

# The Secret Life of Walter Mitty

## [SEL - RULER Approach - Discussion Questions]

### 1. Recognizing Emotions in Oneself and Others

- What emotions does Walter Mitty seem to feel throughout the story? Can you identify specific moments when these emotions are most intense?
- How do the other characters in the story (like his wife or the doctor) react to Walter? What emotions do they express? How can you tell?
- Think about how Walter behaves in different scenarios—what might these behaviors suggest about his inner emotional state?

### 2. Understanding the Causes and Consequences of Emotions

- What causes Walter to daydream so frequently? How do these daydreams seem to affect his emotions? Are they a way for him to escape his real-life feelings?
- How does Walter's sense of inadequacy or frustration (with his wife, with his life, etc.) impact his ability to interact with others?
- When Walter is in his daydreams, how does he feel? What does this tell us about what he might be missing in his waking life?

### 3. Labeling Emotions with a Nuanced Vocabulary

- Can you describe some of Walter Mitty's emotions using specific terms beyond just "happy" or "sad"? For example, does he feel anxious, bored, frustrated, or perhaps humiliated? Why do you think so?
- What emotion might Walter be experiencing in the moment when he imagines himself as the fearless pilot? Is it a sense of power, freedom, or something else?
- In Walter's daydreams, he often feels a sense of excitement or adventure. How would you describe these emotions in more complex terms?

### 4. Expressing Emotions in Accordance with Cultural Norms and Social Context

- How does Walter Mitty express his emotions when he interacts with people, especially when they criticize him or when he's asked to do things he doesn't want to? Is he able to express himself in a way that fits the social situation?
- How do the other characters react when Walter seems detached or daydreaming? What does this say about the social expectations for emotional expression in the story's setting?
- Think about the way Walter's wife communicates with him. How does her behavior reflect societal expectations of how men should behave or show emotions? How does this influence Walter?

### 5. Regulating Emotions with Helpful Strategies

- In what ways does Walter attempt to cope with his feelings of dissatisfaction in his daily life? Does he use his daydreams as a way to regulate his emotions?
- What are some emotional regulation strategies Walter could use in his real life instead of daydreaming? How might he feel more in control of his emotions in those situations?
- Do you think Walter has learned any helpful emotional strategies by the end of the story, or is he still caught in his daydreams? How could he better manage his emotions in a healthier way?

### **Bonus Activity for Reflection:**

- Imagine you are Walter Mitty in one of his daydreams. How would you respond to a situation that caused you strong emotions, like frustration or disappointment? How could you apply a healthier emotional regulation strategy to that situation?

These questions help students explore the emotional dimensions of a character they can relate to, without having to dive into their personal feelings. It can also serve as a subtle introduction to self-awareness, empathy, and emotion regulation. With these questions, you'll encourage students to move beyond surface-level emotions and into deeper emotional literacy.