***Tuesdays with Morrie* Study Guide**

**by Mitch Albom**

**Genre**:

**The Curriculum**

According to the author, the subject of this “course”

The teacher?

The topics?

Graduation?

The final paper?

Flashback to spring, 1979: the day that Mitch graduated from Brandeis University in Waltham, Massachusetts.  Describe Morrie’s physical appearance.

Mitch gives his “favorite professor” a gift.  Explain what the gift is and how it is     symbolic.

Morrie cries when he says goodbye to Mitch.  What does this tell you about Morrie?

**The Syllabus**

The first sentence is startling because it is so blunt. When did Morrie receive his “death sentence”?

Morrie loved to dance. Describe his experiences when he would go dancing at a church in Harvard Square on Wednesday nights.  What does this information reveal about Morrie.

What were the signs or symptoms which indicated that Morrie was suffering from an illness long before he received his terrible news from the doctor?

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Morrie was “stunned by the normalcy of the day.”  Explain how contrast is used here.

How did the disease slowly rob Morrie of his normal existence?

In the fall of 1994 Morrie taught his last class at Brandeis.  Why did Morrie decide to teach this class even though he was so ill?

The doctors guessed that Morrie had two years left, but Morrie intuitively knew it was less.  However, Morrie made a decision that he would not wither away.  Instead, what was Morrie’s approach to his impending death?

What did Morrie tell his friends to do if they *really* wanted to help him?

Describe Morrie’s “living funeral.”  What event motivated Morrie to host this event?

**The Student**

Describe Mitch’s early 20’s and the disappointments he faced which made him feel like a failure.

Mitch was profoundly affected by the death of a favorite uncle.  What is Mitch’s new career path?

Describe Mitch’s career as a sports writer and explain how his career has a negative effect on his personal life.

On graduation day Mitch had promised Morrie that he would stay in touch.  That never happened.  However, fate does have a way of intervening sometimes and changing the course of our lives. What is Mitch doing at the end of this chapter? (The answer is actually to be found at the end of the next chapter.  Read on!)

**The Audiovisual**

What chain of events led to Morrie being featured on Ted Koppel’s TV show, “Nightline”?

Describe, in detail, the meeting between Morrie and Ted Koppel.

Mitch uses personification to describe Morrie’s attitude towards the reality, the lack of  “prettiness,” in death.  Use the example to explain Morrie attitude.  Elaborate.

Morrie’s emotions are real. What contrasting emotions does he feel as he battles his illness?  What information does he share as a guest on “Nightline”?

What is it that Morrie dreads as his body decays? (You can put it into your own words!)

Flashback to Mitch’s first class with Morrie.  What motivated Mitch to include this anecdote?  What do we learn about Morrie?

**The Orientation**

Describe Mitch’s multi-tasking as he drives to Morrie’s house.  How might this scene serve as a metaphor for what Mitch’s life has become?

Why is Mitch uneasy about this meeting with Morrie?  What are his fears?  Elaborate.

A profound idea has been presented to Mitch: What is it like to die?  Then he flashes back to his Brandeis years.  What is the connection?

**The Classroom**

Morrie said, “I’m on the last great journey here- and people want me to tell them what to pack.”  Since the “journey” is dying, what might the “packing” be?

*What happened to me*?  Mitch wonders this as he sits with Morrie.  What has  happened in Mitch’s life?

From Morrie’s perspective, what is worse than dying?

Morrie shares his perspective on our culture and how/why it makes us unhappy.  Explain.  What are your thoughts regarding Morrie’s observations?

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What is the purpose of the flashback?  What is meant by the “tension of opposites”?

**Taking Attendance**

Mitch notes all of the “distractions” that we create in our lives.  How do these distractions interfere with *really* living? Morrie, in contrast, lives his life in a meaningful way.  Give examples.

After covering Wimbledon in England, Mitch arrived home to Detroit and learned some troubling career news.  Explain.

Flashback to the “money discussion.”  Elaborate.

**The First Tuesday -- We Talk About the World**

Morrie says that he has to look at life “uniquely” now.  Why does he use this euphemism to describe his life?

Morrie shares his views on love.  Explain.

What is the purpose of this flashback at the chapter’s conclusion?

**The Second Tuesday -- We Talk About Feeling Sorry for Yourself**

Mitch describes his meetings with Morrie as “a cleansing rinse of human kindness.”  Contrast this feeling with the rest of Mitch’s life.

How does Morrie “mourn”?

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What motivates Mitch to mention the gruesome news he reads in the papers?  What is the point he is making?

Explain the meaning of the “trust” flashback sequence.  Why does Morrie tell Mitch to be more open-minded?  How is the girl in the trust experiment unlike her classmates?  What does this anecdote teach?

**The Third Tuesday – We Talk About Regrets**

Explain what Mitch means when he writes, “we all need teachers in our lives.  And mine was sitting in front of me.”

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Why does Mitch make a list of topics for Morrie?  What does his list represent?  Did he leave anything out?

**The Audiovisual, Part Two**

How does Morrie say that he and his friend Maurie Stein will communicate as their conditions worsen?  What does his answer tell you about Morrie and his outlook?

**The Professor**

“At nine years old, he felt as if the weight of a mountain were on his shoulders.”  What does this hyperbole tell you about Morrie’s situation?

How was Eva (his stepmother) an important figure in Morrie’s life?

What did the visit to the fur factory teach Morrie?

**The Fourth Tuesday – We Talk About Death**

This Tuesday focused on death.  What does Morrie mean when he says that the “better approach” is “to know you’re going to die, and to be *prepared* for it at any time”?  How is this a “better approach”?

How is Morrie a “religious mutt”?  How is this trait important to him?

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What does Morrie want us to understand when he says, “most of us all walk around as if we’re sleepwalking”?  Do you think this simile is a good description?  Why?

What concerns Morrie about Mitch’s life?  What does he want Mitch to do?

**The Fifth Tuesday – We Talk About Family**

Morrie tells Mitch, “there is no foundation, no secure ground, upon which people may stand today if it isn’t the family.”  How is this true for Morrie?

What does it reveal to Mitch about his life?

What do you think about this idea?

What does Mitch realize about his relationship with his work?  How have we seen this to be true so far in the book?

Why does Mitch include the flashback on p.  98-99?

**The Sixth Tuesday – We Talk About Emotions**

What does Mitch realize about the food he has been bringing?  What does this revelation show him about Morrie?

What does the food symbolize to Mitch?

What does Morrie mean when he says, “…detachment doesn’t mean you don’t let

the experience *penetrate* you.  On the contrary, you let it penetrate you *fully*.  That’s how you are able to leave it.” (p.103)

How does Morrie show us that he’s doing this?  (Refer back to earlier sections of the book to help you answer)

What does a gazelle symbolize to Morrie?  Do you think this animal is a fitting choice for Morrie?  Why?

**The Professor, Part Two**

By including the anecdote of Morrie’s work at Chestnut Lodge, what is revealed indirectly about Morrie’s character and treatment of others?

During college, Mitch used to tease Morrie about being “stuck in the sixties.”  As he looks at this now, what does Mitch realize about these traits of Morrie’s that he once saw as corny?

Why does Mitch include the comments about the beliefs of the tribe in the North American Arctic? (p. 114)

How does this further support the idea of Morrie as being a “religious mutt”?

**The Seventh Tuesday – We Talk About the Fear of Aging**

Despite his “complete surrender to the disease,”  Morrie is trying to find positive meaning in his current position.  What positive meaning has he found?

Look at current ads in print (newspapers, magazines, etc.) and/or on TV.  Is Morrie’s theory about aging still true? (p. 117)  Explain and mention an example.

What does Morrie mean when he says, “I embrace aging”?  Does Mitch share this attitude about aging?  Why?

**Eighth Tuesday – We Talk About Money**

Why does Morrie find Ted Turner’s quote so funny?

What does Morrie believe our culture is brainwashed to believe?

How does it relate to Mitch’s life?

Do you agree with Morrie?  Why?

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How does Morrie’s life reflect his belief, “do the kinds of things that come from the heart.  When you do, you won’t be dissatisfied, you won’t be envious, you won’t be longing for somebody else’s things.  On the contrary, you’ll be overwhelmed with what comes back”?  You may use the book up to this point for your answer.

**The Ninth Tuesday  -- We Talk About How Love Goes On**

Morrie tells Mitch that they are working on their last thesis and “We want to get it right.”  What is Morrie referring to?  Why is it so important for it to be right?

Why does Morrie want to make Mitch cry?  Why won’t Mitch cry?  Can he?

How is “A teacher to the last,” fitting in describing Morrie?

Why is learning to pay attention more important than almost everything Mitch was taught in college?  Do you agree or disagree with this?  Would people get along better if they paid attention to each other and really listened like Morrie does?  Explain.

Morrie tells Mitch, “People haven’t found meaning in their lives, so they’re running all the time looking for it.”  Apply this to what you have learned about the way Morrie and Mitch both live their lives.

How did Morrie’s father’s life and death influence him?

Why does Morrie like the ideas of the Desana tribe?  Relate this to Morrie’s beliefs already discussed throughout the memoir.

**The Tenth Tuesday  --  We Talk About Marriage**

Why does Mitch continue to bring food to Morrie’s house?  What does it symbolize at this point in the memoir?

When asked to sing by other, Janine would usually decline.  Why does she willingly sing for Morrie?  What is significant about the song she chooses to sing to him?  Describe Morrie’s reaction to her singing.

On page 147, Mitch says, “I never heard her the way he did at that moment.”  What does he mean?  What is he realizing about his wife and his marriage?

On pages 150 and 151, Morrie and Mitch discuss the Book of Job.  What does Morrie mean when he says, “God overdid it”?  Has Morrie lost his faith in God?  Explain.

**The Eleventh Tuesday  --  We Talk About Our Culture**

Why does Mitch now want to be a part of Morrie’s physical care?  How does this show him to be a dynamic character?

On page 154, what does Mitch mean when he says, “The truth is, I was pounding on his back when I wanted to be hitting the walls”?

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Do you agree or disagree with Morrie’s belief that our economy and our culture make people mean?  Explain.  Has it made Mitch mean?  Use specific examples from the memoir in your response.

According to Morrie, life is somewhat circular in that a person needs others when he is born and again when he dies, but also in between.  How would life be better if we all “invest in the human family”?  Would Mitch’s life be better if he made that investment?  Explain.

What is humorous and symbolic in the ending of the chapter on page 158?

**The Audiovisual, Part Three**

Contrast Morrie’s last interview with Ted Koppel to his first interview.

How is Morrie starting to let go of the outside world?  When will he truly be gone?  Explain.

Explain the meaning of the quotation on page 162, “But as his body rotted, his character shone even more brightly.”  Use specific examples to show this.

Morrie tells Ted Koppel that “It’ll [the disease] get my body.  It will *not* get my spirit.”  How has this proven to be true throughout the memoir?  Use specific examples in your response.

**The Twelfth Tuesday -- We Talk About Forgiveness**

We can see a change in Mitch in that he is now rubbing lotion into Morrie’s feet.  Contrast this visit to Mitch’s first visit with Morrie.

Morrie tells Mitch about his friend Norman and his estrangement from him.  He tells Mitch that it is important to forgive others as well as ourselves.  Why is this so important?

Why does Morrie consider himself to be lucky?  Relate this to the tension of opposites that we previously discussed.

Why does Morrie want Mitch to visit his grave and talk to him?  Why does Mitch imagine this to be a difficult thing to do?

**The Thirteenth Tuesday -- We Talk About the Perfect Day**

On page 173, Morrie tells Mitch that making peace with dying helps one to make peace with living.  What does this mean?  How have we seen this to be true in Morrie’s life so far?

How has Morrie insured that he will live on after his death?  Give specific examples from the memoir.

Describe Morrie’s perfect day.  Why are the simple things perfect to Morrie?  What can Mitch learn from this?  What can you learn from this?

Why does Morrie want to talk to Mitch about his brother?

Describe the metaphor of the little wave and the sea.  How does it apply to Morrie and what he is trying to teach Mitch?

**The Fourteenth Tuesday -- We Say Good-bye**

Why does Mitch take the time to look at all of the little things as he approaches Morrie’s house?  How does this show a change in Mitch?

Describe Mitch and Morrie’s final goodbye.  What stood out to you?  What touched your emotions?  How do we know that Mitch has learned the lessons that Morrie taught him?

Mitch believes that Morrie chose to die when his family was not in the room.  Do you agree with this?  How does Morrie’s choice stay true to his character?

**Graduation**

Describe the significance of the title for this chapter.  Who is the graduate, Morrie or Mitch?  Explain using specific details.

On the day of Morrie’s burial, Mitch has an imaginary conversation with Morrie and found it to be “almost natural.”  Why?  How does this show that Mitch has changed?

Is it surprising that Morrie did not want the hundreds of people whose lives he touched to be at his funeral?  Explain.  How is the poem that Morrie’s son Rob read at the memorial service appropriate and fitting?

**Conclusion**

Make a list of what Mitch has learned about himself and his life from his “Tuesdays with Morrie.”  Which were the most significant?  Explain.

Was Morrie right about Mitch’s relationship with his brother?  What did Mitch do to finally be able to change his relationship with his brother?  How did Morrie help him to do this?

Answer Mitch’s question: “Have you really had a teacher?”

The final line of the memoir is “The teaching goes on.”  How is this true both in Mitch’s life and in your own?