

Arcadia
Topics for discussion

1. There are two narratives contained within *Arcadia*, which overlap in space but not in time. What is the function of having these two stories contained within the same play? Does it make the play seem disconnected? If not, how does Stoppard tie the two halves together?
2. At the end of the play, the two time periods are superimposed, running together – simultaneous yet independent. Why might Stoppard have chosen to do this, and what is the effect upon the viewer?
3. What parallels or ties are there between the characters of one time period and those of the other? How is the split cast bound into one?
4. Does *Arcadia* demonstrate more realism than other Stoppard we have read? Can one identify with characters in *Arcadia* more than in, say, *R&G*? If so, why?
5. *R&G* was based on *Hamlet*, *Travesties* on *Ernest*, *The Real Inspector Hound* on detective dramas, and *Hapgood* on spy thrillers. Is *Arcadia* based on any other work or generic form?
6. What is the importance to *Arcadia* of the scientific ideas of entropy and recursion? Why are they in there?
7. More generally, Stoppard seems very interested in bringing sophisticated scientific ideas into his plays – *Arcadia* (entropy and recursion), *Hapgood* (particle/wave duality), even *R&G* (probability theory) - and to a greater extent in the *R&G* movie. Why? How successful/clear are the science references to (i) a scientific audience, or (ii) a lay audience?
8. *Arcadia* is seen by many to be Tom Stoppard's finest play. Based on just what we have read so far, do you agree or disagree. What do you (dis)like most about *Arcadia*?

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