Sir Gawain and the Green Knight

* How does Gawain, in his attempts at perfection, present a model of ideal behavior expected of a knight of the Round Table?
* What are the details of setting, character, and plot? Where is the story taking place? What time of year is it? What sort of behavior might be expected of a knight errant?
* The term “romance,” as generally used today, refers to courtship and love. However, in literary terms, a romance is any imaginative adventure story concerned with noble heroes, gallant love, a chivalric code of honor, and daring deeds. In what ways does the story, “Sir Gawain and the Green Knight” reflect this literary genre? How doe you think the term “romance” evolved to mean what it does in common usage today?
* How does the appearance of the Green Knight exhibit characteristics of romance? Why isn’t King Arthur afraid of the Green Knight?
* What conflict is established through the two-sentence introduction that precedes the narrative itself?
* Identify some of the symbols in used in this story; in what ways are they significant?
* What are the differences between being confident and being egotistical? Which term best describes the Green Knight?
* Why do you think the king and Gawain laugh after the Green Knight departs?
* Note the similes in lines 199-200. What do these similes add to your understanding and image of Gawain’s situation?
* The chivalrous Knight’s idealistic devotion to his lady is a major element in this medieval adventure. What other principles guide Gawain’s behavior?
* The woman takes the initiative here, a behavior not usually seen in women in medieval romances. How do you explain this?
* What is the significance of the green sash, and why does Gawain finally accept it?
* What response does the Green Knight want to elicit when he mocks Sir Gawain?
* How does Gawain dispute the idea that The Green Knight is a better man than himself?
* Taking into account that the climax is the story’s turning point, it could be also “the point of no return” in the action. Identify the climax.
* Take a look at the exchange between Sir Gawain and the Green Knight on page 219. What effect does the knights’ bantering have on the action of the story? What does the dialogue reveal about Gawain’s character?
* Do you think Gawain would explain the fact that he only received a minor cut from the Green Knight’s ax as magic or divine intervention?
* The simile in lines 356-357 creates an analogy, or an extended comparison. How would you restate that analogy? What does the statement show about the Green Knight’s estimation or opinion of Gawain?
* Lines 370-375 see, crucial to understanding the theme of the story. What does Gawain mean by this?
* How does the ending resolve the conflict between Gawain and the Green Knight?
* And the sash?
* How does the initial depiction of the Green Knight’s lady contrast with the chivalric ideal of women? Why is the idea of her as an unfaithful wife ultimately ironic?