



**Discussion
Questions for
Reader Guide,
PDF Format**

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Before You Read

1. They say you can't judge a book by the cover. Do you agree? Why or why not?
2. Take a look at the cover. When do you think this story takes place?
3. Where do you think the book is set?
4. What type of mood does the cover convey? How does it make you feel?
5. What do you think the title means?

A Note to Readers

1. Have you ever seen someone discriminated against because of their religion, race, sexual orientation, or disability? If yes, what happened?

Chapter 1

1. This story begins on June 12, 1963. Brainstorm a list of anything you know or think you know about the 1960s. Next, write a list of questions you have about the 1960s.
2. How would you describe Addie Ann's relationship with her brother Elias? Use evidence from the text to support your answer.
3. Elias tells Addie Ann, "Everybody's got some fire, some rage. It's how you use your fire that counts." What does Elias mean by this? Do you agree or disagree with him? Use specific examples from your own life to support your answer.
4. Addie Ann says, "What's so special about the vote? Mama always carries on about it, but what difference could one of her votes make anyway?" Do you think it's important for adults to vote? Why or why not? Do you think kids your age should be able to vote for local, state, and national leaders? Why or why not?

Chapter 2 & 3

1. How does Addie Ann feel about her boss, Old Man Adams? Use evidence from the text to support your answer.
2. What gift does Old Man Adams leave to Addie Ann? Why is this gift so meaningful to her?

3. What gift does Old Man Adams leave to the community? Why is that gift important to the citizens of Kuckachoo? Why do the white people try to steal this gift?
4. After the lawyer reads the will, the sheriff pulls out his shotgun. Addie Ann says, "I'm afraid we're all going to die. And I wonder if it's worth it, for the land." Name a specific place in the world where people fight and die over the right to land? Is it worth it to fight about territory? Why or why not?

Chapter 4

1. Addie Ann says that ever since she got chased out of the big house, she's been jumping rope, Uncle Bump's been playing harmonica, and Elmira's been burning sage. What do you do to make yourself feel better when you're upset?
2. What trick did Delilah play on her mother? Have you ever played a practical joke on someone? What was it? Did the person think it was funny? Why or why not?
3. At the end of chapter four, Mama lies to Mrs. Tate. What is the lie she tells? Why does she lie? Why does Addie Ann say "fibbing to white folks is an altogether different matter"?
4. Is it ever okay to lie? If yes, under what circumstance? If no, why not?

Chapter 5

1. List five people who are at the civil rights meeting. Briefly describe how each of them is connected to Addie Ann. (For example, Elias is her brother.)
2. Who was Medgar Evers?
3. Mr. Tubbs reads out President Kennedy's speech that compared the fate of a black and white baby born in 1963. Do you think a black and white baby born today will grow up with an equal chance of going to college and getting a good job? To learn more, go to: <http://www.shanaburg.com/blog/?p=7>

Chapter 6

1. What did Mama tell Addie Ann about watching white folk? Why do you think Mama said this?

2. What did Addie Ann do at the Corner Store that got her into trouble?
3. At the end of chapter six, Addie Ann says, “I can’t feel anything.” Why do you think she can’t feel anything? Have you ever had an experience in which you couldn’t feel anything but watched the scene in front of you like you were watching it on TV? If yes, what happened?

Chapter 7

1. What is the Reverend’s Brigade?
2. Describe Addie Ann’s relationship with Flapjack. Have you ever had a similar relationship with a pet? If so, describe.
3. Why does Addie Ann act like a mother to Mama by trying to give her comfort? Have you ever felt like the grownup around an adult? If so, when? Did you mind? Why or why not?
4. Addie Ann overhears Mama tell Uncle Bump, “He goin’ home.” What does Mama mean by this?
5. At the end of chapter 7, Addie Ann asks her brother if he’s here. She says, “My brother tells me he is.” Did Elias speak? Has Elias come home? (Hint: The author deliberately left this part unclear, so give your best guess as to what is going on.)

Chapter 8

1. A simile is when a writer uses the word *like* or *as* to compare two different things. When Addie Ann hears the sheriff’s dog outside her house, she says, “My heart, it freezes like the icebox.” What two things are being compared in that sentence? Why didn’t the author have Addie Ann say, “My heart, it freezes like snow” or “My heart, it freezes like ice cubes”? Why do you think the author carefully chose to use the word “icebox”?
2. At the end of chapter 8, Addie Ann tells Mama, “Don’t fret. He’s still with us.” Why does Addie Ann say this? Do you think that Addie Ann believes her own words? Why or why not?
3. Do you believe that Elias is still alive? Why or why not?

Chapter 9

1. Why don't the white Kuckachookians know that Old Man Adams left the garden for blacks and whites to share?
2. Why does Mr. Mudge want to use Old Man Adams's land to build a school instead of a garden?
3. What is integration? What does the mayor mean when he says, "Integration here? That ain't nothin' but a thousand never evers!"
4. In 1954, in a case called *Brown v. Topeka Board of Education*, the Supreme Court ordered that all schools in the United States integrate. This story takes place nine years later, in 1963. How is it possible that schools in Mississippi still were not integrated, so many years after the Supreme Court order?
5. What kind of gesture did Miss Springer make after Mama spilled the tea on the rug? What can you figure out or infer about Miss Springer based on this gesture?

Chapters 10 & 11

1. What is Miss Springer's plan for how to plant, weed, and water the garden?
2. Based on what Miss Springer says to Mr. Mudge, what can you figure out or infer about which group(s) of people did farm work in the Mississippi Delta?
3. Why might Mr. Mudge speak one way about black people but act in a different way? Is it true that actions speak louder than words? Support your opinion with examples from your life, the book, or the world.
4. Mrs. Tate, Miss Springer, and Mrs. Worth all react differently to the fact that Elias Pickett might be dead. Explain the differences among them.
5. At the end of chapter 11, Addie Ann says, "I see those bills in my uncle's pocket, they don't amount to a bucket of spit." What does she mean? Why does she feel this way?

Chapter 12

1. What does Addie Ann bring to Mrs. Tate at the courthouse?
2. What does Mrs. Tate tell Mrs. Worth that she saw growing in the garden?
3. What type of test did Mrs. Worth give to people who wanted to vote? Why do you think white people went to such trouble to prevent black people from voting?

Chapter 13

1. In the first paragraph of this chapter, Addie Ann says that if she didn't have Ralphie, she'd go "cockadoodle mad." The author made up a new use for the word "cockadoodle" that seems to fit. Take an existing word and use it in a sentence in a brand new way.
2. The first time Addie Ann talked to her missing brother, she said she saw "yellow and orange glitter." Now she tries to talk to Elias again, but she doesn't see the glitter. What does the glitter symbolize? Is the glitter real or imaginary?
3. Addie Ann says she has a "soul connection" with her brother. That's why she's sure he's alive. Have you ever had a soul connection with someone? Can you prove it existed? Explain.

Chapters 14 & 15

1. Mrs. Tate tells Addie Ann, "Negroes are good at loving other people's children." If Mrs. Tate just paid Addie Ann a compliment, then why is Addie Ann angry?
2. How does Addie Ann feel about starting junior high school?
3. Addie Ann's father insisted that his children get an education. He told Mama, "That's the only way for them to live free." Do you agree or disagree? Why?
4. How would you describe the relationship between Addie Ann, Cool Breeze, and Delilah?
5. Explain the following terms: sharecropper, plantation, plantation school.

Chapter 16

1. Addie Ann sits down in class. Her teacher, Mrs. Jacks, looks at the students. Addie Ann wonders if Mrs. Jacks sees the bald spot in the middle of her left eyebrow. What does this thought of Addie Ann's tell us about how she's feeling? Have you ever felt the same way that Addie Ann does at that moment? If yes, when?
2. Mrs. Jacks tells the students, "As Negroes, we've got to run faster, work harder, and think better than all the white folks combined, so that's what I'm going to

- expect y'all to do." Why does Mrs. Jacks say this? Was it a true statement at the time? Is it true today? Why or why not?
3. After the first day of school, Addie Ann is in bed crying. She says, "I know my brother's spirit is here—not his ghost but his spirit." What does she mean?

Chapter 17

1. Delilah tells Addie Ann, Mama, and Uncle Bump the news about the bombing of a church in Birmingham, Alabama that killed four young girls. Mama immediately asks if Addie Ann and Delilah want to help bake some cookies. Why does Mama do this? Do you think sometimes kids are too young to know about scary events in the world? Why or why not?
2. Addie Ann lies to Mr. Tate about the letter she finds on the Tate's bedroom floor. Why does she lie? What would you have done?
3. Mrs. Tate asks Addie Ann to keep the letter a secret. Is it ever okay for an adult to ask a child to keep a secret? If yes, when is it okay and when is it not okay?
4. Addie Ann says, "When someone keeps a secret, they're keeping the truth from getting out. So telling a secret's like spreading around the truth. What could be wrong with that?" Do you agree or disagree with Addie Ann? Why?
5. Mama wants Addie Ann to tell her the secret about Mrs. Tate. Then Mama threatens to give away Flapjack if Addie Ann tells anyone else. Why does Mama react this way? What does Mama's reaction tell us about her?

Chapter 18 & 19

1. What advice does Uncle Bump give Addie Ann about her love life? Do you think this is good advice? Why or why not?
2. Why does Mrs. Worth have the keys to the garden?
3. Why does Addie Ann almost drop Ralphie on the floor?
4. How has Reverend Walker changed from the beginning of the story? Use evidence from the text to support your answer.
5. The Negroes are invited to the garden picking at noon. The reverend says they should show up at sunrise anyway. What do you think the best plan would be for

them? What are the possible risks associated with your plan? What are the possible rewards?

Chapter 20

1. This chapter opens with a description of the dawn. Addie Ann says, “From my seat on the swing, I see the sky’s the soft blue it only turns fall mornings. A few stars still sparkle. And right about now, the world seems half-asleep, stuck in a place where everything’s all right and everyone who should be in it is.” Write a descriptive paragraph about your favorite time of day.
2. Was it a good idea for Addie Ann to skip school and go to the picking? Why or why not?
3. While the black Kuckachookians march down the edge of the field, they sing a song called “We Shall Overcome.” This is called a freedom song. During the civil rights movement, the black protesters often sang these songs. Why do you think music was such a big part of the movement?

Chapter 21

1. After the reverend tells the black citizens to go back to their homes, Addie Ann sits outside with Delilah and Cool Breeze. Addie Ann cracks jokes and jumps rope. Do her actions reflect her feelings? Why or why not?
2. Why does Addie Ann think that Mr. Mudge will raise prices in his store higher than a cat’s back?
3. Does Addie Ann have a good idea about loading up on vegetables at the Corner Store? Why or why not?
4. Honey Worth meets Addie Ann in the woods and issues a warning. What is the warning? Why does Honey do this? What do we learn about Honey in this scene?
5. When Reverend Walker comes to Addie Ann’s house, he says “There comes a time for a man when his dignity’s worth more than his life.” How would you define dignity? Do you agree or disagree with what Reverend Walker said? Why? Which people in history acted like their dignity was worth more than their life?

Chapter 22

1. Addie Ann still feels close to her brother and tries to talk to him even though he's gone. Do you believe that people who know each other really well can communicate without seeing each other? If yes, give an example to support your answer.
2. A symbol is an object in a story that represents a deeper meaning. In this book, the river is a symbol. What do you think is the deeper meaning that the river represents? (Note: There is not just one correct answer.) Addie Ann says, "And the river. I don't hope it chooses to meander my way. I imagine that river and dive right in." What does this statement mean? How does this statement signal a change in the way that Addie Ann behaves?

Chapter 23

1. In this chapter, what does Addie Ann learn about the meaning of home?
2. What lie has Addie Ann's family been keeping from her throughout her whole life? Why didn't her family tell her the truth sooner? Do you think they were justified in telling this lie? How can grownups figure out when kids are ready to hear some difficult truths? Has anyone ever kept the truth from you because of your age? If yes, explain.
3. Addie Ann says, "The sparks catch inside me. They burst into a river of flame." What does Addie Ann mean when she says this? Think about previous times in the story when the author used fire and river imagery. Why do you think the author chose to use that particular language here?
4. At the end of chapter 23, Addie Ann says, "When I hear that whisper, I know whose it is...I know that voice. It's my own." Why does Addie Ann finally recognize her own voice? Why did she mistake these whispers for her brother's before?
5. What does Addie Ann fear could happen to Uncle Bump? Do you think her fear is realistic or is she over-reacting? On what do you base your answer?

Chapter 24

1. Addie Ann says, "This isn't just about us Picketts. This is about all of us. Who we are. What our future holds." What does she mean? Do you agree or disagree with this claim? Why?
2. A metaphor is when an author compares two different things *without* using the words "like" or "as." When Addie Ann orders Cool Breeze to get Mrs. Jacks, she

- says, “Tell her this is the big test. The final exam!” When Addie Ann says this, what two different things is she comparing? (Note: This is a tricky question because Addie Ann doesn’t come right out and tell you what she means by the word “this.”) How does the use of metaphor help Addie Ann communicate the importance of the moment?
3. Earlier in the story, the sheriff pulled out his shotgun after the reading of the will. That sent Elmira, Addie Ann, and Uncle Bump running. This time, however, when the sheriff waves his shotgun, Addie Ann stays put. What is the difference now?
 4. Why would residents of nearby towns put their own lives in danger to surround the jail in hopes of sparing Uncle Bump’s life?
 5. Addie Ann says, “The truth burns inside me. And I wonder if sometimes it’s better not to know.” Do you agree that sometimes it’s better not to know? Explain your answer using examples from the world or from your own life.

Chapter 25

1. Why does Addie Ann specifically mention that the sheriff pushes Uncle Bump “up the seven courthouse steps—seven not six”?
2. Make a prediction. What do you think will be the outcome of the trial? Why do you think this?

Chapter 26

1. How do you think that Elias could have learned that Uncle Bump had a lawyer from Jackson?
2. Guess who planted over the garden with butter beans. Why do you think it was this person?
3. At the graveyard, Addie Ann feels guilty. Should she? Why or why not?
4. Addie Ann says, “It’s strange how when you stop thinking, the answers grow in your mind.” Have you ever solved a problem after you stopped trying to figure out the solution? If yes, when?
5. Is it realistic that Addie Ann could have solved the butter bean crime through a dream? Have you or anyone you’ve known ever solved a problem or answered a question in a dream? If yes, what happened?

Chapter 27

1. What is justice?
2. Addie Ann says that she heard that Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. didn't like violence. Who was Dr. King? With what did Dr. King think that people should fight instead of weapons?
3. Throughout the hearing and trial, Addie Ann has moments when she doubts Uncle Bump's innocence. Does this make her disloyal? Why or why not?
4. What can you figure out or infer about Mrs. Worth's economic status? Is she rich or poor or somewhere in between? Use evidence from the text to support your answer.
5. How is Miss Gold treated by Mr. Tate and the judge? If you were on trial in 1963 Mississippi, would you prefer to have Mr. Hickock or Miss Gold as your lawyer? Why?

Chapter 28

1. Back in the 1960s, black citizens often were accused of being "uppity" or "forgetting their color." During the trial, Mr. Hickock says, "Some who observed Bump say he even acted as if he'd forgotten his color, since he took care of the old man like he was his very own son." Why would white people become so angered by and often violent toward black people who "forgot their color"?
2. Mama tells Addie Ann that a scapegoat is someone who folks can blame for their troubles. Have you ever seen somebody being treated as a scapegoat for another person's problems? If so, explain.
3. Mr. Hickock shouts at Uncle Bump, "Answer me boy!" Uncle Bump explodes, "I am a man!" Why do you think Uncle Bump reacts so strongly? How would you have reacted if you were Uncle Bump?

Chapter 29

1. When she testifies in court, Mrs. Tate says, "Folks don't want to believe that two things—beauty and brains—can go together." Why does she bring this up? Do you agree or disagree with this statement? Use examples from your own life to support your opinion.

2. Just after Mrs. Tate makes the comment about beauty and brains, Miss Springer tells her to “Quit whistlin’ Dixie!” What does Miss Springer mean by this? Was Mrs. Tate whistlin’ Dixie?
3. A theme is an idea that is explored throughout a book. Loyalty is a big theme in this book. What is loyalty? In this chapter, who do we learn is a loyal person? Who do we learn is disloyal? Is it always better to be loyal, or are there exceptions? If yes, when?
4. Why do you think Mrs. Tate decided to testify in court? What did she risk by doing this? Was it worth it? Why or why not?

Chapter 30

1. According to Addie Ann, why does the judge finally agree to let her testify as a witness in court? How often do you think people are motivated by how they will look to others? When is how we appear to others important? When is it unimportant? Use examples from your own life to support your opinion.
2. In court, Addie Ann swears on the Bible to tell the truth. Then she says, “I think about how much the whole truth can hurt.” Is it always better to tell the truth? Why or why not? Use specific examples to support your opinion.

Chapter 31

1. Mr. Mudge is supposed to be out of town, but when everyone shows up at his farm, he’s right there. According to Mr. Mudge, where was he and why is he back in Kuckachoo?
2. Addie Ann thinks that Mr. Mudge isn’t telling the truth, so she says, “Mr. Mudge beats the devil round the stump.” She’s also petrified about finding the evidence she believes is on the farm, so she says, “Me? I’m nervous as a long-tailed cat in a room full of rocking chairs!” These are Southern expressions. Make up three of your own Southern expressions. Give a definition for each one. Then use each of your Southern expressions in a sentence.
3. Addie Ann says, “Despite the mean things Mr. Mudge says about Negroes, he’s helped my family all these years.” How does Addie Ann feel about accusing him of committing the butter bean crime? Do you think she’s doing the right thing? Why or why not?

4. What does Mrs. Tate do at the farm that surprises everyone? Why can't she stop laughing?

Chapter 32

1. When Addie Ann hears the jury foreman state the verdict, she says, "The bayou floods inside me." Why do you think that the author chose the image of water to express Addie Ann's reaction to the news?
2. Addie Ann says, "Setting an innocent Negro free isn't the same as locking up a guilty man." What does she mean?
3. Did the jury deliver a fair verdict? Why or why not?
4. Addie Ann says that she grew up more in the last four months than in the four years before that. She said she had "an inside growth spurt." Have you ever had an experience that led to an inside growth spurt? Explain.

Chapter 33

1. Describe how the meaning of home has changed for Addie Ann, Mama, Elias, and Uncle Bump since the beginning of the book.
2. If Uncle Bump was found not guilty, then why does he need to leave Kuckachoo?
3. What are some of Addie Ann's favorite family memories? What are some of your favorite family memories?
4. How has Mama's view of Addie Ann changed since the beginning of the book? Use evidence from the text to support your answer.
5. List five adjectives you would use to describe Mr. Mudge. Is he a good man, a bad man, or somewhere in between? Give specific examples to support your answer.

Chapter 34

1. Before Uncle Bump and Elias return to Hattiesburg, what object does Mama give to Uncle Bump? What do you think that this object symbolizes in the story?

Discussion Questions

A Thousand Never Evers by Shana Burg

2. At the All-Kuckachoo Garden Club meeting, Reverend Walker says, “In the garden of the Lord, there’s more than enough for us all!” What does Reverend Walker mean? Do you believe what he says is true? Why or why not?
3. In the very last image of the book, Addie Ann holds up her finger, and Ralphie wraps his hand around it. Why do you think the author chose this as the very last image? What does this image symbolize?
4. Do you think that this is a hopeful ending? Why or why not?

Afterword

1. In the Afterword, Shana Burg writes, “Today, the cost of silence is high.” What do you think she means? Do you agree or disagree? Why? Use examples from your life or current events to support your answer.
2. Name three things young people can do to speak up for justice and lead by their own example.

WRAP UP: INTERDISCIPLINARY ACTIVITIES

1. How do you think life in Kuckachoo will change? Write the next chapter—chapter 35—of *A Thousand Never Evers*.
2. Fashion was very important in the 1960s, and hats played a huge role in society. There were special hats for different occasions. Read more about the role hats played in *A Thousand Never Evers* here: <http://www.shanaburg.com/research4.php>. Next, design three different hats for three different characters in this book. Explain who would wear each hat, when that character would wear the hat, and what that particular hat might tell us about that person.
3. Create a math worksheet with ten questions and a separate answer sheet. But this will be no ordinary math. It will be butter bean math! Be sure to show your work. For example, one question might be: "If a butter bean vine grows at ten inches per week, then after 42 days, how long would the vine be?" See the end of chapter 27 to get ideas of how butter bean math was used in the book.

WRAP UP: THINK IT OVER

1. Who gets justice in this story? Who doesn't? Use specific examples to support your answer.
2. How has Addie Ann changed from the beginning of the story to the end? Use specific examples to support your answer.
3. What role did young people play in the civil rights movement? How did they change the course of history? If you are too young to vote, can you still have a voice in the world? If no, why not? If yes, how?