

Discussion Questions for *The Golden Seed*

Teachers/parents please take note: These discussion questions are not specifically intended as a study resource for the classroom or with your child. While some of the study questions may be appropriate for that purpose, depending on the age group, others clearly are not. They are meant to engage the reader in a thoughtful discussion with regard to some of the concepts in this story. I leave it up to the teachers or parents discretion to include them in the classroom or engage with them with your child, and I encourage you to develop your own in response to the story.

My own comments are included below with the questions and are just that, comments, not final thoughts or definite answers.

1. Where do you think this story is taking place?

It could be anywhere. I deliberately wanted the place, wherever that may be, to be created in the mind of the reader.

2. Why do you think it took Lila so long to decide to come to Earth? Why did she not venture forth with all the other star children who were coming and going?

Maybe she was afraid. Maybe she was simply content with where she was. Maybe she felt she simply didn't have enough information yet to make the commitment of finally leaving the safety and security of where she was to try something totally different. Maybe she felt like it was hopeless, like she would never be able to make a difference anyway, so why bother?

3. What do you think it means when the story refers to "forgetting who you really are"? What does this mean to you?

To me, forgetting who you really are means losing the ability to act with integrity and follow your truth. It means walking the path in life that others expect of you, or following another's path, without really finding your own. It means not knowing or finding your own voice, your own passion, your own reason for living. It means giving up your personal vision, your passion, your self-respect, your self-worth in order to settle into another person's idea of who you are.

4. Lila seems to have a lot of conflict with the parents she chose. Why do you think she chose them, knowing ahead of time that it would be difficult?

I think Lila saw this situation as "danger plus opportunity". She knew it would be difficult, but perhaps she thought, from her perspective in the heavens, that the contrast would be useful in keeping her awake. In other words, if she had chosen very loving, supportive and gentle parents who could see her and resonate with her in every way, there would be no conflict, no obstacles, no contrast that would grate on her inner way of being and give rise eventually to her own conviction in herself. There would be no inner fight to fight, no digging for her own clarity and self-worth. And while the ease of this alternate life may seem tempting, it may not have allowed Lila to find her own true self in this world and offer it to others.

5. What do you think of the idea that reality might not be what you think it is? That it actually may be more malleable than you think, based on your perceptions? And what are perceptions anyway? How do you define them in your life?

I read many years ago about the idea that for something to be real, it must be able to withstand the test of time. It can't be temporary. It must be able to hold its truth from generation to generation and culture to culture. It must

be able to withstand differences in race, socioeconomic status and education. It must be the thing that stands behind everything we see and experience. Whatever is temporary is not real. Yes, the experience may be real, the experience of pain may be real, for instance, or fear, but the thing itself isn't. It passes. It may leave a deep psychic cut, and moving forward in life will depend on how well we can let that trauma go. But it passes. Even a lifetime of pain (and I in no way mean to minimize this experience) will pass. We are all perception and sensation. We perceive an event based on our cultural heritage, race, socialization, education, past experiences (that may not have been consciously digested) and habits, attitudes and associations. When we perceive an event and categorize it and experience a feeling, that is a sensation. Often, we have no idea that the sensation to the perception we are having is just an automatic response. It feels real enough, and we say, "well, that's who I am". But is it really? Is that truly a genuine response? A creative response? Are you reacting, or acting? That, to me, is perception and the art of creation – in that gap. You have the opportunity, in that moment, to create something new, to create a different experience, for you and everyone around you. You aren't simply re-inventing the wheel every second of your life.

6. What do you think of the idea that Lila chose her parents? What does this imply?

To me, this implies responsibility. I was first introduced to the idea that we choose our parents over 20 years ago, largely through Rudolf Steiner's work, who is the founder of Waldorf education, among many other things. For the past 20 years, I have really struggled with this idea. And I still do. Would we really choose parents who abuse us, demoralize us, neglect us and otherwise seek to do us harm, extinguishing this precious new life that has no agenda but to seek love, affection and care? I think, as human beings, we are very limited in our thinking, and there is no easy answer to this. I do know, that in my quieter moments, in the deepness of meditation, I feel something there, as if something is saying to me: You may never understand it, but it is part of the tapestry, this weaving that connects all beings. You cannot know the truth of this for every other being, but you can work to find the truth of it in your own life.

And I try, but I admit that it is hard. But I think the hardest part about it is that if you choose to accept this idea, than you also must accept the responsibility that is inherent in that choice. And that's the kicker. Because then, you can no longer blame. You can no longer play the victim. And it puts you in a position of power. And very often, people are not comfortable in this position, because now you have a choice. You can choose to build a life of freedom. But that means letting go of who you think you are. And that's very hard.

7. Do you think Lila accomplishes what she set out to do?

Lila's original intention was to help and to heal and to be of service to others, specifically to show them that they were not born to be just another cog in the wheel, but that they were born to bring their own personal light to the world, whatever that may be.

I think that Lila's intentions are a process, not a destination. I think in the process of struggling to allow her own light to shine into the world, she paves the way for others, and offers them inspiration. I think it's not so much in what she does, but how she chooses to be, that acts as a source of inspiration for others.

8. How do you feel about this story? How does this story make you feel?

For me, the story makes me feel hopeful. It's simple but speaks to me deeply about the struggle for integrity, autonomy, truth, and actually living the phrase "be yourself". To me, that's a common catch phrase that in our culture is very hard to do. Our "self" isn't automatic. The socialized self may be, but the true self is not. It takes a lot of courage to access the true self. It takes even greater courage to put it out into the world.

9. When Lila was struggling, was there ever a feeling while you were reading that she might not make it? That she may never find her “Golden Seed”?

You know, life is hard. And I really tried to compact that feeling into this short story. The struggle is real. And the outcome is usually uncertain. We may win some, we may lose some, but ultimately, to me, to never find your true purpose in this life, and to “lead a life of quiet desperation and go to the grave with the song still in you”, as Henry David Thoreau writes, is an egregious tragedy. And the song doesn’t have to be big or massively life changing. But whatever it is, you have to live it. You have to hear it from your own heart. And if you spend an entire life in an authentic inner search for your own personal song, and never quite make it 100%, it doesn’t matter. The effort, the intention was there. And in a goal oriented culture, that can be hard to swallow: That you may not make it, that it may not amount to anything external. But inwardly, you will feel the difference. And the reward will lie in the effort, not the result. But you will be different somehow, and therefore, your life will feel different, even though externally things may look the same for a while.

10. Before Lila comes to Earth, she seems very confident. What happens to her confidence once she gets here? Who or what is part of the process of undermining her confidence?

Deepak Chopra has a beautiful quote. He says, “ You alone are the judge of your self worth, and your goal is to discover infinite worth in yourself no matter what anyone else thinks”.

I think of this in regard to Lila. Before she comes, she has infinite self worth. She doesn’t have to fight for it, it’s just there. It’s simply part of her being. When she arrives on Earth, however, she finds that isn’t the case. Her worth is measured and judged by how good she makes others feel about themselves. Implicit or not, this is the message she receives about her self worth. And so it takes any ability or opportunity to know your own self worth off the table, because she is taught to live in perpetual object referral mode (what is my self worth in relation to the things and people outside myself), as opposed to subject referral (what is my self worth in relation to the inner workings of my being). And many factors contribute to this: education, socialization, the unmet needs of the parents. It’s not to say these things are all “bad”, but they do create obstacles. And the quality and authenticity of your life is determined by how well you overcome these obstacles. Yes, the infinite self worth Lila comes to Earth with is shattered, mostly by the expectations of the other equally shattered and unconscious souls around her. But that appears to be part of the game. Can you recognize that you are shattered in the first place? That’s the first step. Then, collect only the shards that make you feel whole, and discard the rest. Somehow, those pieces will end up fitting together beautifully, and you will find you are your own complete being.