

Reflections:

A Student Response Journal for...

Tuesdays with Morrie

by Mitch Albom

written by Lisa L. Burris

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Pre-reading

1. The cover of this book is pretty bland by most standards. It is a simple beige background, with different colored writings. As a publishing house executive, write a memo to your staff, defending or opposing the choice of the cover for *Tuesdays with Morrie*.
2. The subtitle of *Tuesdays with Morrie* is “an old man, a young man, and life’s greatest lesson.” Based on this subtitle, what do you think this novel is about? Write a well-developed paragraph explaining your answer.
3. This book’s author, Mitch Albom, has dedicated *Tuesdays with Morrie* to his brother Peter, who is “the bravest person (Albom) knows.” If you were to write a book about your own life experiences, to whom would you dedicate it? Imagine that you are writing a book about your life, and write a dedication of one or two sentences for that book. Then, write a short section for a press release for the book, explaining why you chose to dedicate your book to that person.

The Curriculum

4. This book's author, Mitch Albom, describes graduation from college as the beginning of being an adult. He says that graduation marks the time when "the curtain...come(s) down on childhood."

Different cultures have rituals or ceremonies to officially mark a person's passage from childhood to adulthood. When do you think a child becomes an adult? Are people officially adults when they turn 18 or 21? Do we become adults when we graduate from school, get a job, get married, or have children of our own?

Write a section about adulthood for an encyclopedia. Make sure your section includes a description of what it means to be an adult and how a person can know that he or she is no longer a child, but an adult.

5. Mitch's favorite professor is Morrie Schwartz. Morrie is so important to Mitch that at graduation, he wants to introduce Morrie to his parents.

Who is your favorite teacher? Write a scene for a television movie where you introduce your favorite teacher to your family or friends. Be sure to describe the setting and atmosphere, as well as the dialogue.

6. Mitch gives Morrie a gift. It is a tan briefcase with Morrie's initials on it. Mitch says that he bought the gift because he didn't want to forget Morrie, and he didn't want Morrie to forget him, either.

What kind of special gift would you like to give someone close to you? Think about a special gift you'd like to give someone if money were no object. Write an article for a holiday newspaper supplement, explaining a gift that you would like to give a special person and why you would want to give it.

The Syllabus

7. In the summer of 1994, Morrie got a strange feeling that something bad was coming. It is almost as if he had a premonition about his illness. He seemed to know that a major change was coming in his life.

Have you ever had a premonition or a sense of déjà vu? Have you ever felt or even dreamt that something happened, only to find out later that it actually did happen? Write an e-mail to Morrie, explaining a time when you, like he, felt that something was going to happen to you, only to find out later that your premonition came true.

8. Morrie loves to dance. He goes once a week to a church for a public dance, sometimes even taking his own music for the D.J. to play. He doesn't even care if there's no one to dance with him. He'll just fling his hands in the air and begin to dance by himself.

Dancing is a great activity for older people like Morrie. It is a social activity that also provides a bit of exercise. Write a section for a senior center's brochure, describing fun activities like dancing, crafts, and so on that can be beneficial for senior citizens. Be sure to include the benefits of each of those activities, too.

9. When Morrie dances, he is usually alone. According to Mitch, Morrie is a wild dancer, too, waving his arms around and whirling crazily on the dance floor. In fact, judging by the way he danced, most people at the church hall thought that Morrie was just some crazy old man, not realizing that he was actually an esteemed college professor. This just goes to show that we can't always tell what a person is like just by looking at him or her.

Using Morrie as an example, write a posting for an online fashion magazine, explaining how a person should be judged.

Tuesdays with Morrie

10. When Morrie and his wife Charlotte go to the neurologist's office, the doctor has terrible news to tell them: Morrie has Lou Gehrig's disease and he is going to die. This is certainly devastating news for the Schwartzes.

Doctors are, of course, professionals, but it still must be difficult for them to deliver such bad news. Write an instruction manual for doctors, giving them step-by-step guidance in how to tell a patient that he or she is going to die.

11. As Morrie is given the terrible news about his condition, he is surprised and dismayed to see that, despite his problems, the rest of the world continues as normal. In other words, the world didn't stop just because he received some devastating and life-altering news.

Make a list of at least ten words that can apply to how Morrie must be feeling. Then, using five of those words, write a poem about how the world goes on, even if you are hurting emotionally. Here are a few words to begin your list:

- Devastated
- Ignored
- Sad

12. Morrie's condition worsens to the point that he has to hire someone to help him change his clothes at the YMCA pool. This causes others in the pool locker room to stare at Morrie and completely disregard his privacy.

As the manager of Morrie's YMCA, write a memo to your staff in which you explain how to prevent people from pointedly staring at Morrie.

Tuesdays with Morrie

13. Mitch indicates that Morrie kept his illness a secret. Morrie only reveals it to his students when it is necessary to do so, when it becomes impossible to hide any longer.

If you were as sick as Morrie, if you had a fatal illness, would you reveal it, or would you prefer to keep it quiet? Write a well-constructed paragraph in which you explain what you would do if you were in Morrie's position.

14. Mitch explains to us what ALS (also known as Lou Gehrig's disease) can do to a person. He says it "often...begins with the legs and works its way up." Eventually, the disease takes over the whole body, rendering the patient immobile, yet still conscious. This is a devastating disease in which the patient is fully aware of gradually losing complete control of his or her muscles.

This brings up an important question about the quality of life for severely ill people. Is it preferable to allow someone to continue to life, even if he or she is immobile and unable to communicate, or do we do a disservice to someone in this condition by prolonging his or her life? What about a patient who is immobile, uncommunicative, and on life support? As a patients' rights advocate, write the text for a flyer to be distributed to the general public, telling people whether patients deserve the right to die if they are comatose or whether life should be preserved at all costs.