The Open Boat Questions

1. Why does the oiler die? Is it because he's the best of the four, or because he's the worst? Or does he die for no reason at all? What evidence do you have for your answer?
2. If the universe and the sea are indifferent, why does the narrator so frequently describe it as if it has a will, or even a consciousness?
3. Remember that poem about the French soldier whom the correspondent finds so moving? Well, fast-forward a few months. The correspondent is back home safely, and comfortably lying on the couch. He is reminded of the poem again. How do you think he feels about it now? Does he still empathize with the soldier, or is that feeling gone?
4. What character do you admire most in the story? The oiler? The shark? The guy on the beach with the halo? What are the qualities you find most admirable?
5. Imagine a reunion between the three survivors one year later. How do you think they have been changed by this experience? What about five years later, or ten years? Is there a difference?
6. A shark shows up in the middle of night, but unlike in, say, [*Moby-Dick*](http://www.shmoop.com/moby-dick/) or [*The Old Man and the Sea*](http://www.shmoop.com/old-man-the-sea/), it doesn't really do anything. Why is it in the story? What do you think it represents?
7. Do you imagine that any other survivors made it off the sinking ship and onto lifeboats? Try to imagine what might have gone down in another of the lifeboats.