Study Questions – “The Secret Life of Walter Mitty”

1. Name the characters Mitty imagines himself to be.

2. Describe the situation he creates for each of those characters.

3. Mitty drives past a hospital and imagines that he is a surgeon. What other situations lead Mitty into other dreams?

4. Give two examples of how Mitty is suddenly roused from his dreams.

5. What personality traits does Mitty possess in his dreams?

6. Compare the way Mitty is treated by people in his dreams with the way he is actually treated in his real life.

7. Explain two methods by which Thurber makes the story humorous.

8. What is the theme of “The Secret Life of Walter Mitty”?

9. Explain how the theme is revealed through the character of Mitty?

10. Do you feel sorry for Walter Mitty? Why or why not?

11. How would you describe a “Walter Mitty type”? In what ways is the character of Walter Mitty a recognizable and well-known human type?

12. Ultimately how does the POV from which the story is written affect the reader’s experience?
A character often reveals a story’s theme, or central idea. A writer, developing theme through character, usually gives the reader a very clear picture of the thoughts, words, and actions of the main character. Because the focus on the character is so strong, the reader understands that this character’s life is meant to illustrate an idea or message about life in general. Any change that a character undergoes or lesson that a character learns in a story usually points to the story’s theme.

People all over the world have come to know Walter Mitty and his dream life. For example, the journalist Lewis Gannet once saw a reference to “Walter Mitty types” in an editorial in a newspaper in Pakistan. The editorial writer clearly expected readers to understand the reference without any further explanation.