

Discussion Questions for *Twelve O'Clock High*

Some of the major characters to watch for: General Frank Savage, Colonel Keith Davenport, Major Harvey Stovall, Bishop, Lt. Col. Ben Gately, Major Joe Cobb, Sergeant McIllhenny, Lieutenant General Prichard.

1. Early in the movie, Colonel Davenport is removed from his command of the 918th bomber group not just because of poor performance by his team, but more fundamentally because of “over-identification with his men.” What does the leadership mean by this and to what extent might that really be a problem?
2. General Frank Savage takes command of the bomber group. Note what he does on his first day in command, and how that is different from Davenport’s leadership. Why does Savage take this hardline approach and what do you think of it?
3. Why does General Savage create a “leper colony” within his team? What is it and what purpose, if any, does that serve? Does this sort of approach have applications to other leadership situations of which you’re aware?
4. After their first successful bombing raid under Savage, he meets with all the men, first praising them and then publicly criticizing individuals. What’s his purpose for doing this and do you think it’s effective?

5. It seems important to General Savage to develop leaders within the team. Why is this a priority for him, how does he do it, and how do we know that he succeeded?

6. One of the more interesting lines in the film is when Stovall says “The only difference between Frank Savage and Keith Davenport is that Savage is about this much taller.” Their styles and personalities seem so different, so what’s Stovall’s point? And if he’s right, what can we learn from that about leading a team to maximum performance?

7. What are the initial and ultimate outcomes from Savage’s leadership style, and what do you conclude from that?

8. What might we take away from this movie regarding how to develop a mediocre team into an excellent one?