

QUESTIONS ABOUT
the new me
Part 1

Halle Butler reveals in first person the life of a confused, twenty-first century woman with a self-centered, self-deceiving life style. This book is more of a character sketch than a novel, but the writing is brilliant. The real story is found more “between the lines” than in the actual words.

The questions below run from the beginning of the book to the end of *Chapter Fifteen*.

Chapter One

1. Does the narrator like her co-workers? Her new job?

Chapter Two

2. What is the narrator’s attitude toward other riders during her train ride to her new job?
3. Does Millie like her supervisor?
4. How much experience does Millie have in her new line of work? Does she expect the job to last?
5. What does she do when Tom Jordon phones for somebody to open the door for him?
6. Does she believe her work to be important?
7. What does she plan for recreation when she gets home? What does she actually do?

Chapter Three

8. Karen is Millie’s supervisor. Is she happy with Millie? What does she plan to do with her?
9. Karen paid \$1500 upfront to the temp agency for Millie and pays the agency \$20 per hour for her. Karen believes that by paying a replacement only \$15 per hour, she can recoup the \$1500 fee in “less than a month.” Four weeks at 40 hours per week is 160 hours and 160 hours times \$5 per hour saved is only \$800 saved in “almost one month” so Karen is way off. Is Karen a competent supervisor? What are her chances to impress the company?

Chapter Four

10. Millie overhears a conversation during which one woman’s only contribution is the occasional “choral ‘Yeah,’” referring to the ancient Greek tradition of using a choir to

emphasize points during a play. That Millie recognizes this shows she is well-educated. To what extent does the conversation sound like Millie's own life?

11. Millie used to have a boyfriend. Why do you think he left her?

Chapter Five

12. While Sarah wants to talk about her own problems, what does Millie want to talk about? Does Millie actually like her friend Sarah?
13. When Millie goes to bed it is only 9:30 pm, but what condition is she in?

Chapter Six

14. This chapter is an aside about Kristin, a co-worker of Millie's. How is Kristin like Millie? How is she different?

Chapter Seven

15. How many hours a week does Millie work? How many of these are productive? What does Millie estimate she is being paid per hour for her actual work?
16. When she asks for extra work, what work is she given? Does she do it?
17. Why has Karen given her the extra work?

Chapter Eight

18. How does Millie usually pass the time at home?
19. Millie is not happy. Whom does she blame for this?

Chapter Nine

20. What things does Millie decide she "should" do? Which of these things does she actually do?
21. Millie overhears a conversation about a woman getting a dog walker. What does the woman believe she needs before she can get a dog walker?
22. Does Millie finish shredding the documents?

Chapter Ten

23. Elodie is the woman with the dog. In this aside, we see from her point of view how she hopes to use her new pet to start a conversation with her friends. Is she happy with the discussion she starts?
24. Jessica, another of Millie's co-workers, stays home. How does she spend her evening? Is the author telling us something about how fulfilling she believes our lives to be?

Chapter Eleven

25. As Millie and Sarah walk to a party, Sarah tells Millie about her job. Is Millie sympathetic? Why does she give the responses she gives? Is she successful?
26. What does Millie do as soon as she has met the hostess?
27. In Chapter Two, Millie is very critical of Karen when Karen confuses the name Millie with Maddie. In Chapter Eleven, she interrupts a conversation with someone Sarah is talking to. How hard does she try to remember this man's name?
28. The day after the party, when Millie is feeling hung-over and sorry for herself, she says, "You can't ask someone to help you without letting them know you're different than advertised, . . . That you're uglier, weaker, more annoying, more basic, less interesting than promised." Do any of us ever have similar feelings? Is Millie representative of many of us in these times?

Chapter Twelve

29. What does Millie do Sunday? What does her boss, Karen, do Sunday?

Chapter Thirteen

30. When Millie gets an email from her temp agency asking how she's doing, what is her immediate reaction? Does she work harder, perhaps shred the documents she's been given? Does she do anything productive?
31. Why does she spend \$60 at Whole Foods?

Chapter Fourteen

32. When Millie phones her mother, what does she hope her mother will tell her?
33. Millie exhibits a huge amount of energy and uses it to clean her apartment. Do you think she is manic-depressive?
34. There is a saying: "Don't count your chickens before they're hatched." What does it mean? Is Millie paying attention to the saying?

Chapter Fifteen

35. Millie begins making plans for the future when, she believes, she'll have a permanent, well paying job. Is this all wishful thinking? Does she make any real changes in her behavior to make this happen?