

### Discussion Questions for *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*

1. One of the themes of the work is that animals are treated with a great deal of reverence, while androids are treated with contempt. It seems as though even man-made animals (such as Deckard's electric sheep) are treated with more respect than androids. Why are androids looked down upon? Does the novel actually answer this question? What constitutes life in the context of the novel, if electric animals are accorded some measure of respect, while androids are not?
2. Why is the euphemism "retired" used to describe the killing of an android? Are the androids outlawed because they killed people on Mars, or are they outlawed because they returned to Earth? Why aren't the people of Earth aware that androids are among them? Why are androids permitted to live with humans on colony worlds, but are not allowed to live with humans on Earth?
3. At one point in the novel, Deckard says that he is Mercer. Is he talking literally, or is he speaking metaphorically? Why does Deckard suddenly relate to Mercer at the end, while he steadfastly refuses to believe in him earlier in the novel?
4. Buster Friendly, Mercer's antagonist, is revealed as an android late in the novel. Irmgard Baty seems to think that Buster's main accomplishment is the debunking of the theory that humans have empathic powers, since he reveals that Mercer is a fraud. Is Irmgard correct in her assumption? Does Mercer represent something more than the empathic power in humans?
5. J.R. Isidore notices that the androids seem to lack human warmth; that they possess efficient mental processes, but are not quite "right." Deckard notices the essential coldness of the androids, but like Isidore, is somewhat sympathetic toward them. What do the androids lack? How is this lack conveyed in the novel? Is the depiction of androids believable?
6. J.R. Isidore notes that everything on Earth is slowly turning into what he calls "kipple," or rubbish. If left unattended, all material things decay into kipple, a process he terms "kipplization." Deckard calls the same process entropy, noting that all life tends to break down over time. Eventually, Deckard realizes that the androids and humans are locked in a struggle of decay; each seeking to stave off entropy, while acknowledging that it occurs. Is the novel effective in the portrayal of entropy and decay? Is there hope at the end of the novel that entropy can be held in check, or is everything destined to become kipple?
7. Near the end of the novel, the three remaining androids remove the legs from a spider. They seem to take a perverse pleasure in this act, while J.R. Isidore and Deckard are appalled by the

act. Does this act reveal the essential “otherness” of the androids and affirm that they have no empathic sense?

8. There is a curious doubling effect in the novel. Rachel Rosen is doubled in the form of Pris, and Deckard is doubled in the form of Mercer. Mercer and Buster are also doubled. Do these doubles reflect archetypes of good and evil; live and man-made? Are the doubles effective? How do the doubles contribute to the feeling of déjà-vu that permeates the novel?
9. How does the post-apocalyptic atmosphere contribute to the mood of the novel? Is there any hope for humanity (or the androids) in this world? Is the world becoming permanently “kipplized”?
10. What is the motivation of the androids in the movie? Why do they return to Earth, knowing that they are unwanted? Is the plot hampered by the lack of motivation on the part of the androids?

#### Optional Questions regarding the movie *Blade Runner*

1. Why does the movie *Blade Runner* eliminate the character of Mercer? Why are the electric animals eliminated in the movie? Is the plot of *Blade Runner* more compelling than the plot of the novel? Why or why not?
2. Does the movie make the elimination of the androids more compelling than in the novel? Does the limited life-span of the androids in the movie make their decision to return to Earth more believable?