

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS FOR BARRACOOON BY ZORA NEALE HURSTON

1. Cudjo says to Zora Neale Hurston, “My name is not Cudjo Lewis. It Kossula.” Why does it mean so much to Kossula to make sure that Hurston knew his true name?
2. Cudjo Lewis expressed an affinity for his cultural traditions. What are three African traditions or customs that Cudjo continues in America? Cudjo was considered a poet and griot. What are the attributes of a griot and do we see these elements in Cudjo’s narrative? In describing life in his African village, Cudjo talks about the king. What describes the political and societal structures of Cudjo’s village? What matters are overseen by the king, and how does that affect the community? How does the political and social structure in Africatown compare with that of Cudjo’s village?
3. What initiations did Cudjo undergo in Africa?
4. Describe the Dahomian attack on Cudjo’s village, Bantè. How did the violence affect Cudjo? What was the outcome for Cudjo and his village?
5. What is Cudjo’s experience in the barracoon? How were people selected for transport?
6. What was Cudjo’s experience aboard the Clotilda? How did his experience differ from that of the Americans aboard the ship?
7. What was the nature of the relationship between Captain William “Bill” Foster and Cudjo and between Timothy Meaher and Cudjo? How would you describe the nature of the relationship between Foster and Meaher?
8. How do the enslaved Africans learn about their freedom? How do they react to the news?
9. What characterizes the relationship between Africatown residents and Africans?
10. One of the first things Cudjo Lewis and his fellow compatriots do after emancipation is make homes for themselves. How do they go about acquiring land and building houses? What about their process allows them to create their own neighborhood and community?
11. Cudjo talks about his marriage to Seely. How do they get married? What is Cudjo’s attitude about marriage and marriage license?
12. What hardships does Cudjo’s family face? How does Cudjo handle these situations?





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13. There are two distinct moments Cudjo describes where he learns about the law: when one of his sons is shot and killed by a sheriff's deputy and when his wagon is hit by a train. What lessons about the law does he learn from these experiences?

Questions issued by the publisher.



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