***The Road*: Discussion Questions**

**Directions**: Responses must be typed in MLA format. Responses must be half page minimum and include a quote from the book. In-text citation example: (McCarthy 3). Works Cited page is not required for responses.

1. Cormac McCarthy has [an unmistakable prose style](http://www.oprah.com/article/oprahsbookclub/road/road_author_bookshelf_01/1). What do you see as the most distinctive features of that style? How is the writing in *The Road* in some ways more like poetry than narrative prose? How does the writing style reflect the world in *The Road*? How is McCarthy able to make the post-apocalyptic world of [*The Road*](http://www.oprah.com/article/oprahsbookclub/road/road_book_synopsis/) seem so real and utterly terrifying? Which descriptive passages are especially vivid and visceral in their depiction of this blasted landscape? Cite at least one passage.
2. McCarthy envisions a post-apocalyptic world in which "murder was everywhere upon the land" and the earth would soon be "largely populated by men who would eat your children in front of your eyes" (McCarthy 152). How difficult or easy is it to imagine McCarthy's nightmare vision actually happening? Do you think people would likely behave as they do in the novel, under the same circumstances? Does it now seem that [human civilization is headed toward such an end](http://www.oprah.com/article/oprahsbookclub/road/road_themes_01/2)? What do you find to be the most horrifying features of this world and the survivors who inhabit it?
3. Why do you think the mother of the boy killed herself? Is her suicide understandable, or justified? What do you think of her statement, “[y]ou talk about taking a stand but there is no stand to take” (McCarthy 48). Is the father and son’s fight for survival in the world of *The Road* worth the constant pain and misery? Or would one be better off leaving the world behind, either by wasting away or suicide? What do you think you would do?
4. The man and the boy think of themselves as the "good guys." In what ways are they like and unlike the "bad guys" they encounter? How are good people distinguished from bad people in this story? What makes [the relationship between the boy and his father](http://www.oprah.com/article/oprahsbookclub/road/road_themes_01/7) so powerful and poignant? What do they feel for each other? How do they maintain their affection for and faith in each other in such brutal conditions?
5. McCarthy's work often dramatizes [the opposition between good and evil](http://www.oprah.com/article/oprahsbookclub/road/road_themes_01/5), with evil sometimes emerging triumphantly. What does *The Road* ultimately suggest about good and evil? Which force seems to have greater power in the novel? The sardonic blind man named Ely who the man and boy encounter on the road tells the father that, "There is no God and we are his prophets" (McCarthy 143). What does he mean by this?
6. Discuss how the relationship of the father and son in *The Road* alludes to the Biblical story of Abraham and Isaac, how they’re similar. Why does the father say about his son, "What if I said that he's a god" (McCarthy 145)? Are we meant to see the son as a savior? What do you think McCarthy is suggesting in the scenes in which the boy begs his father to be merciful to the strangers they encounter on the road? How is the boy able to retain his compassion—to be, as one reviewer put it, "compassion incarnate"?
7. McCarthy doesn't make explicit what kind of catastrophe has ruined the earth and destroyed human civilization, but what might be suggested by the many descriptions of a scorched landscape covered in ash? What is implied by the father's statement that, "On this road there are no godspoke men. They are gone and I am left and they have taken with them the world" (McCarthy 27). What do you think caused the devastation? What clues are provided?
8. The father tells his son he must go on in order to "carry the fire." When the boy asks if the fire is real, the father says, "It's inside you. It was always there. I can see it" (McCarthy 234). Soon after the boy asks the stranger if he is carrying the fire. Why is it so crucial that they not let it die? What is this fire, and what does it represent? How many interpretations can you come up with?
9. Why do you think [McCarthy](http://www.oprah.com/article/oprahsbookclub/road/road_author_bio/1) ends the novel with the image of trout in mountain streams before the end of the world—"In the deep glens where they lived all things were older than man and they hummed of mystery" (McCarthy 241). What is surprising about this ending? Does it provide closure, or does it prompt a rethinking of all that has come before? What does it suggest about what lies ahead? Why do you think he used this paragraph and these thoughts to end the story? Do you think the McCarthy ended the story with a hint of hope? Or do you think the author meant to suggest that there was no hope left in the world?