

“Blues Ain’t No Mockin Bird” Study Guide

1. Which characters play a part in this story’s conflict? Which characters are only onlookers?
2. What details in the first paragraph tell us that the family has lived in many different places? What details later on in the story explain why Granny has moved so often?
3. Why do the two men want to film the family? Why does Granny resent the film crew?
4. What action does Granddaddy Cain finally take to resolve Granny’s conflict with the camera crew?
5. Explain why Granny tells the children the story about the man on the bridge. What does that particular story reveal about her values?
6. That shrewd observer Cathy seems to want to imitate Granny. Why does Cathy bring up the story about Goldilocks? How does “Cathy teacher” interpret the story differently than the story is usually told?
7. Think back to the story’s title, and what it says about “the blues.” Toni Bambara says that though many outside experts have tried to interpret the blues, only the people who sing them can understand what they are about. In this story, how are the cameramen like those outside experts? What have they failed to understand about Granny and her family?
8. What is the theme of this story? State the theme in the form of a generalization about our lives—that is, what does the story reveal to you about our need for respect, sympathy, and privacy? Consider the **title**, Granny’s **anecdote** (or short story that she tells about the man on the bridge), and Cathy’s **anecdote** (or short story that she tells about Goldilocks).
9. What did you learn about the **first-person narrator** in this story? What else would you know if Granny or Granddaddy Cain were narrating the story?