“The Village” Discussion Questions

Directions: *Answer all questions in complete sentences. You will be able to answer the questions online, however you must jot down your answers (notes) and once the movie is finished, answer the questions. Remember to jot down information that is related to your essential question: How does tradition, ritual, and the dystopian view influence behavior and the human spirit? Online, write your answers in blue.*

1. The movie opens with the scene of an elder burying his child. Later on, the movie reveals that the elders moved to the village to escape the pain of death that was so imminent in modern day America. Have the elders achieved anything? Can the pain of a loved one’s death be lessened by the means of that death?

2. In the first half of the movie, a number of viciously killed and skinned animals are found on the grounds of the village. A whisper arises among the villagers that the creatures within the woods are responsible for these brutal acts. Ms. Hunt addresses the towns people and offers the following arguments:

a. A coyote or wolf probably killed the dogs.

b. Those we don’t speak of are bigger than coyotes or wolves.

c. Therefore, those we do not speak of are not responsible for the killing of the dogs.

How might a community of human beings succumb (*fail to resist)*  to such a faulty explanation?

3. Ivey Walker, the blind heroine, claimed that “some people, just a handful… give off the tiniest color. It’s faint, like a haze. It’s the only thing I ever see in the darkness.” She then taunts Lucius that she won’t tell him what color he gives off, claiming that it wouldn’t be ladylike. The problem with this scene is the obvious question of how can a blind person identify colors. Even if she perceived these colors, how could she know red (the bad color) from gold (the protective color)?

4. Lucius Hunt points to the locked black box in the corner of his mother’s living room and claims that everyone in the village has secrets. To this, his mother replies that the contents of the box are reminders of past sins: “Forgetting would be to let them live again in another form.” It is not exactly clear what other form Ms. Hunt has in mind, but her point merits consideration. How essential is memory for ethical behavior *(demonstrating respect)*? Is one doomed to repeat previous immoral behavior if one forgets it?

5. Before revealing the farce of the creatures to Ivey, Mr. Walker explains the problems with the town: “Money can be a wicked thing. It can turn men’s hearts black… Good men’s hearts.” Money drove townspeople to commit murder. Yet, the village elders have allowed people to die and go blind, when medicine was close. As the murders were driven by capital gain, so the elders were driven by the elimination of pain. Haven’t the elders’ hearts been turned black as well? Are their actions any more morally justifiable (distinction between good and bad) than the murders in the town?

6. When Mr. Walker divulges his idea of sending Ivey to the town to his wife, she reminds him that he cannot go because of a sacred oath. However, under a consequentialist (holding that the consequences of one's conduct are the ultimate basis for any judgment about the rightness or wrongness of that conduct) approach, wouldn’t it be permissible to break an oath if it saved a human being’s life? Is Shyamalan rejecting the consequentialist rationale laid by Lucius Hunt?

7. After revealing the plan to the elders, Walker asserts that if they didn’t send Ivey, “We could never again call ourselves innocent.” Yet, it seems hard to conceive of the elders as innocent up to this point. They are lying to the entire village and have contributed to the death of villagers when medicine was close. Furthermore, sending a blind girl into the woods hardly seems innocent; it is improbable she would return. Perhaps, sending Ivey is the best option because her blindness makes her less capable of detecting their lies. In light of the whole movie, can the elders ever truly call themselves innocent?

8. Some have claimed that Shyamalan’s attempt to fool the audience doesn’t work in The Village. First, the accents and vernacular (the language or dialect spoken) are not distant enough; they appear forced. Secondly, would early American societies ever allow women such a primary role in ruling? Some feel that the costumes are not convincing enough to make “those we don’t speak of” threatening. Another inconsistency hurts the director’s effort; many of the villagers appear to be close in age to the elders. How are these members of the community being deceived, since they were not born into it? Despite all of this, were you fooled by The Village, and, if so, why?

9. Shyamalan said that for The Village, he “wanted to write about innocence.” At the end of the movie are there any truly innocent figures remaining? If Ivey continues the deception, can she still be considered morally good? Is Noah Percy innocent in his stabbing of Lucius Hunt because of his mental handicap?

10. The director also states that he was setting the feigned village in the 1800s, and in that time “innocence couples with not knowing a lot.” Is ignorance any criterion for innocence?