

## *The Diving Bell & the Butterfly*



**Directions: Respond to each of the following. Your responses must be in complete sentences, well constructed and thoughtful. (HAND WRITTEN).**

1. When Jean-Dominique Bauby (Mathieu Amalric) comes out of his coma, some of his first questions are: “Is this life?”, “Why me?” and “How can I go on?” But Henriette (Marie-Josée Croze) finds it obscene that Jean-Dominique would want to die. What is the source of her anger when Jean-Do communicates this to her? Was her anger justified or not? Was her response justified?
2. Jean-Dominique at one point says, “It takes what I can only call a miracle to lift my spirits. Believing in personal miracles is risky, it makes you feel self-important.” How does Jean-Do balance hope with acceptance in facing his life as a stroke survivor? Explain and provide examples.
3. How we label a health condition is important for how those who have the condition understand themselves. Labels have the tendency to both empower and confine. Is “Locked-in syndrome” a good descriptor of the experience of Jean-Dominique? Why or why not?
4. Changes to the brain can be life-altering and can critically impact one’s identity. How does Jean-Dominique re-see himself after his stroke? How do others see him as the same or different from the man they knew up until the time of his stroke?
5. Jean-Dominique is treated as if he is invisible to the servicemen who come to install a telephone in his hospital room. Henriette admonishes them saying, “Don’t act like he’s not here.” What are ways in which persons with disabling conditions are treated as if they are invisible in our society? What are ways to help them to be seen, recognized, and included? What does Jean-Do have or do to make himself recognized?
6. Liam Lacey writes in his review, “*The Diving Bell and the Butterfly* isn’t about feeling better about terrible things, but about cherishing imagination as the force that sustains life.” What is so important about imagination for understanding who we are as persons, as humans? How is imagination important for Jean-Dominique able to hold his life together, and to bridge between his locked-in state and the world around him?
7. Roussin (Niels Arestrup) likens his past experience as a hostage (in Beirut) to Jean-Dominique’s condition of Locked-in syndrome. Roussin tells Jean-Do that waiting is the hardest part, and that he should “hold fast to the human inside [him], and [then he]’ll survive.” What could Roussin mean in saying this? What makes our humanity something on the “inside”? Do you agree with this view of humans?
8. The movie is replete with references to limitation, constraint, and incarceration on the one hand, and liberty, freedom, and boundlessness on the other hand. What are the sources of each? Explain how you either agree or disagree with the following assessment of the movie, “... curiously enough, a movie about deprivation becomes a celebration of the richness of experience, and a remarkably rich experience in its own right. In his memoir Mr. Bauby performed a heroic feat of alchemy, turning horror into wisdom, and Mr. Schnabel, following his example and paying tribute to his accomplishment, has turned pity into joy.”