

True West Discussion Questions

1. What was Austin trying to prove by stealing all of the toasters?
2. Does Lee change at all throughout the play? If so, how?
3. If you wanted to make a movie that would be very popular, what subject matter would you choose?
4. Which movie would you rather see: Lee's Western or Austin's period piece? What reasons might Saul have had to pick either one of those scripts?
5. In stealing toasters, Austin became a little more like Lee. Lee also tried living a life similar to Austin's by writing his screenplay. Do you think each character found the other's life as interesting and exciting as they thought they would?
6. Why is the pull of the desert so compelling for both brothers?
7. Which traits do you admire in each of the brothers?
8. What made Austin lash out physically against his brother, Lee?
9. Lee and Austin's mother does not come in until the very end of the play. What point did her appearance make? Did her presence push forward the plot or did it serve some other purpose?
10. Although he never appears in the play, how does the old man influence the action of the play? How does Austin and Lee's responsibility to their father change the course of the story? What is the significance of the absent father in the play?
11. Are sons destined to turn into their fathers?
12. What role does family play in the story? Why do you think Sam Shepard chose to write about two brothers rather than, say, two neighbors or two childhood friends?
13. If this play were about two sisters, would it change drastically? If so, how?
14. Discuss the distinction between "art" and "business" Shepard makes in the play.
15. Does every person have the capacity to "snap" and almost change completely?
16. Which role would you rather play, Austin or Lee? Why?
17. Discuss how Austin and Lee are archetypes for the creative process.
18. *True West* travels the line between being realistic and being surrealistic. How does the feel of the play change from the beginning of the play to the end?
19. How does the setting mirror the progression of the characters in *True West*?
20. What strikes you as quintessentially American about *True West*?