Questions for Thought and Discussion

- What is psychoanalysis?
- When was it invented?
- What did Freud mean by ‘free association’? Why, according to psychoanalysis might it be useful, and why, in practice, does it prove so difficult?
- Why are psychoanalytic patients invited to lie on a couch?
- What adaptations in the procedure were made in order for psychoanalytic work to be undertaken with children?
- What is the most important task of the psychoanalyst?
- What psychological factors may interfere in a psychoanalyst’s capacity to work psychoanalytically?
- Why did Freud think people ‘repress’ some of their own thoughts? Give an example.
- Why did Freud place so much emphasis upon the interpretation of dreams?
- Did Freud think ‘the talking cure’ a suitable treatment for everybody?
- Which psychoanalytic theorist, if any, apart from Freud, would merit their own book in this VSI series? Explain the reasoning behind your answer.
- Using a classic example, such as the case of the ‘Rat Man’, consider possible changes in psychoanalytic approaches to treatment and to interpretation since the time of Freud.
- What did Freud mean by the Oedipus complex? How has it been developed? Why has it been so controversial?
- What do psychoanalysts mean by ‘the primal scene’, and Nachträglichkeit, or ‘après coup’?
- Why is it important for analysts to create a consistent ‘framework’ of time and space for the work?
- Given that a surgeon can operate successfully without having undergone surgery, and a psychiatrist can prescribe medication to a psychotic person, without suffering delusions herself, why is it assumed that psychoanalysts need necessarily to undergo psychoanalysis themselves before they embark upon their clinical work?
- Which aspects of Freud’s theories and practices have been most hotly contested by at least some of his followers?
- In which societies, and in which periods, have psychoanalytic ideas, and psychoanalytic treatment proved most popular and influential?
- What are the main rivals to psychoanalytic approaches to the mind and its many afflictions today?
- What did Melanie Klein mean by ‘the depressive position’? And by ‘projective identification’?
- What did Wilfred Bion mean by ‘a container’?
- What did Donald Winnicott mean by ‘a transitional object’?
- What did Jacques Lacan mean by ‘the real’?
- Can you identify any key differences between the approaches to psychoanalysis that became prevalent in post-war Britain, France, and the United States?
- Is psychoanalysis best regarded as a science, an art, or neither?
- Some historians have dubbed the twentieth century, the ‘Freudian century’. What do you think they mean?
Other books by the author
*Rome or Death: The Obsessions of General Garibaldi* (Cape, 2005)

Further Reading
Please see further reading at the back of *Psychoanalysis: A Very Short Introduction*