Discussion Questions (Taken from http://www.shmoop.com/time-machine-hg-wells/questions.html)

1. The ending of *The Time Machine* is notably ambiguous, with the Time Traveller disappearing and the unnamed narrator listing some possibilities for where (ahem, when) he went. Why do you think Wells wrote such an ambiguous ending? Why does the unnamed narrator get the last word? And how do you react when his last word is sort of optimistic?

2. Some authors have written sequels to *The Time Machine*, with wildly different stories. In one, the Time Machine is used to get to Mars. In another, the Time Traveller can't get back to save Weena because the Morlocks and Eloi don't exist, thanks to the Time Traveller telling his original story. In yet another, the Morlocks invade the Time Traveller's own time because they learned how to make Time Machines when they took his apart (see 10.10). If you wrote a sequel to *The Time Machine*, what would happen? Or if you wrote a 13th chapter, what would happen? Where did the Time Traveller go and what did he do then?

3. In our discussion of the characters, we’ve offered some ideas about why this story has both an unnamed narrator and the other dinner guests. But why do these guests (except for Filby and maybe Hillyer) not have names? Why are some of them defined by occupations (e.g., the Medical Man) and others defined by qualities (e.g., the Silent Man)? And why are there so many of them?

4. There's no mention of God or religion in this novel, and none of the Time Traveller's guests are particularly religious (there's no Minister or Priest, for example). Why isn't there any religion in this story or religious view of the
story? We get to see what an Editor might say about the story or how a Medical Man might respond. How would a Priest, Minister, Rabbi, Imam, etc., respond to this story of time travel and human degeneration?

5. The Time Traveller’s friends are all men, except for Weena. Does that change the effect of the story? In the 1890s, women’s rights were a subject of debate; for instance, in Britain, in 1894, the right to vote in local elections was extended to married women. How does Wells imagine the questions of gender difference in the future? (Brain snack: Wells later wrote a novel that’s a fairly sympathetic portrayal of the difficulties a young woman would have in his society.)

6. In the 1960 movie version, before the Time Traveller gets to see the Eloi and Morlocks in the far future, he sees the effect of a nuclear war, which was a topic that was on people’s minds a lot in the 1960s. If you were making a movie version of The Time Machine today and wanted it to respond to the issues people are worried about now, what would the Time Traveller see on his way to the far future? (Since there actually was a semi-recent [2002] version of the movie made, you can compare it to your version. We think yours is probably going to be a lot better.)

7. Although the Time Traveller wants to be scientific about the evolution of humanity, he seems to sympathize more with the Eloi. Why? Does this change the way we read the novel? Did you sympathize with the Eloi while reading the book, or do you take a more neutral view of the Eloi-Morlock ecology? (Here’s a simple test that comes from our years of watching Nature on PBS: if a Morlock were chasing an Eloi, would you root for the Morlock, the Eloi, or neither?)

8. The narrator says that the Time Traveller shouldn’t be trusted – and thus it makes some sense that people wouldn’t trust his story. But why does Wells add this uncertainty? Are we supposed to be uncertain? Or is it just that we’re supposed to see that the dinner guests are uncertain? One of the final judgments on this story is the narrator’s remark that the story is
incredible but told in a very believable way. Do you agree with this statement? How does the Time Traveller make his story more believable?

9. The Time Traveller takes a while to get to the theory that the Morlocks eat the Eloi. In fact, the sudden realization that the meat he saw underground was Eloi comes to him after he contemplates the stars (7.12). Did you guess that the meat was Eloi before the Time Traveller did? Why does the Time Traveller take so long to get to this realization? Why does the realization come to the Time Traveller so suddenly when he’s thinking about how big the universe is?

10. Even when he goes to the desolate beach in the year 30 million or so, the Time Traveller finds the tiniest possibility of life: the football-sized creature with tentacles. Why does Wells include this detail? Does the creature give us hope that life will go on, or does it just serve to highlight how depressing the future really is?

**Biography**

Herbert George Wells (21 September 1866 – 13 August 1946[3])—known as H. G. Wells—was a prolific English writer in many genres, including the novel, history, politics, and social commentary, and textbooks and rules for war games. He is now best remembered for his science fiction novels, and Wells is called a father of science fiction.[4] His most notable science fiction works include The Time Machine (1895), The Island of Doctor Moreau (1896), The Invisible Man (1897), and The War of the Worlds (1898).