

Literature Circle Questions

Use the following questions and activities to get more out of the experience of reading *Blood on the River* by Elisa Carbone.

1. At the beginning of the novel, why doesn't the magistrate send Samuel to the gallows for stealing the locket from the pawnshop?
2. Both Captain Smith and Reverend Hunt teach Samuel very valuable lessons. What is the biggest lesson that Reverend Hunt teaches Samuel? What is the biggest lesson that Captain Smith teaches Samuel?
3. List the names of the three ships that sail from England to the New World. Which of the ships is the smallest? Which ship does Samuel take?
4. Reverend Hunt believes that the settlers get ill in the summer because of the mosquitoes that bite them. What do the natives use to keep from getting bitten by mosquitoes?
5. Place the following in order, from those who have the least say at the settlement to those who have the most say at the settlement:

Gentleman

Servant

President

Laborer

Council member

6. After Reverend Hunt introduces Samuel to Captain Smith, he points to the men to whom Samuel and Richard must show to respect. What does Samuel do so that he will remember each of the men?
7. As Captain Smith's page, Samuel both serves Captain Smith and learns from him. Think of a time when you acted like a page by both helping a person and learning from that person. Describe who this person was, how you helped him or her, and what you learned from him or her.
8. The Virginia Company's contract with the settlers sometimes gets in the way of the settlers' ability to survive in Virginia. Explain how this happens.
9. At the end of the novel, Samuel says that Ann, John, and Virginia Laydon are like family to him. Explain why it is so important to Samuel to feel like he has family.
10. On page 98, we learn that Master Wingfield is no longer president because he hid food from the settlers, and that Captain Ratcliffe is now president. Captain Smith tells

Samuel that they “have gone from the frying pan into the fire.” Explain what Captain Smith means by this.

11. The author begins each chapter with a quotation. The quotations come from the writings of the real men who settled in the New World. What does each quotation have to do with what happens during each chapter?
12. When Samuel says that his “circle has become bigger” on page 136, what does he mean?
13. Why do you think the author titled this novel *Blood on the River*?
14. If the settlers had abandoned Jamestown and gone back to England with Sir Thomas Gates in the spring of 1610, what do you think would have happened to European settlement of the New World?

Note: These questions are keyed to Bloom’s Taxonomy as follows: Knowledge: 1-3; Comprehension: 4-5; Application: 6-7; Analysis: 8-9; Synthesis: 10-12; Evaluation: 13-14.

Activities

1. The settlers were not allowed to write letters saying anything bad about what it was like living in the New World. Yet, as we know from reading this historical novel, the settlers had many problems trying to start a new life in James Town. Imagine that you are a settler and your brother has sent word that he is coming to join you in James Town. Write him a truthful letter about your experiences in the New World and convince him to stay in England.
2. Because the settlers and the natives speak different languages, they often use body language to communicate with one another. For example, on page 71, Samuel uses body language to tell the native he is hungry, and the native uses body language to tell Samuel that he can eat some of their bread. Pair up with a classmate and try to communicate using body language. You can start off by communicating something simple, such as “I am sleepy” or “I am strong,” and then move on to something more difficult, such as “I would like to trade my pencil for your notebook.”

Keep a log of your experiences communicating with body language. To do this, first write down what it is you would like to communicate to your classmate. Then, after you use body language to communicate it, write down what body language you used and whether or not your classmate was able to understand you.

Once you have tried to use body language to communicate a few times, allow your classmate to do the same.

3. Samuel Collier had a difficult life. But his life also included some good experiences and some people who helped him become a better person. Make a list of the pros (the good experiences and the good people) and the cons (the bad experiences and the bad people) of Samuel's life. For example, one pro is that his mother taught him to read, and one con is that his father beat him. Create your list by writing "Pros" on one side of your paper and "Cons" on the other side. Under "Pros," list all of the positive events of Samuel's life. Under "Cons," list all of the negative aspects of Samuel's life. Then count the number of pros you listed and the number of cons you listed. Which is greater, the number of pros in Samuel's life or the number of cons in Samuel's life?

Other Books by Elisa Carbone

Last Dance on Holladay Street

The Pack

Storm Warriors

Stealing Freedom

Sarah and the Naked Truth

Starting School with an Enemy

Corey's Story: Her Family's Secret

Author Web site: www.elisacarbhone.com