

READING GUIDE FOR "THE GREAT CONVERSATION"

Note: Hutchins makes snarky asides, big claims, kind of lame jokes, and dire predictions. Watch for these as you read.

To whom does Hutchins refer in his use of the term "men"? How does his consistent use of the term affect your reading of the text?

What are some things that Hutchins claims are NOT his goals in this essay?

Hutchins is already answering to some of his critics. Give some examples.

Why were these books chosen?

TRADITION OF THE WEST

What are the characteristics of the Great Conversation?

What is absent from this series of books?

What is the goal of a Liberal Education? Is it good vocational training?

MODERN TIMES

Who has historically had access to a liberal education? Does RH think this is a good thing?

Why would people need a liberal education now?

These works were written long ago. Do they still speak to us?

EDUCATION AND ECONOMICS

Can everyone get a liberal education? What do critics say? What does RH say?

RH states: "Think of the time that could be saved by the simple process of squeezing out the waste, water and frivolity out of American education"—True? What would you cut out of the education you've had so far?

RH predicts a "leisure society" where we have lots of free time. Was he right?

Do you think that our society now values technical training, a liberal education, or something else? What do you think the goals of education in Quebec are now?

THE DISAPPEARANCE OF LIBERAL EDUCATION

According to RH what do the goals of the then-current educational system seem to be? Has this changed? Is it a desirable state of affairs?

For what two reasons did liberal education disappear?

How is the great conversation useful in an age of specialization?

(CAN SKIP EXPERIMENTAL SCIENCE)

EDUCATION FOR ALL

This section more or less summarizes the previous parts and makes his most vehement arguments. Find three or more arguments he makes that stand out to you, such as "in education, as elsewhere, the broad primrose path leads to a nasty place." I don't know if it is true, but the image is great!

EDUCATION OF ADULTS

What are RH's major criticisms of how we approach education for adults?

Can we live happily by "animal gratification alone?"

Is science and engineering still a more "respectable" choice for a young scholar today?

THE NEXT GREAT CHANGE

Note the RH here predicts globalization!

How could a liberal education for all avert nuclear annihilation and bring about world peace?!