

Discussion Questions

The Book Woman of Troublesome Creek

1. The Kentucky Pack Horse program was implemented in 1935 by the Works Project Administration (WPA) to create women's work programs and to assist economic recovery and promote literacy. When you think about the novel, how did the program affect the people in this remote area? Do you think library programs are still a vital part of our society today?
2. How has a librarian or booklover impacted your life? Have you ever connected with a book or author in a meaningful way?
3. Missionaries, government, social workers, and various religious groups have always visited eastern Kentucky to reform, modernize, and mold hillfolk to their acceptable standards. Do you think Cussy faced this kind of prejudice from the outside world? Is there any prejudice or stigma associated with the people of Appalachia today?
4. How do you think Cussy's father feels after he marries her off to an abusive man? Why do you think he agrees to Charlie Frazier's proposal in the first place? What do you imagine life was like for an unwed woman at that time?
5. Imagine you are making a community scrapbook like the ones Cussy distributes to the people of Troublesome. What would you include? Do you think these materials were helpful to Cussy's library patrons?
6. When Cussy receives the cure for her blueness from Doc, she realizes there's a price to pay for her white skin, and the side effects soon become too much to handle. If you were in Cussy's shoes, would you sacrifice your health for a chance at "normalcy"?
7. How do you think Cussy feels when she is ostracized at the Independence Day celebration, despite her change of skin color? Can you relate to her feelings of isolation? How does her experience parallel racial prejudices that are still prevalent today?
8. Cussy has to deal with the loss of many loved ones in a very short amount of time. How do you think she handles her grief? Which loss was the most difficult for you to read?
9. What do you think life was like for the people of Troublesome? What are some of the challenges the people on Cussy's library route face?
10. What do you think happens to Cussy, Jackson, Honey, and the other inhabitants of Troublesome after the story ends? Imagine you were Cussy. How would you feel leaving Troublesome for good?

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