

Discussion questions

“Sonny’s Blues,” by James Baldwin

1. This is the first story we’ve read that has been written from a first-person point of view. Yet the story is about a character other than the narrator. Point of view is one of the most important choices a short story author can make—what does Baldwin’s choice to have Sonny’s story narrated by a first-person bystander do for the story?
2. The story keeps coming back to the condition of childhood; the narrator frequently references things that children supposedly do. What’s the narrator’s perspective on childhood? Why might childhood be a recurring point of consideration for “Sonny’s Blues”?
3. Consider the articles your group chose to read with “Sonny’s Blues.” Did they answer any questions you had about the text? Did they raise new questions for you?
4. If you could discuss “Sonny’s Blues” with the authors of the articles you read, what would you want to talk about?