his relationship with Veneering was? Do you think he knew that Betty had an affair with him? Why, finally, were they able to become friends of a sort?
17. Which parts were the most heartbreaking for you?
18. What did you learn about British culture from this book?
19. Did you get a sense of what Edward thought about the "new generation"? What did you think of his interaction with Oliver and Vanessa. Did you think it was mean of him to let Vanessa go on about lawyers and the Bar without revealing who he was?
20. What did you think of his reaction to Betty's death? Why do you think he needed to revisit his past by visiting his cousins as well as reminiscing about his childhood and young adult life?

Source: Discussion questions provided by the Southfield Public Library,
<https://southfieldlibrary.org>

