

Think About It

Discussion Questions and Writing Prompts

Chapter One:

1. *The Freedom Stone* begins in 1850. How long ago was that? Make a list of the things we enjoy in our lives today that were not available in 1850. A few ideas to get you started...a toilet...a car, etc. Keep adding to this list as you read the book. You may think of new things after each chapter.
2. How would you feel if you did the work that Moses did in the fields every day instead of going to school? Why?
3. How do you think Moses felt about being a slave? What makes you think that?
4. Describe Massa. Do you like him? Explain.
5. Should Moses have told the Massa about the carrots he had stuffed in his pockets? Why, or why not?
6. How did the picture of the whipping scars on Paris' back make you feel?
7. Writing prompt: Moses' home is not like mine.

Chapter Two:

1. Compare the Big House and Moses' home.
2. How was Addie's life different from Moses'? How was it the same?
3. Describe James. Do you like him? Explain.
4. What are the ways that Addie and Mama stay out of trouble when Massa gets crabby? Would that method work for you? Is it a good or a bad idea to say nothing? Give examples of times when it is a good idea to say nothing, and times when it is bad to say nothing. How does James deal with his Father? How do Sarah and Missus deal with Massa?
5. Mama sang a song after breakfast as she headed into the kitchen. What do you think the words in the song meant?

Chapter Three:

1. Why was it important to listen and learn, but not to repeat things heard or seen?
2. Have you ever had to do a job where you got blisters all over both hands or that made you sore and tired at the end of a day? In the United States, the Fair Labor Standards Act, passed in 1938, ensures that when young people work, the workplace

is safe, does not jeopardize their health and well-being, and does not interfere with their education. Research project: Find three examples of child labor prior to 1938. With each example, write 2-3 sentences about how the job was unsafe, jeopardized the child's health, or interrupted their education.

3. Moses was embarrassed that he fell and messed up the plowed field when he picked up the quartz stone. Share with us an example of when something similar happened to you.

4. Why did a slave owner want to own slaves?

5. Writing prompt: James plays a trick on his father because.....

Chapter Four:

1. Why do you think that Missus and James started teaching Addie and Moses to read and write?

2. Imagine that you are the only person in your class who does not even know the alphabet. Imagine that you do not know how to read. Imagine that you do not know how to do simple, basic math. How would that make you feel?

3. Why do you think that slave owners did not want slaves to learn how to read and write?

4. When Addie sang, what do you think she was feeling? How can you tell?

5. Missus winked at Addie at the end of the chapter. What do you think that meant?

6. Writing prompt: Missus was courageous.

7. Writing prompt: Slavery was not fun, but enslaved children found ways to have fun anyway.

Chapter Five:

1. What were the hardest parts of being a slave? Why? What does the story tell you that makes you believe that?

2. Make a log of everything you eat for a whole week. Then compare your diet to the slaves' diet. Would you be able to do your school work well or perform well in your sports or other recreational activities on the diet of a slave?

3. Moses and Addie are about the same age as you are. What games do you like to play with your friends? Are any of them similar to the games Moses and Addie enjoyed?

4. Why do you think the slaves sang so much?

5. How did the story of the escaped slave make you feel? How did it make Moses feel?
6. At the end of the chapter, the slaves sing a song. What do you think the words mean?
7. Writing prompt: Moses, rubbing the stone in his pocket, is thinking...

Chapter Six:

1. Compare Christmas in the Big House to Christmas in the slave quarters.
2. Why did Mama and Addie look forward to helping with the Christmas decorations? How do you know?
3. Smells or aromas can make us feel a certain way. Or, they might cause us to think about a special memory. What are the aromas in the air at the Big House during the Christmas season? Can you close your eyes and think about the aromas in your house during the holiday season? What are they?
4. What was the best part of the Christmas holiday for a slave?
5. Explain how Massa and Missus treated Addie after she fell while serving the pies to their guests.
6. How would you feel if, one day without any notice, your sister or brother and your Mother were suddenly taken away?
7. Writing prompt: I might run away at Christmas.

Chapter Seven:

1. How do you think it felt for Papa to work in the fields when he was sick?
2. How did everyone feel when Papa died?
3. Why do you think Papa's funeral was at night?
4. What did Moses know he needed to do? Why couldn't anyone know?
5. Writing prompt: What makes you want to work harder? Fear of punishment or encouragement?
6. Writing prompt: How did the slaves show the spirit of 'community'? Think about all of the chapters you have read so far.
7. Research: Write a two-page paper about the Nat Turner Rebellion. Be sure to include why you think Turner organized the rebellion. Did the rebellion accomplish what Turner hoped for? Explain.

Chapter Eight:

1. What is the job of an overseer?
2. Explain why Massa was angry at Ben.
3. Moses felt that there were both good and bad things about moving into the Big House. What are they? Do the good things outweigh the bad?
4. How did Moses feel about Missus? Why?
5. Why did Missus say that Moses had to be brave? Was he?
6. Writing prompt: Sometimes you want something very badly, but you are afraid to do what must be done to achieve it.

Chapter Nine:

1. Why was it so hard to say good-bye to Missus, James, and Sarah?
2. In groups of three, let's try to walk around the room in the manner of the Monacan Indians.
3. How do you think Mama, Addie, and Moses felt when they were standing in the cold water all night? Why? Have you ever felt that way?
4. We talked about smells after Chapter Six -aromas of Christmas. In this chapter, Mama makes us think about some awful smells when she was on the ship coming to America. What were those smells? Can you close your eyes and smell them?
5. How do you think Mama felt when she was sold at auction. Why?
6. Writing prompt: Why do you think that Mama had never told Addie and Moses the story of her capture in Africa and her journey to America on a slave ship?

Chapter Ten:

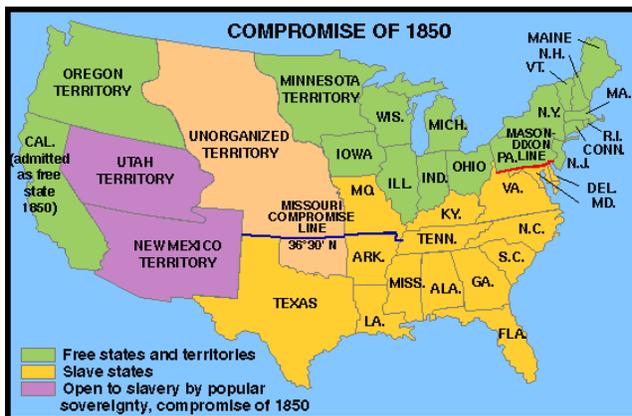
1. Who taught Moses to fish and hunt? Why was this important for Moses to know? Is that a skill that is as important today as it was in the 1850s?
2. How do you think Addie felt when she fell? How do you think Moses and Mama felt when they heard the three knocks on Addie's water gourd?
3. Have you ever had an experience where you were hurt and somehow had to call for help? What did you do? Could Addie have done what you did?
4. Demonstrate a four-handed carry.
5. Writing prompt: Moses was a good leader.

Chapter Eleven:

1. Why was Addie so willing to talk so much?
2. Have you ever broken a bone? Compare Addie's treatment with your treatment.
3. How do you think the Harlans felt about the fact that Addie, Moses, and Mama had to stay for so long?
4. Why would the Harlans help Addie, Moses, and Mama? Were the Harlans brave? Why? Were they putting their daughter, Elise, at risk?
5. What hiding places could you create in your home?
6. Writing prompt: Use your imagination. How do you think Missus knew about the Harlans?

Chapter Twelve:

1. Moses considers the Harlans to be friends. What makes someone a friend?
2. What parts of Moses' journey were like Elijah and Betsey's journey and what parts were different? Whose journey was harder? Why?
3. Look at the map of the free states in 1850. Where do you live now? Was your state a free state? Do you know why it was or it wasn't? How do you feel about that?



Source: digirev.us

4. Do you think that runaway slaves were brave, or do you think they were foolish?
5. Writing prompt: Have you ever had to take a big risk? Was it worth it?

Chapter Thirteen:

1. How did you feel when Mama knocked out the slave catcher with an oar from the boat? Did you think it was funny? Did you feel sorry for the man?
2. Would you have let the slave catcher drown? Why, or why not? Discuss how slaves might have understood what it feels like to be taken advantage of. Would a slave have wanted revenge? Or, would a slave have had compassion, given their own circumstances?
3. Why did the doctor shake their hands?
4. Imagine that you only have the clothes that are on your back right now. What would it feel like if someone told you that they wanted you to select three full changes of clothes, including shoes and coats?
5. Use your imagination. Why did the old fisherman never reveal his name?

Chapter Fourteen:

1. What is a 'forged' document? Why was it necessary for runaway slaves to carry forged freedom papers?
2. Were Moses, Addie, and mama afraid on the train? Why?
3. Do you think the friendly conductor could read the freedom papers? If he could, what was he thinking?
4. Was the conductor on the second train white or black? Why do you think so? Could you be wrong? Let's discuss assumptions and why we make them.
5. Writing prompt: We cannot do it alone. How do we need the help of others?

Chapter Fifteen:

1. Having never seen a body of water larger than the creeks, streams, and rivers of Virginia, Moses was shocked at the size of Lake Erie. Have you ever been completely surprised at the size of something? What?
2. Think about a time when you were in a crowd of people. As a good people-watcher, were you curious about anyone in particular. Who? Why?
3. Was it easier to run away, or would it have been easier to stay?
4. Writing prompt: What does it feel like to achieve something that you once thought impossible?

Epilogue:

1. In our memories of times past, we remember both the really, really bad things and the really, really good things. Which did James and Moses remember? Why? Or, did they remember both, but only focus on one?
2. Discuss differences and similarities between Papa's funeral and Missus' funeral.

Research and report on one of the following persons:

1. Frederick Douglass
2. Harriet Tubman
3. Theodore S. Wright
4. Lewis Tappan
5. Sydney Howard Gay
6. John Brown
7. Sojourner Truth
8. William Wells Brown
9. Daniel A. Payne
10. David Ruggles
11. William Still
12. Charles B. Ray
13. Charles Pinckney
14. John Jay
15. William Lloyd Garrison
16. Thomas Garrett
17. Dr. Francis LeMoyne
18. Henry 'Box' Brown
19. Henry Bibb
20. Jermaen Loguen
21. Richard Allen
22. Daniel Coker
23. Benjamin Banneker
24. Phyllis Wheatley
25. Edmonia Lewis
26. Eliza Harris
27. Levi Coffin
28. John Rankin

Topics for further research

1. Routes on the Underground Railroad
2. Methods for punishing slaves
3. Reasons white people gave as their reasons for supporting slavery
4. Quaker beliefs and logic for protecting runaways
5. Catching runaways - patrollers, slave catchers, public notices
6. The Underground Railroad
 - when
 - where
 - how many assisted
7. Slave population in US
 - 1840
 - 1850
 - 1860
 - 1870
8. Black regiments in the Civil War
9. The Emancipation Proclamation
10. Black writers
11. Black artists
12. Black musicians
13. Differences between life in the 1850s and life today
 - electricity
 - cars
 - planes, etc.
14. The adaptation of blacks to Christianity
15. Negro spirituals
16. The Nat Turner Rebellion
17. Life after the Emancipation Proclamation
18. Schools for blacks after The Civil War
19. Runaway Slave Communities:
 - Fort Mose - Florida
 - The Great Dismal Swamp - Virginia and North Carolina
 - Grand Contraband Camp - Virginia
 - Lyles Station - Indiana