A Gathering of Old Men
by Ernest J. Gaines

Directions:
• Answer the following questions completely and provide the page number you found the answer on.
• If the question is bolded, you are required to write a response in the study guide; it is an inference or application question that does not have a concrete answer in the book.

Section A: STUDY QUESTIONS pp. 1-33

1. What “arrangement” is there between Snookum and Old Toddy that Snookum doesn’t have much of a say in for the next year?

2. What was the task that Candy interrupted Snookum’s meal of turnips for?

3. What does Snookum see in the weeds at Mathu’s house?

4. After Mathu’s house, which other houses does he visit spreading the message from Candy?

5. What is Janey’s job? Who are her employers?

6. What is the difference between living in the quarters and the Marshall House? Literally and symbolically, what do the two locations represent?

7. When Janey hears what Snookum saw at Mathu’s house and connects it with what she heard earlier, she is afraid of what will happen next. What is she afraid of?
8. Why doesn’t Janey inform the Major and Miss Bea of Candy’s message?

9. Instead of informing the Major or Miss Bea, which two people does Janey contact?

10. On page 12 Janey states, “They been a killing.” This isn’t the message from Snookum. Why does Janey believe someone is dead?

11. What is the connection between Miss Merle, apple pie and Major Jack? (inference)

12. What does Candy confess to Miss Merle?

13. What is the story of Candy’s parents and childhood?

14. What does Candy mean when she says, “I won’t let them touch my people”?

15. What does Candy want a lot more of before Mapes arrives?

16. What is the biological connection between Candy and Janey?

17. Miss Merle summarizes Candy’s plan. What is it?
18. What reason does Clatoo have for hating Fix and his family?

19. Mat and Chimley are alerted by Berto to come to the Marshall quarters. The two men continue fishing as they remembered “what happened after these fights, these threats, how the white folks rode. This what I was thinking, and I was sure Mat was doing the same. That’s why we didn’t look at each other for a while. We didn’t want to see what the other was thinking. We didn’t want to see the fear in the other one’s face” (29). What does the phrase “white folks rode” refer to?

20. Who says, "We are getting too old to hide under the bed" and what does he mean?

21. Who is “the only one who ever stood up to them [Fix and his drove]”? Explain the story of the Coke bottle.

22. Explain this quote. "I have to go, Chimley," [Mat] said. "This can be my last chance" (32).
Section B: STUDY QUESTIONS  pp. 34-57

1. Mat has a lot of pent up anger. In the past he has taken his frustrations out on Ella. What does he do when Ella says that she will call Mat's brother and have him stop Mat?

_________________________________________________________________________________

_________________________________________________________________________________


2. What is Mat's personal motive for going to Mathu's house? (Oliver)

_________________________________________________________________________________

_________________________________________________________________________________


3. Who is Cherry? (What does he do for a living)? ______________________________________

_________________________________________________________________________________

_________________________________________________________________________________


4. Describe Clatoo. What is his personal reason for going to Mathu's house?
   a. 
   b. 
   c. (personal reason)


5. Describe Yank.
   a. 
   b. 


6. Describe Dirty Red.
   a. 
   b. 


7. Why is Dirty Red going to Mathu’s?

_________________________________________________________________________________

_________________________________________________________________________________


8. Who works the land on the Marshall Plantation? ________________________________


9. How has life changed on the Marshall plantation in the past 25 to 30 years?

_________________________________________________________________________________

_________________________________________________________________________________


10. Who does Dirty Red tease about missing the rabbit? ____________________________
11. What is Jacob Aguillard's personal motive for going to Mathu's house? (What happened to Tessie?)
___________________________________________________
___________________________________________________
___________________________________________________

12. What is symbolic about all the men waiting in the graveyard?
___________________________________________________
___________________________________________________
___________________________________________________

13. What is Clatoo carrying in addition to his gun? ___________________________________

14. How is Old Coot dressed?
___________________________________________________
___________________________________________________
___________________________________________________

15. In what way is Rev. Jameson set apart from the other men?
___________________________________________________
___________________________________________________
___________________________________________________

16. What does Clatoo hide in the back of Mathu's house?______________________________

17. Gaines again points out the hierarchy among the African Americans only from Mathu's point of view.
   a. What color is Mathu?

   b. What color is Clatoo?

   c. What is so unusual about Clabber?

   d. What is Mathu so proud of?

18. As the story unfolds you become aware of a social hierarchy among the African Americans and the whites.

   Major Jack & Miss Bea  Chimley  Reverend
   Beau Bouton  Jacob Aguillard  Snookum
   Candy Marshall  Mathu
   Lou Dimes  Dirty Red

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>white social hierarchy</th>
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Section C: Study Guide pp. 58-83

1. What is Lou's relationship with Candy? __________________________________________

3. "His mouth and eyes were still open, his face caked with sweat and dirt, his dark brown hair speckled with dry grass seeds. He was about thirty, roughly handsome, maybe a hundred and seventy-five pounds. . . A shotgun lay in the weeds a couple of steps to my right"(60). Who is being described? __________________________________________

4. Retell why Candy says that she shot Beau. Be sure to include Charlie, Beau, Mathu, and Candy in the story.
   __________________________________________
   __________________________________________
   __________________________________________
   __________________________________________
   __________________________________________
   __________________________________________

5. Who followed Mapes "sticking as close as a small frightened child would stick to his father" and is also described as "very tough around the very old and the very young"? __________________________________________

6. What does Mapes do to try to get the men to tell the truth?
   __________________________________________
   __________________________________________
   __________________________________________
   __________________________________________
   __________________________________________

7. Mapes questions three men: Billy, Gable, and Jameson. After questioning Jameson, what do all the men, women, and children do?
   __________________________________________
   __________________________________________
   __________________________________________
   __________________________________________
   __________________________________________

8. How does Mapes feel about Mathu personally?
   __________________________________________
   __________________________________________
   __________________________________________
   __________________________________________
   __________________________________________

9. What is Herman's profession? __________________________________________

10. Why do they call it an "electric chair dance"?
    __________________________________________
    __________________________________________
    __________________________________________
    __________________________________________
    __________________________________________

11. What is Uncle Billy's personal reason for saying that he shot Beau?
    __________________________________________
    __________________________________________
    __________________________________________
    __________________________________________
    __________________________________________
12. How does Mapes "test" Billy to see if he could be the killer?

13. Describe Mapes (his personality and how he looks physically) and tell what his favorite thing to munch on is.
   a. Personality-
   b. Physically-
   c. Physically-
Section D: STUDY GUIDE pp. 83-110

1. What does Candy mean when she tells Mapes to "mind his hands" when he questions Mathu?

2. "You had to be here then to be able to don't see it and don't hear it now. But I was here then, and I don't see it now, and that's why I did it. I did it for them back there under them trees." Explain what Johnny Paul means by those "under them trees."

Also explain what he means by "I don't see it now, and that's why I did it."

3. What reason does Tucker give for killing Beau?

4. Why do they resent the Cajuns?

5. What reason does Yank give for killing Beau?

6. What job does Mapes assign to Russel, another deputy? Why is it important?

7. What reason does Gable give for killing Beau?

8. What reason does Coot give for killing Beau?

9. What does Beulah claim happened at the St. Charles River?
10. On page 108 Beulah explains the difference between justice for white people and justice for black people. What does she say?

11. What wish does Snookum have?

12. Gaines uses foreshadowing when Mapes says, "The quiet before the storm. He'll be here when he get them all together." What is he predicting?
1. What are the nicknames of Gilbert Boutan ___________________ and Calvin Harrison ________________?

2. Why have they received these names?

3. What college do they attend? _________________________

4. What is the game of the year? ______________ vs. ______________

5. Who is Sully and what position does he play?

6. After Gil finds out about his brother's death, how does he treat Cal and why does he treat him that way?

7. Where does Gil tell Sully to go before they go to Gil's house? __________________________

8. Sully describes the scene at Marshall like something out of the *Twilight Zone*? What is this an allusion to?

9. Gil doesn't believe that his brother Beau would have come after Charlie with a gun. What proof was there back in the beginning of the story that proves Gil is wrong?

10. What does Gil say is the only difference between his family and Candy's family?

11. Gil asks the assembled group one final question: “Won’t it ever stop?” What is the “it” Gil is referring to?

12. What mysterious action does Lou observe?

13. Miss Merle demonstrates her belief that all people are equal. How does she show this?
Section F: STUDY GUIDE pp. 131-183

1. Describe Fix Boutan.

2. What was Mapes request/order for Fix?

3. What did Gil see in the Marshall quarters that no one had ever seen before?

4. Gi-bear (Gil) has a hard time explaining to his father why Fix shouldn’t go to Marshall or Bayonne. Gil speaks about the old black men at Marshall, his fellow football player, and the Bouton family’s reputation. Fix is a symbol to the old African–American men gathered at Marshall. What is Fix a symbol of? What is Gil trying to do about this connection between his father and the old men’s fears?


6. What is a parrain? (142).

7. Define vigilante.

8. According to Russ, what should Gil do now?

9. Why won’t Fix go to the Marshall quarters?
10. Why does Fix disown Gil?

11. Who is Jack’s niece mentioned on 154?

12. What is the burden or weight that Jack (Marshall) never wanted which now causes him to drink?

13. Does Tee Jacques support what Luke Will suggests? What other possible motives might he have for acting the way he does?

14. Why does Jack Marshall choose not to act at all?

15. What is the answer to the mystery observed by Lou Dimes?

16. Mapes accuses Candy of trying to “keep them slaves the rest of their lives” (174). What does he mean?

17. Fix isn’t coming to Marshall, but the men decide to make a stand anyway. What stand do they intend to make?

18. Who arrives in Mathu’s cabin at the end of the chapter?
1. Lou tells Candy that after this night, there will be a big change in her life. What does he say has happened with her relationship with Mathu? What does Lou demand about their relationship?

a. 

b. 

2. What does Charlie look like? Give as least two distinguishing features.

a. 

b. 

3. What does Charlie want to be called and why?

a. 

b. 

4. Who is Charlie's parrain? ____________________________

5. What has Charlie always done all his life? __________________________________________
   __________________________________________
   __________________________________________
   __________________________________________

6. What really happened the day Beau was shot? Start with the fight in the cane field.

   __________________________________________
   __________________________________________
   __________________________________________
   __________________________________________
   __________________________________________
   __________________________________________
   __________________________________________

7. Before Mapes can take Charlie in, who shows up? ____________________________

8. What happens to Mapes when he goes out on the garry to get his gun?

   __________________________________________
   __________________________________________
   __________________________________________
   __________________________________________

9. Who does Mapes put in charge of the action?________________________________________

10. What happens to Griffin?

   __________________________________________
   __________________________________________
   __________________________________________
   __________________________________________

11. Who gets "winged" (wounded)?________________________________________
12. In the part of the story where Sharp, one of the vigilante men, is telling the story, we find out that the drove wants to leave. They didn't realize that the black men would shoot back at them, and they are in trouble for shooting the sheriff. They lie and say that they have no bullets left. Now Dirty Red continues the story. Both Charlie and Luke Will refuse to give their guns to Lou Dimes. Who gets up first?
______________________________

14. List three people for whom funerals are held:
 a. 
 b. 
 c. 

15. Who shot Mapes?______________________________

16. What happens to Charlie?________________________

17. What happens to Luke Will?_______________________

18. Name three of the groups that attend the trial.
 a.  
 b.  
 c.  

19. Why is Mapes embarrassed at the trial?

20. What punishment do the men of the gathering receive from the judge?
 a.  
 b.  

21. Answer the following questions by making several inferences from the actions that are described in the last chapter. Saying that the relationship changed is not adequate. State what clue you were given in the book that led you to this conclusion.

   What can you infer about Gil's relationship with his family?
 a.  
 b. (clue)

   What can you infer about Candy and Mathu' relationship?
 a.  
 b. (clue)
22. What is the tone of the last chapter?

23. What is the climax of this book? Describe how there is no going back from this point.

24. Name one of the themes of *A Gathering of Old Men*. State it in a sentence as a topic plus author's opinion. EX: In Ernest Gaines novel titled *A Gathering of Old Men*, the author, through the theme of …., teaches us…

25. Name and describe one of the conflicts in this book.

26. Was it a happy ending?