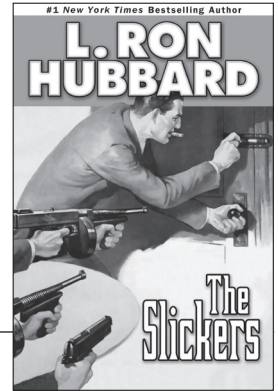


L. Ron Hubbard's *The Slickers* Discussion Guide

(also includes the short stories
Murder Afloat and *Killer Ape*)



STORY SUMMARY & OVERVIEW

Arizona sheriff Tex Larimee leaves the familiar frontier behind for the crowded streets of New York City, only to be robbed, framed and imprisoned shortly after arriving. Far from home and stripped of his badge and revolver, Tex must rely on his experience, determination and quick thinking to expose the criminals responsible. Blending mystery, humor and action, the author explores how character, confidence and resourcefulness matter far more than appearances.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

The Slickers is set in the mid-1930s, when New York City was one of the world's largest and busiest urban centers. Organized crime remained a major concern following the end of Prohibition, while professional pickpockets, confidence schemes and criminal organizations operated alongside legitimate businesses. Police departments were becoming increasingly specialized, although modern forensic science and communications technology were still in their early stages.

The story also reflects a popular cultural contrast of the era between the American West and the rapidly growing cities of the East. Western sheriffs were often portrayed as practical, independent lawmen whose straightforward methods contrast sharply with the bureaucracy of large metropolitan police forces.

Although the characters and events are fictional, the author uses these real historical differences to create an entertaining fish-out-of-water adventure that examines justice, adaptability and the meeting of two very different American cultures.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

📖 How did law enforcement differ between the American West and large Eastern cities during the early twentieth century? Tex's methods often contrast with those used by New York police officers. Discuss policing in both settings and why you think their approaches developed differently.

📖 Why are people sometimes underestimated because they seem different? Throughout the story, Tex is judged because of his appearance, accent and mannerisms. Compare this with modern situations in which people are misjudged because they do not fit expectations.

 Which is more powerful: physical strength, reputation, intelligence, or confidence? Near the end of the story, Tex relies more on psychological tactics than violence to expose the criminal. Discuss which qualities are most effective when solving difficult problems and explain your reasoning.

 How does humor strengthen the mystery? The story blends comedy, crime and suspense. Discuss how moments of humor affect the reader's experience and make the more serious events even more memorable.

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Murder Afloat

Discussion Guide

STORY SUMMARY & OVERVIEW

U.S. Narcotics operative Bob Clark boards the SS *Cubana* to investigate a massive drug-smuggling operation, but his mission quickly becomes far more dangerous than expected. When the ship's captain is murdered, and fire breaks out aboard the vessel, Clark must unravel a deadly mystery while fighting to save both himself and the passengers. Combining maritime adventure with detective fiction, the author tells a suspenseful story of courage, quick thinking and justice under extraordinary circumstances.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

During the early twentieth century, passenger liners connected the Caribbean, Central America and the United States, transporting travelers, cargo and international commerce across busy sea lanes. These same routes also attracted smugglers seeking to move illegal goods between countries. As heroin, opium and other narcotics became increasingly regulated during the 1920s and 1930s, governments expanded international efforts to combat organized drug trafficking.

Law enforcement officers investigating crimes at sea faced unique challenges. Communication with authorities ashore was limited, jurisdictions often overlapped, and investigators frequently worked in isolation aboard ships where suspects could not simply leave.

Although the mystery aboard the SS *Cubana* is fictional, the author uses this historical setting to reflect real concerns of the period surrounding maritime security, international crime and the growing effort to disrupt organized smuggling operations.

CHAPTER ONE: A MURDER AT SEA

📖 What motivates people to act courageously even when they know the personal risk? Captain Simmons risks his life to leave an important clue behind. Compare his actions with historical or modern examples of people who knowingly accepted danger to help others.

📖 Why do investigators sometimes willingly enter dangerous situations? Clark chooses to respond to what he believes may be a trap rather than ignore it. Discuss why law enforcement officers, journalists and investigators often accept personal risks while pursuing the truth.

📖 Why is a ship especially vulnerable without its captain? The chapter ends with the *Cubana* continuing through the sea while criminals control the bridge. Discuss the dangers created when leadership disappears during an emergency.

CHAPTER TWO: FIRE BELOW DECK

📖 Why is remaining calm so important during emergencies? Clark must think clearly while trapped inside a burning compartment. Discuss how panic affects decision-making and why self-control improves the chances of survival.

📖 How reliable are first impressions? Clark quickly develops suspicions about several passengers. Discuss what makes someone appear trustworthy or suspicious and whether first impressions should always be trusted.

📖 Why is communication critical during a crisis? The destruction of the ship's radio greatly increases the danger. Compare this situation with how modern communication technology might change the outcome of a similar emergency.

CHAPTER THREE: TRUTH AND UNCERTAINTY

📖 Why might someone hesitate to reveal everything they know? Jean Raymond provides valuable information while still withholding certain details. Discuss why people sometimes remain cautious even when other lives' may depend on complete honesty.

📖 How do rumors influence people's behavior during emergencies? Many passengers remain uncertain about the true situation aboard the ship. Discuss how incomplete information and fear affect the decisions people make during crises.

📖 Why do extreme conditions make rescue efforts so difficult?

CHAPTER FOUR: ACTS OF COURAGE

📖 How does personal tragedy strengthen the emotional impact of the story? Harrington's desperate search for his wife gives the larger disaster a deeply personal dimension. Discuss why individual stories often help readers better understand large-scale emergencies.

📖 How can one person's actions improve the survival of many others? Clark repeatedly risks his own safety to send a distress call and assist those around him. Compare his actions with a historical or modern example in which one individual's leadership saved many lives.

CHAPTER FIVE: SOLVING THE MYSTERY

📖 How does Clark piece together the truth? The solution depends upon carefully evaluating motive, opportunity and evidence rather than making assumptions. Discuss which clues prove most important and how Clark's reasoning leads to the correct conclusion.

📖 How can greed and fear influence people's decisions? Harrington's actions are shaped by personal ambition and self-preservation. Compare these motivations with historical or modern examples involving political corruption, organized crime, or business scandals.

 What qualities define effective leadership during a crisis? Throughout the investigation, Clark consistently accepts responsibility, remains calm under pressure, and places the safety of others first. Discuss which leadership qualities prove most important during emergencies.

 How has criminal investigation changed since the 1930s? Compare Bob Clark's investigative methods with those available to modern law enforcement agencies. What advances in technology have transformed investigations, and what investigative skills remain just as important today?

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Killer Ape

Discussion Guide

STORY SUMMARY & OVERVIEW

When a man is found dead, suspicion immediately falls on Joe, an escaped orangutan. Reporter Bill Lacy refuses to accept the obvious explanation, believing Joe is incapable of murder. As Bill searches through the wilderness before the police can destroy the animal, he uncovers evidence that challenges everyone's assumptions. Combining mystery with adventure, the author explores the importance of compassion, critical thinking and resisting the urge to draw conclusions based solely on appearances.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

During the 1920s and 1930s, zoos, circuses and traveling exhibitions frequently displayed exotic animals to fascinated audiences. Great apes, such as orangutans, attracted particular attention because relatively little was known about their intelligence and natural behavior. Newspapers often sensationalized incidents involving dangerous animals, reinforcing dramatic stereotypes that shaped public opinion.

Scientific understanding of animal cognition and welfare was still developing during this period, and standards for caring for captive wildlife varied considerably from those expected today. Public discussions about conservation, animal welfare and responsible treatment would continue evolving throughout the twentieth century.

Although *Killer Ape* is a work of fiction, the author draws on real historical attitudes to explore how assumptions, media coverage and limited knowledge can influence public opinion and criminal investigations.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

 How have attitudes toward animal welfare changed over time? Early in the story, Bill is criticized for caring deeply about Joe's well-being. Compare public attitudes during the 1930s with modern views of conservation, zoos and animal welfare.

 Why do people sometimes blame the most obvious suspect before examining the evidence? After the body is discovered, many immediately conclude that Joe is guilty. Compare this reaction with historical or modern examples where assumptions proved incorrect.

 Why do people sometimes risk their own safety to help others? Bill ventures into the forest during a snowstorm to protect Joe before the police find him. Discuss what motivates people to help individuals—or animals—they believe are being treated unfairly.

 How accurately does the story portray orangutans? Discuss what scientists know about orangutan intelligence, memory, communication and behavior. Compare those findings with Joe's portrayal and identify which elements seem realistic and which reflect the era in which the story was written.

 How can empathy change the outcome of an investigation? Bill consistently tries to understand Joe's actions rather than assume guilt. Describe a historical event, literary work, or personal experience in which considering another perspective led to a very different conclusion.

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