1. How far would you agree that McEwan has made the first chapter of *Enduring Love* particularly vivid and effective, striking or memorable? Comment on the details, methods, and or techniques he has used.
2. What does the balloon event at the beginning do to the story? Does it make everything that comes after seem less dramatic? The Plot follows a falling action, never reaching the original high point of drama with the balloon. In an interview Ian McEwan said he wanted to have the reader ‘hit the ground running, to have a first chapter like an addictive drug.’ (Originally he was going to start with the restaurant scene as this high point but decided to make it chronological in the end) Was this plot structure successful in getting you hooked into the story and keeping you interested or did the falling plot lack sufficient climax?
3. “The beginning is simple to mark”; “a beginning is an artifice”. What do you think McEwan might be saying about the beginning of a story?
4. Why do you think it is a balloon accident, as opposed to an accident of some other kind that McEwan has chosen?
5. “We were seven years into a childless marriage of love”. How would you say the novel represents Joe and Clarissa’s relationship?
6. During the struggle to control the balloon in chapter one, McEwan presents a conflict between altruism and the basic necessity of looking after yourself. What might this situation be saying about the ways individuals relate to each other and how does this impact the rest of the novel?
7. Joe says in Chapter 2, “It was a random matter, who was alive or dead at any given time”. How does *Enduring Love* establish and explore the idea of the random?
8. What can you say about Joe’s attitude to religion?
9. Discuss the statement: There is something about Clarissa’s take on the world that Joe badly needs.
10. Consider Clarissa’s interest in Keats, Joe’s interest in Darwin and how both Clarissa and Joe read and write significantly within their respective careers. Why might McEwan have made Clarissa and Joe academically natured?
11. Joe Rose is a likable character. Discuss.
12. Discuss the ways in which characters in Enduring Love use storytelling as a way of making sense of what happens?
13. Jean Logan is a significant character in the novel. Discuss.
14. First-person narrative can only ever present one character’s perspective on events. How does *Enduring Love* use this kind of narrative?
15. What do you think is the significance of Jed being a de Clerambault’s sufferer and what effect does the inclusion of the appendices have on the way we understand the novel?
16. The ending of the novel is flawed. Discuss.
17. What do the appendices add to the story? Some reviewers and even a science journal have mistaken the case study as real but the researchers names are anagrams of McEwan. While De Clerambault's syndrome (or erotomania) is real the case study is fictitious)
18. What does this story say about insanity? Is this an accurate depiction of mental illness?
19. What do you make of the struggle between science and faith in the book? Joe tries to reason things and worries about what he could have done to change things. Clarissa accepts that bad things happen ‘for a reason’ and that there is some sort of plan. Jed has absolute blind faith that things are meant to be a certain way. What are the strengths and weaknesses of these approaches?
20. Do you doubt that Joe is a reliable narrator? Do you trust him or believe what he is saying? The perspective is mostly third person personal. We see everything from Joes’ point of view in various way: present time, in reflection, projecting forward and imagining. There are also letters and a section where he imagines what it would be like from Clarissa’s perspective. Though we don’t actually see from her perspective, just what he imagines it would be like. Does this section make sense or seem odd? As it is all from Joe’s perspective does this add to the feeling that he is an unreliable narrator?
21. Should Joe feel bad for not immediately sharing the truth about Jed with Clarissa and going through her papers? Should Clarissa have believed Joe and supported him? Was she too harsh? She doubts Joe but expects him not to doubt her. Is this hypocritical? Where do you think the balance of trust lies between them?
22. The fate of their relationship is left open. What do you think will happen between Clarissa and Joe after the end of the story? Do we ever really know other people?
23. Do you think everything is connected? Could one element being changed change the whole sequence of events?
24. How were you affected by the gruesome elements in the book (like the horrible crushed figure of John Logan with a ‘Picasso face’ and the chip of Jed’s elbow that Joe later finds under his couch).
25. Joe is a science writer and Clarissa is a literary academic. How did the scientific and literary details arising from their professions work in the story? Did their anecdotes draw good analogues with what was happening around them? For example: Keats being spurned by Wordsworth who he greatly admired.
26. How does the in-depth reflection and meandering of thought or stream of consciousness work in the book? Does it add to the story or derail it?
27. What do you make of Joe’s side quest to get the gun and the violent scenes that ensue? Does it bring up issues of who we could have been if we took another path? Does it fit within the context of the story? Do you feel it was a reasonable and believable action?
28. Clarissa cannot have children but spends a lot of time with children of friends and family. The ending of the book is at a picnic with the children of the dead man’s wife. The children take Joe’s hand right near the end. Is this a sign of acceptance?

Discuss the role of children in the story?

1. Do you feel the book was successful and enjoyable?
2. Have you read any other McKewan books and if so, how do you feel that they compare?