Life is Beautiful Discussion Questions

1. Controversy surrounded Life is Beautiful when it premiered, because many critics felt that comedy was not an appropriate medium for a depiction of the Holocaust. What do you think?

2. Several film critics and Holocaust survivors took issue with the accuracy of the scenes of life in the concentration camp, some of which show children laughing and playing. Do you think such inaccuracies undermine the film as historical narrative?

3. How do you define 'historical narrative'? What do you consider authoritative historical narrative?

4. The film's director, Roberto Benigni, defended his film, arguing that the story was about the father-son relationship. Do you think the film, as a work of fiction, can be viewed in a separate context that does not, in any way, critique the historical events it depicts?
5. Examine whether there is a proper context for the use humor. Can (or even should) we laugh at or during acts of war, impending death, or facing serious illness among other possible examples?

6. Does hiding the truth from children normally help or hinder them? Describe how Guido's constant refusal to tell his son the exact truth, allows his son to remain hopeful and trustful of his father.

7. Discuss if the humor takes too much away from the understanding the constant danger the Jewish people were under during World War II.

8. Analyze the possible reasons the film used obvious humor versus more subtle humor.