

Discussion Questions:

Why is the guy playing the acoustic guitar actually in the film, rather than simply having the guitar music on the soundtrack?

What connections do you notice between the sump, the guitar player, and the mosquitoes? When do each appear in the story? Do they appear in tandem? What metaphorical meaning could these occurrences have?

What kind of house does the Big Boss live in? How does this tie into the themes of the film?

When does it start raining? What does this mean for the plot and characters? What other instances of extreme weather do you notice?

When does the film switch from summer to fall? How does this transition relate to the plot?

How do you interpret the dream sequence? Why are there two Matsunagas? What does each represent? Why is one chasing the other? Why does one emerge from a coffin, and why is the other attempting to open the coffin? Is he attempting to open the coffin, or destroy it?

What, if anything, does Matsunaga achieve in his death?

Do you think Matsunaga would have reformed had Okada not killed him? Why or why not?

Find some examples of references to feudal values – loyalty, dying for a cause, etc. Who says or does these things? Why? What does any character ultimately gain from any of this?

Scholar Mitsuhiro Yoshimoto argues that Sanada's alcoholism is a hollow affectation, and that the character has no real darkness. Do you agree with this or not? Why?

Scholar Donald Richie argues that Matsunaga's downfall is actually linked directly to his attempts to recover. Therefore, the film seems to say that he's doomed no matter what. Do you agree with this interpretation or not? Why?

Why does Kurosawa include a second doctor as a counterpoint to Sanada in one brief scene?

Why does Kurosawa choose to create a shifting moral scale amongst the gangsters?

What perceptions of bravery and cowardice does Kurosawa present in *Drunken Angel*? How do you think these perceptions relate to the war? What do these notions say about defeat and victory?

What are some of the ways that Kurosawa allies the film's good characters with a more progressive vision of society?

While the central characters in *Drunken Angel* display moral ambiguity, a number of people in the film are painted as definitively bad or good. Why do you think Kurosawa chose to include these poles of behavior?

Why does doctor Sanada live and work directly beside the sump while Matsunaga and the rest of the gangsters live and operate at a distance?

Pay attention to objects seen in the sump and scenes taking place beside the sump. What metaphorical value does the sump provide in these instances?

What happens in the final shot of *Drunken Angel*? What symbolism is at play here? What does the shot mean, in the context of the film's meaning?