"Hills Like White Elephants" by Ernest Hemingway

Level Questions

Level One – *Reading On the Line* – As you read, you should be mentally asking questions that can be answered by explicit information you can physically point out in the passage. You "recall" or "remember" facts and details that answer questions such as *who, what, where,* and *when.*

1. What is the setting of this short story?
2. What are the American and the girl doing as they wait for their train?
3. What is absinthe?
    a. This question is slightly different because you may have to rely on your teacher or another resource for the answer. It's considered Level One because the answer is denotative—you can "point to" the definition of this word.

Level Two – *Reading Between the Lines* – Proficient readers make interpretations based upon details in the text. As you read, you should be asking questions that can be answered by making inferences and assumptions based upon evidence in the text, such as "*What does a detail or image represent, suggest, or personify?*" These questions are interpretative questions.

4. How does the girl's reference to "hills like white elephants" change their conversation?
    a. Look for patterns in their conversation when the "hills like white elephants" are mentioned.
5. What is the tone of the conversation between the American and girl?
6. What does the absinthe (the Anis del Toro) symbolize?
7. What is the girl afraid of losing?
    a. There may be more than one answer to this question.

Level Three – *Reading Beyond the Lines* – As you read, you should move beyond the text to connect to universal meaning. Ask mental questions like, "*How does this text connect to my life, with life in a larger sense of all human beings, with my ideas about morality and values?*" These questions are open-ended and go beyond the text. They are intended to provoke a discussion of abstract issues and thematic concerns.

8. What happens to relationships when there is a fundamental disagreement about life altering decisions?
9. How effective are the distractions, such as drinking in this story, which we try to fill our lives with? Do they really keep us from dealing with the problems we face?
10. How would you have handled this situation differently? (Please think *less* about the social issue addressed in this story and *more* about how the couple communicated with one another.)