Twilight
by Stephanie Meyer

A reader’s guide

Twilight is a phenomenally successful novel whose popularity has grown and grown since its publication. It was the biggest selling novel of 2008 and has sold over 17 million copies around the globe. Readers of the novel have become ardent fans, one reviewer saying, ‘Move over Harry Potter’.

Twilight was initially rejected by 14 agents but became an instant bestseller when it was finally published and has now been translated into 37 languages.

After reading the novel you might want to explore some of the ideas in the story. It is always interesting to share points of view with others. Your ideas and interpretation might be very different to theirs; you might love the Twilight series, they might be the best books you have read or you might be a casual reader.

This guide contains many ideas and thinking points for you to explore individually or as part of a reading group. There are no right or wrong answers but your opinions will be more interesting if you have evidence from the story to support them.

Good luck and happy page turning!
Title

1. The novel is called *Twilight*. Why do you think this title was chosen?

2. What are the connotations of the word ‘twilight’?
   Connotations are ideas that are suggested, rather than explicitly stated.

3. Can you think of an alternative title that might fit the book better?

Edward

Edward has every asset on his side: beauty, perfection, grace, power, compelling attraction and the divine perfume of his breath … but is he too perfect? Too idealised as a character to be believable?

1. Edward is clearly the hero of the novel. How do you think Stephanie Meyer feels about the character that she has created? Are we as readers supposed to feel the same?

2. Is Edward bored with immortality?

3. Is the novel fair to the average boy who is not a vampire? Is it fair to young women? Does it create unrealistic expectations?

4. Writers often have many inspirations; one of Stephanie Meyer’s is the Jane Austen novel *Pride and Prejudice*. This novel was also the inspiration for the Bridget Jones diaries and film. From what you know of either *Pride and Prejudice* or its adaptations, what links can you draw between the characters of Edward and Mr Darcy?

5. Although Edward has the ability to read minds, he can’t read Bella’s. Why do you think the writer decided to create this block between them? What would be the effect if Edward could read Bella’s every thought?

6. Would you want others to be able to read your mind? How comfortable would this be for you and your mental privacy and emotional wellbeing? How would you feel if you could read other peoples’ minds?

7. It becomes clear in the novel that Edward watches Bella as she sleeps and has been doing so from early in the story. Is this a comfortable detail? How would this make you feel? Should Bella be more disturbed that he has been there in her room without her knowing? As readers how should we react to this?

8. If Edward was an animal what animal would he be? Why?

9. Do you think that Edward is selfish or selfless in his relationship with Bella?
Bella

1. How appealing is Bella as a character? Do you like her? Can you empathise with her?

2. What do you think of Bella? She stresses her normality, her ‘averageness’. How realistic is her character as a teenage girl today?

3. Why do you think Edward loves Bella?

4. How do you think the recent changes in her life have affected Bella?

5. Could this story happen to anyone? Is the appeal of the novel that reader’s can imagine they are Bella and are loved by Edward? Is this what makes the novel so successful?

6. The story contains many domestic details. Bella cleans and cooks for her father and at many points in the story her household chores are described in some detail. Why did Stephanie Meyer include this sort of detail in the story? Is the author suggesting anything about the role of women or of a good daughter?

7. What do you think of Bella’s relationship with her parents?

8. What do you learn about Bella as a character through her taste in clothes?

9. If what you wear isn’t important and doesn’t say anything about you as a person, what is important in the Twilight world?

10. Is Bella too passive? Once she is with Edward nothing else matters; at some points he even has to remind her to breathe! Is Bella nothing without Edward? What message does this send to readers about them and the importance of having a boyfriend/girlfriend or a relationship?

11. Some feminists have found the book very disturbing, especially the way it presents the role of young women. What does Bella do in the novel? Who does she make her decisions and choices for? Is this a positive message to be sending young girls and young women today?

12. What is suggested by Bella’s full name? What associations does the name suggest? What are the connotations?

13. Bella wonders if she is ‘seeing the same things through my eyes that the rest of the world was seeing through theirs. Maybe there was a glitch in my brain.’ (Chapter 1 p.9/10). Is there something unique about Bella? Is there a hint about what is to come in the novel or is it just a reflection of the isolation she feels? Is this typical teenage alienation or something more?

14. If Bella was an animal what animal would she be? Why?
Books

1. How similar has the marketing of the *Twilight* books and the *Harry Potter* books been? Think about the timing of the launches, special editions and the slow release of the series.

2. What do you think one reviewer of *Twilight* meant when they wrote, ‘Move over Harry Potter’?

3. How would you describe the style of the books (the way that they have been written)? Some critics think that there are parts that are very ‘clunky’ and not as well written as other parts. Do you agree with this assessment? Others have used the words ‘fluid’, ‘breathless’ and ‘liquid’ to describe the style. What label would you apply?

4. The *Twilight* books have been a raging success, but how long do you think their popularity will last? Will people still be reading them in 5/10/15/20 years’ time? Do they have something in them that will make them modern classics or will they go out of fashion only to be replaced by another series of books?

5. Emily Bronte’s *Wuthering Heights* is one of Bella’s favourite books. Copies of the book, which was written in 1847, have been reissued with covers based on the *Twilight* cover art, as has Jane Austen’s *Pride and Prejudice*. Have you noticed this in bookshops or libraries? Has it inspired you to read either of these classic novels? If you have, did you find them enjoyable, intriguing or challenging? Did they add anything to your understanding or enjoyment of *Twilight*? What do you think about classics being rebranded in this manner?

6. There have been a number of writers who have been inspired by the *Twilight* novels and have written modern day high school vampire stories. Have you read any of these stories? How do they compare with *Twilight*? Why do you think there are so many versions of these books around? What is the appeal of these books to readers?

7. Are the *Twilight* books too feminine to appeal to male readers? Would you recommend this book to male readers or are they just vampire chick lit? ‘Chick lit’ is a term used to describe easy to read, ‘light’ books that appeal mainly to young women, it is a description that could be seen as fairly derogatory or negative.
**Vampires**

1. If you have read *Dracula*, the original vampire novel, you will have noticed that the vampires in Stephanie Meyer’s books are very different from those created by Bram Stoker. What are the main differences? Why do you think Meyer did not use the ‘traditional’ vampire characters?

2. What do you think is the appeal of vampire stories as a genre?

3. Would you want the ‘gift’ of immortality? Making a list of pros and cons might help you decide.

4. It is clear that Bella wishes to be a vampire. What would this decision cost her? Her family?

**Film**


2. To fit the story into a traditional feature film length, many scenes were abridged or cut out entirely. Were there scenes from the book that you would have liked to have seen in the film?

3. Had you read the novel before watching the film, or did the film inspire you to read the novel?

4. Did the actors meet your expectations of the characters? Do you think they were well chosen for their role?

5. The film creates a very strong impression of the gloom of the town, Forks. What did you like about the setting? Did it reflect the novel?

**Further activities**

1. Why not re-read the novel with this guide and the questions that have been posed?

2. You could read the inspirations for the novel, Jane Austen’s *Pride and Prejudice*, Emily Brontë’s *Wuthering Heights* and even Bram Stoker’s *Dracula*. Can you see the connections?

3. What questions do you have after reading the novel? Why not write your own guide?

4. Has reading this novel inspired you as a writer?