



UNLOCKING FREEDOM'S DOOR

READING GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE

1. The book's title was inspired from the saying, "*Education is the key to unlock the golden door of freedom,*" by George Washington Carver. Does it capture the main theme of the story?
2. There are several other themes portrayed throughout the book. Discuss the following sayings and how they relate to the storyline:
 - a. "*Freedom is the open window through which pours the sunlight of human spirit and human dignity,*" by Herbert Hoover.
 - b. "*We must learn to live together as brothers or perish together as fools,*" by Martin Luther King Jr.
 - c. "*Everything you've ever wanted is on the other side of fear,*" by George Addair.
 - d. "*What lies behind us and what lies ahead of us are tiny compared to what lies within us,*" by Henry David Thoreau.
 - e. "*Our death is not an end if we can live on in our children and the younger generation. For they are us, our bodies are only wilted leaves on the tree of life,*" by Albert Einstein.
3. Several pneumatic devices are used throughout the book. Describe what the following symbolizes:
 - a. Closed door
 - b. Open door
 - c. Key
 - d. Big oak tree
 - e. Birds
4. Foreshadowing is used throughout the book. Discuss these two key scenes and the events they foreshadow:
 - a. A dead mockingbird found in the second floor bedroom of the brown cottage (Chapter 12).
 - b. Thomas says that their house isn't going anywhere when they have to vacate Hampton (Chapter 21).
5. Discuss how the following key characters evolve over the course of the story:
 - a. Mary Peake
 - b. General Butler
 - c. Shepard Mallory
6. Should Butler have prevented the Rebel burning of Hampton? Was Mary justified in her reaction to Butler's inaction?
7. I didn't want to emphasize the blood and gore of the Battle of Bethel but still wanted to portray the horror of war. Was the treatment in the book appropriate?
8. In Chapter 28, Mary makes three stops on her final visit to Hampton. Describe the significance of each of these stops:
 - a. The big oak tree
 - b. The new homes and the new school at the former courthouse
 - c. The site of her destroyed home
9. The book was written in past tense, third person except for the Prologue and Epilogue. These two chapters were written in Daisy's voice, in both past and present tenses. Was this an effective way to introduce and end the story?
10. Who (or what) is the key antagonist in the story?
11. There are a number of important scenes throughout the book. Which scenes did you most like and dislike and why?
12. Describe how the following major setbacks affected the plot:
 - a. Defeat at Big Bethel
 - b. Defeat at Bull Run
 - c. Burning of Hampton
 - d. Mary's illness
13. Describe key turning points and how they affected the story.
 - a. A slave patrol assaults Mary
 - b. Butler arrives at Fortress Monroe
14. What parallels can you draw between the themes and occurrences in *Unlocking Freedom's Door* and challenges in today's society?

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