

Great Books Discussion Group
Questions for *All the King's Men*

1. The title of the book, *All the King's Men* comes from the nursery rhyme, "Humpty Dumpty." Can we trace the development of the fall of Willie Stark? Is the title meant to be derogatory? How closely does the plot follow the political career of Huey Long? Are we meant to make a direct correlation between Willie Stark and Huey Long? Is there one incident that leads to Starks' downfall, or is it a combination of incidents which cause his downfall?
2. What make Willie Stark so appealing to both men and women in the novel? Why does he inspire such devotion in his followers and such disapprobation in his enemies?
3. What causes Willie Stark to want to grind up his opponents? Did Stark begin by pursuing honest goals, but become sidetracked as he amassed more power? Why do Jack Burden and Lucy Stark say that they have to believe Willie Stark was a great man?
4. At the end of the novel, Jack Burden says the story was about Willie Stark, but that it was also about him. Whose tale is it? Whose voice predominates in the book?
5. By the end of the novel, what has changed about Willie Stark? What has changed about Jack Burden? Which character ultimately finds fulfillment? Why does Anne Stanton finally marry Jack Burden?
6. In many ways, the discoveries about Judge Irwin are central to the novel, and set off a series of events that eventually lead to the deaths of Willie Stark and Adam Stanton, and the affair Willie has with Anne Stanton. Judge Irwin's death also leads Jack Burden to adopt a different view of life. Initially, Jack believed that circumstance dictated people's lives. By the end of the novel Jack believed that good and evil were necessary, and that man's place was within the nexus of good and evil and involved free will. Which philosophy did Willie Stark adopt? Which philosophy did Jack's father believe in?