English 10H
Study Guide: The Bell Jar

Directions: Please answer the following in complete sentences. Use evidence (lines) from the book when necessary. Also refer to literary devices, if they are applicable.

Chapter One
1. Briefly describe these characters: Doreen, Betsy and Elly Higginbottom
2. Why is the name of the hotel ironic?

Chapter Two
3. How does Esther view Doreen and Lenny?
4. What does Esther decide at the end of the chapter?
5. What do the song lyrics tell us about attitudes at the time?

Chapter Three
6. What pressures on Esther are evident? How are they shown?
7. How does Esther deal with her difficulty with chemistry? Have we seen this type of behavior before?

Chapter Four
8. How might society, represented by Esther’s benefactor, Philomena Guinea, the fingerbowl story and the ladies’ day luncheon make Esther feel? Why?
9. Esther’s dissatisfaction and cynicism are demonstrated in her attitude to Technicolor movies. What does she say about Technicolor movies?

Chapter Five
10. Briefly retell the story of the fig tree.
11. Do you think that Esther’s idealizing of Buddy meant that he could only ever disappoint her?

Chapter Six
12. Why does she think that a man would invent the drug to forget?
13. How does this chapter reinforce Esther’s views on sexuality?

Chapter Seven
14. Give evidence from this chapter to show that Esther cannot reconcile a successful career that she may choose with the traditional gender roles of society.
15. Why does Esther decide to let Constantin seduce her?

Chapter Eight
16. How does Esther react to Buddy’s proposal? Why?
17. How is foreshadowing used in this chapter?

Chapter Nine
18. How can Marco be seen as a more sinister version of Buddy Willard?

Chapter Ten

19. Describe and explain the female roles represented by the characters in this chapter.
20. Describe Esther’s growing mental illness.

Chapter Eleven

21. Explain the importance of Esther no longer being able to write.
22. When Esther talks to the sailor, who does she think she is speaking to? Why is this significant?

Chapter Twelve

23. What is Mrs. Greenwood’s first name?
24. What do you think of Mrs. Greenwood?

Chapter Thirteen

25. Describe the beach incident.
26. What did Esther steal from her mother? Why?

Chapter Fourteen

27. What do you think happened to Mrs. Mole?
28. Do you think Esther meant to knock over the bin of thermometers? Why or why not?

Chapter Fifteen

29. How is the theme of confinement described by Esther in this chapter? Are all Esther’s problems blamed on societal pressure?

Chapter Sixteen

30. What did Joan do? Why?
31. Dr. Nolan stopped all visitors. Is this a good sign? Explain.

Chapter Seventeen

32. How does Plath show parallels between the mental institution and “normal” society?
33. Why do you think Esther is receiving shock treatment all of a sudden?

Chapter Eighteen

34. How do Joan and Esther react to Buddy’s reappearance?
35. Provide a quote that expresses Esther’s attitude. Explain.

Chapter Nineteen

36. Do you think Esther’s decisions in this chapter are a good step in her recovery? Why?

Chapter Twenty

37. Give evidence (and quotes) to show Esther’s recovery?
38. Give evidence of Esther not being fully cured, and of unresolved problems.