

Reading an discussion questions, Jane Addams, *Democracy and Social Ethics*

1. What is Addams' definition of ethics? Of democracy?
2. Why does she organize her book in the way she does?
3. Explain how each type of relationship Addams describes illustrates her basic argument about the need for ethical change in the name of democracy.
4. Is social democracy the same as socialism or communism?
5. Addams describes the "social claim" as the competitor of the "family claim" in the lives of educated women like herself. Why do you think she suggests that democracy requires the social claim to be more fully developed for everyone? Wouldn't that fill everyone's lives with conflict and ethical dilemmas?
6. What does Addams' chapter on domestic servants and their employers tell us about her view of democracy as a relationship among women, as well as between men and women?
7. What does Addams have to say about the work ethic? How does it illustrate her point about the need to socialize democratic ethics in an industrial society?
8. Why is paternalism unacceptable as an ethical stance? What examples of paternalism does Addams utilize?
9. If ethical standards are contingent on experience, does Addams give us any foundation at all for making moral judgments? Are all experiences ethically equal, or are some experiences more important than others? Do some Americans bear heavier ethical burdens than others? How would you describe her concept of democratic morality?
10. What does Addams mean when she writes about ethics that are individualistic and selfish? What examples does she use?
11. Is social democracy a feminist theory of democracy? Would Addams have believed that women were more likely than men to be persuaded by this way of thinking about democracy? If so, why?
12. Do you think Addams considers certain experiential differences more threatening to democracy than others? How do you think she would compare the ethical gaps that exist between rich and poor, employers and workers, parents and daughters, philanthropists and recipients of charity, teachers and students?
13. Is there a place for individual achievement and personal responsibility in Addams' scheme? Is there a place for individuals at all?
14. Do you think that mutual respect and exchange can resolve all the ethical conflicts that Addams describes? Why or why not?

