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Reading Questions: De Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, pp. 3-17, 71-5, 283-96, 524-33, 566-70, 721-5, 748-66.

1. Why does de Beauvoir begin with the question: "What is a woman?"
2. What does it mean to be the "Subject, the Absolute?"
3. What does it mean to be the Other, according to de Beauvoir? Who or what is the Other? How does one become an Other?
4. What groups does de Beauvoir mention as examples of Others? What is it like to be an Other?
5. How are women different from groups that have been constructed as Others like proletarians or black people? Why do women lack this characteristic?
6. How do you understand de Beauvoir's brief sketch at the end of the Introduction of existentialist morality? Read it carefully and try to see past the jargon: what she is talking about should be familiar. What role does existentialist morality play in her wider argument?
7. According to de Beauvoir, how does the prehistory of humanity explain women's subjection? How is this account similar to or different from other prehistorical or state of nature accounts we've read this year?
8. How does one become a woman according to de Beauvoir? What is the role of biological or anatomical destiny in this process?
9. What are the characteristics that a girl is raised to embody? How do they contrast with those that boys are raised to embody?
10. How does a mother feel toward her child according to de Beauvoir? Why does she feel this way?
11. How does male suppression of abortion reveal hypocrisy regarding the feminine ideal? What is the effect of this hypocrisy on women? See particularly the discussion on page 532.
12. How does de Beauvoir think we should go about the emancipation of women? What are the devilish challenges that stand in the way of emancipation?
13. Do we lose something important when we go about her mode of emancipation?
14. In general, would you say de Beauvoir is trying to make women into men in order to emancipate them?
15. Are women different from men in important ways but still their equals? What would de Beauvoir say about this?