***Amos Fortune, Free Man***—by Elizabeth Yates

Study guide (comprehensive)—by Jonas Sauder

**a *schooling at home* resource**

**Introduction**

These questions, comments and suggested activities can stimulate deep engagement with the story of Amos Fortune’s life in a way that cultivates insight and wisdom. The questions follow the story page by page.

The comprehensiveness of this study guide (12,000 words based upon a 36,000 word easy-reading biography) is not intended to be in its length a model for a *schooling at home* book-study guide. Rather, it illustrates the extent of the riches accessible through careful meditation on a story that seems simple in its reading. It is intended as a resource from which teachers can choose, adapt and add questions and activities to craft their own study guides for their own students on various age/grade levels.

Note that although this book is quite readable by upper elementary age children, its themes and applications are more deeply formative for adolescents, youth, and adults. While the younger will profit from learning the story (which can benefit them more in later years as they recall it), older, more mature students’ hearts can “burn within them” as their understanding is opened through their vicarious walk with Amos Fortune as he patiently learns freedom.

This study guide can also serve as a model for interested persons to develop study guides for other books. The “flavor” of this study guide reflects the nature of Elizabeth Yates’ biography of Amos Fortune. Its questions point toward profound insights and wisdom for living in a difficult setting. Other books (or other people’s lives) focusing on other themes would accordingly call for study guides that match. Some examples might be: exploration/discovery; making a difference in the world; inventor/initiative; grit/fortitude; specialness of routine; intense passion for a cause; leadership…

A good study guide should complement the story/book by resonating with its themes, elucidating its meaning, and unpacking its significant details; thus enhancing the already-good story. A “study guide” full of simplistic or distracting or vague questions, activities intended to develop unrelated skills, or extraneous and agenda-flavored commentary can easily prohibit the student from experiencing the story in its own right while at the same time souring him from ever wanting to jump “study guide” hoops again.

A good working metaphor for the study guide writer is to feel yourself being a *tour guide.* Imagine yourself walking through the story alongside your reader, carrying on a dialogue with him as you go. Look! What do you see? Can you hear that? Did you notice that? I wonder if you look at this differently than I do. What did she say—did she say what I thought she said? What does that mean? Why would anybody do/say such a thing? Did you ever think/feel that way? How does that work? Let’s check out where that actually happened. Did you know this is real? Let’s figure out how they put this together. Can you guess what will happen next?

To write a study guide, first get into the story yourself and get the story into you. Then put yourself in your student’s shoes (or in his skin), empathizing with his attitude, feelings, experience, abilities, etc. Finally, using that understanding, take him vicariously on a tour through the world of the story, sensing how he will resonate with the various things that you ask, say, suggest, direct, and explain. Anticipate his responses: struggle with him, laugh with him, sweat with him, wonder with him, cry with him, sit and walk and run with him. Enjoy the blessing of anticipating his Eureka’s.

**Ch. 1-- *Africa 1725***

1. What did the people’s dancing have to do with corn planting time?
2. Note the use of drums. What’s the purpose of “drumming”? How does a drum work? Can you make a tin can drum—or a wooden one?
3. What did the small conical huts look like? Why do you suppose they lived in such houses? How does the style of people’s houses spring from their resources, way of life, or goals? Is there more than one style of house in your community?
4. What is *obeisance*? Why was it offered to the chief?
5. What had been the threat to Ath-mun’s life? What saved her? How was she saved? What’s the meaning and purpose of a sacrifice, as evidenced here?
6. The At-mun-shi were *pagan*. What pagan practices have we seen so far in the opening pages of this book? Were they *religious?* Can we see any pagan practices around us today?
7. What’s an *incantation?* To whom did the people offer their incantation? What was their request? How does offering incantations differ from the Christian practice of offering up prayers to God?
8. Why do you suppose the incantation was repeated over and over as a chant? Does this repetition show faith, or does it perhaps demonstrate a lack of faith?
9. What does Prince At-mun’s action in front of his the people (leaping, standing, dancing) show?
10. An old woman says the Prince will rule with his heart rather than his head. What does she mean, and why does she say it? What’s the difference between the two? Which is better—and why?
11. What are several reasons Ath-mun may have felt safe with her brother?
12. What is *ecstatic* motion? What does it mean to be in a state of *ec-stasis?* Is that a good thing? Is it dangerous? Was King David ecstatic when he danced before the Lord with all his might? (II Sam. 6:14)

Is there ever a time when it’s appropriate to be ecstatic? When?

1. What was the people’s immediate reaction when they heard the gunshots? What offense did they fear?
2. Why did the white man hesitate to shackle At-mun? If At-mun looked dangerous, why did the slavers particularly want him—why didn’t they leave him behind?
3. The elderly that were left behind bewailed the loss of their *youth, strength*, and *leadership*. Discuss the meaning of each of these terms in this context. Which do you suppose could have survived better in the jungle without the others: the youth or the older people? In what ways do youth need the aged—and the aged the youth? Can you name some ways in which you have been blessed by old people?
4. Why did the “best of the At-mun-shi” go with bowed heads and shoulders into the unknown? What does that mean? Why did At-mun’s head stay up? What does it mean to “hold one’s head up”? Does holding one’s head up have more than one meaning? (Consider hope vs. arrogance) Compare it with a bowed head. When is it appropriate to bow one’s head? (Consider defeat vs. deference/prayer).
5. What might At-mun have said to his lame sister as he passed her?
6. What mark was At-mun to bear for the rest of his life? What comparison if any can be made between this and Galatians 6:17?
7. Why did Ath-mun hold her hands open and outspread as she limped back to her people? Does her response give you a hint to the answer to #17?
8. At-mun was bound by chains, but still a prince. How could that be? What kind of “bondage” do chains guarantee, if any? What can chains *not* do by themselves? Ath-mun was a princess. Were she and At-mun also servants? In what sense is a leader a servant?
9. “Neither could escape the work they were born to do.” Is this true of everyone? Can anyone escape the work he is born to do? If so, what are the consequences?
10. In this chapter, what’s the difference between a chief and a prince?
11. What’s a *leader*? *Leadership?* What qualities constitute good leadership? What makes people trust or distrust a leader? Do people always trust a good leader and distrust a bad leader? Why might they do the opposite?
12. Note the effective, efficient use of language in this chapter. Can you find *one* unnecessary sentence that could be deleted without the loss of something important from this chapter?
13. Consider the author’s effective use of words. Note that the slaver came forward with his *lash*. At-mun cringed as he felt it. Why is lash a better word here than *whip, strap, switch,* or *scourge?*

**Ch. 2--The Middle Passage**

1. How can tiredness, hunger, fright, and bewilderment serve as weapons to control a people? Consider each. Can you add to the list?
2. What did At-mun do with his eyes? How was he able to do this—wasn’t he tired, hungry, and afraid just like the rest of the captives were?
3. What gave the people a bit of hope? After all, At-mun had also been captured, just like they were. His body was present with them all along. But what did they now sense that united them?
4. Was slavery an unheard of thing among the At-mun-shi? (Some research into practice of slavery in history would be helpful—in Bible times, among other ancient peoples, and in Africa. Did all live in poverty and abuse? Could a slave actually be rich—and still a slave? Were any highly educated?)
5. At-mun knew that it was not chains that would enslave his people. What form of “power and cunning” was being used to enslave them, and how was it being carried out?
6. What troubled At-mun as he looked into the faces of his people?
7. What do you suppose made them abashed and spiritless? (What do those terms mean?) What kinds of circumstances make people “abashed and spiritless” in our day? How can this be avoided?
8. Discuss who the “natives in the employ” of the white men might have been. Apparently they were other Africans. What might have induced them to help capture other Africans, and what’s their attitude toward the captives?
9. At-mun watches closely as they drift downriver. What’s he watching for?
10. The juxtaposition of the gliding canoes with their “freight” and the routines on the river bank (goat herding, feeding monkeys, sleeping crocodiles with open mouths) offers strong ironies. What are some?
11. The flotilla of canoes gradually enters a new world unknown to the At-mun-shi. Tillage. Stone encampments. Discuss the meaning and significance of At-mun’s having “stepped across the world’s horizon.” What’s the horizon of your world? Has it shifted as you grew up? What’s the difference between broadening horizons as we grow through childhood and youth and the kind of horizon At-mun was crossing?
12. Can you put into words what At-mun was feeling—what’s this new mix of elation and fear he was experiencing? What wonder was he seeing? Have you ever experienced anything like this?
13. To whom did At-mun pray during the night? What was pagan about these prayers? Why does his pray?

What motivates people to pray?

1. What strength did At-mun know that he had? What *could* he and the people in his canoe have done? How does he make his decision? What is his decision? Why does he sleep?
2. What are the stark details of how the captives wait for three weeks? Describe 1. Pits. 2. Food 3. Shelter
3. For a little experiment…are you willing to try living on water plus two other food staples of your choice for a week or more, such as water, bread, and rice?
4. What other “immigrants” joined the At-mun-shi in their pits? Were former neighbor-type captives an encouragement? Were former enemy-type captives a threat?
5. What did all the people in the pit have in common? What drove them—what was their one goal?
6. At-mun’s eyes lost their ability to help his people. Discuss the progression of the people’s look toward At-mun: from (a) reverence to (b) dazed to (c) looking away to (d) glancing at him without recognition. What’s happening to them? Compare this to the ways in which we might look at Jesus.
7. What four major *commodities* were traded by the slave ship captain in exchange for the cargo of slaves?

What’s a commodity?

1. Why were the traders “pleased at what the time and treatment in the pits had done”? What had it done? What would it mean to be “merchandise”?
2. Why did the way At-mun held his head limit his value as merchandise?
3. What different types of qualities is the ship master looking for in selecting his “merchandise”?
4. As appropriate, try lying spoon fashion with some friends with wrists and ankles tied for an extended period of time in a tight space. What feelings does this experience evoke?
5. On the voyage, the slaves were trained to “behave” by being offered something and also threatened with something. What were these two “training tools”?
6. As At-mun looked out the porthole, an awful realization came over him. What was it? What’s the meaning of such a reality? What do you suppose is the best response in such a situation?
7. At-mun’s fellow tribesmen-captives forgot two things. Forgetting is tragic.
8. They forgot that they were At-mun-shi. If one forgets who “his people” are, what are some of the implications? What can replace that? How do we go about remembering?
9. They also forgot that they were men. Is that possible? What exactly does that mean?
10. They had been *made* to forget. Who made them forget? How? Could they have resisted? What are some things today that *make* us forget? How do we go about remembering? If you forgot…do you suppose you would know you forgot? How could you know? Can others help you?
11. The men made sounds to each other in the night—sounds without meaning. What does that “mean”? Did you ever hear such sounds?
12. What does At-mun *compel* himself to do? How? What does he want to *have* to carry into the future besides his body? What do you have to carry into your future?
13. Why did At-mun have increasing difficulty in distinguishing “his people” from the others? How does the type of “response” we make in the presence of our own people help to identify us? Consider how you might identify one of your friends or family in the dark or over the phone or if they are disguised by heavy clothing.
14. What made it harder and harder for At-mun to remember the life he left behind? What’s apparently dangerous about “the present?” Did the present have anything to offer besides food & water? How is existing in “the present” both a good thing and a danger?
15. At-mun gradually loses more and more of his memory. Finally he boils his determination down to two things: the face of his sister and his birthright. “I am a king.” Why does he select these two as his “irreducible minimums?” Try making your own list. What two would you choose if you had to? And how would you go about “burning them into your memory”?
16. What’s ironic about the ship’s needing to wait a day offshore at Boston before docking for business?
17. Is it believable that At-mun found trousers more restrictive than chains? How so?
18. Why might At-mun have kept his eyes on the soaring gulls as he stood on the auction block?
19. What is At-mun’s “defect,” according to the ship’s merchandise papers?
20. How do you go about recognizing whether someone addresses you with an *imperative, exclamatory, declarative,* or *interrogative sentence?* What’s the difference in how these sentences sound? What is the purpose of each?
21. At-mun had vowed to never answer a white man. What was different about the strange man in gray with the broad-brimmed hat that made At-mun answer him?
22. What’s the significance of the man’s offering to buy At-mun outright rather than “running him up” on the auction? (Consider the purpose and hopes that both the seller and the bidder have in an auction.)
23. Why did At-mun want to tell his purchaser that he’s a king? What did he have left from his home land? Does memory matter? Why? Which memories are most important? If you had to choose only 10 memories, what would go onto your list? How would you go about deciding which memories to place on that list? Would they be only “good” memories? If you decide to choose any “bad” ones to remember, what would be the reason for your choice?
24. The Quaker gives At-mun a name. Who has the authority to “name” someone? What *is* a name? How would it affect you if you were suddenly given a new name and told to use it?
25. Numerous men, referred to only as “slavers,” were involved in the capture and transport and sale of Amos and his people. Yet we don’t really see these men. They are not described as individuals; we have no descriptions of them; we learn about them only through what they do. Why do you suppose the author more or less keeps them “invisible” to us except through their actions?
26. This would be a good time to do a bit more research into the *middle passage:* When it occurred, who was involved, its purpose, its conditions, some statistics, etc.

**Ch. 3--Boston 1725-1740**

1. Caleb Copeland’s Quaker commitments do not favor owning a slave. But he stretched the categories for several reasons. He lists three to his wife. What are they?
2. Caleb’s wife Celia smiles at Caleb’s generous heart. She believes he’ll do what’s best for At-mun/Amos, which includes eventually giving him his freedom. This brings a fascinating reply. Is Amos “untamed”? Is Caleb’s description of Amos as “part animal” an epithet or a sympathetic recognition of current reality?
3. If someone is released from bondage to “run wild,” is he free? Can anybody actually *give* freedom to another? This introduces the concept of freedom, which is a major theme of this book and Amos’s life. He started out free. Is he “free” at this point in the story? To what extent?
4. Celia thinks Amos might speak when he no longer has anything to fear. List 10 or more kinds of/causes of fear? (such as…the unknown, loss of reputation…) Does fear bind our tongues?
5. Caleb tried to show Amos how to operate the loom. Celia tried to show Amos how to sit, sleep in a bed, and eat with utensils. What was the difference in their approach? Who was more successful? Under what assumptions did each one operate? What’s significant about the fact that Celia sees Amos as a big *boy*?
6. Celia claims that the “sound” Amos makes is not merely a sound—it must be a word. What’s the difference? What is a *word*? Did you ever make one up? Try it.
7. List as many new *ways* as you can that Amos adopted as he lived with the Copelands—*ways* that were quite different from what he knew in Africa.
8. One memorable incident from the story occurs as Roxanna helps Amos read from the Bible as they practice learning to read English together. She reads that we are made “kings and priests to God.” What’s she thinking when she says, “You be a king and I a priest”? How does this passage resonate with Amos—what does it confirm in his mind?
9. Celia had an intuitive understanding (what does that mean?) that Amos would continue saying his special sound/word (At-mun) “until he can replace it with something of equal meaing.” Was she right? When the strange sound “At-mun” no longer came from his lips, what *did* come from his lips? What was Amos pleased about?
10. Fifteen years pass! Amos “thought of himself as one of them.” What does that mean? Was that a problem? Did that make him more of a slave or more free?
11. WHY would Amos not want manumission when Caleb spoke to him about it? How could freedom possibly be more difficult than servitude?
12. Amos felt sorry for his fellow slaves in Boston. But what seemed even worse than their ill treatment was the fact they had no past (what does that mean?) and little future—“the white man’s world with its toil and indignities was nothing they wanted to call their own.” What does “calling it your own” mean? And why wouldn’t most slaves want to “call the white man’s world” their own? What future would you like to “call your own?”
13. How did Amos go about becoming a type of “leader” to the other slaves he knew in Boston? What type of leadership did Amos NOT give? What DID he recommend?
14. What Bible verse did many slave owners frequently quote to their slaves? What was different about the “operating verse” that guided the Copeland household? Why do you suppose Amos *allied* himself to the Copeland family?
15. The reason behind Amos’s refusal to accept manumission is so profound that he cannot put it into words. Something engraved deep in his soul that he inherited by growing up among his At-mun-shi people kept him connected to Caleb, who was older and wiser than Amos. What was it? What was the source of Amos’s dignity in Boston?
16. Roger Copeland grew up, learned the weaving trade, married, moved away and established himself in his household supported by his trade. Why could Amos not do the same if given his manumission? Was his insistence on being a member of the Copeland family an unhealthy dependence or a wise choice under the circumstances?
17. Why did the free Negroes have their own gatherings for singing and storytelling? Have you ever sung a melody that goes further back than memory? What’s special about singing a melody that your unknown forefathers sang?
18. Why does Amos look with attention at newly arriving children-slaves at the dock whenever he has the opportunity? We have some clue about a special, wistful longing he has—what’s he hoping?
19. How does Amos come to be called Amos Fortune? Why does he accept it?
20. Why must Amos be sold instead of set free by the Copeland’s when Caleb dies?
21. At the auction, Amos joined the bidding himself. What does that mean? Why does he stop at 50 pounds when he actually had more available? (Would you pay every penny you have to purchase your freedom from slavery? Or would you accept slavery and keep your money to spend if you could?)
22. What assessment did his new owner, Mr. Ichabod Richardson, make of Amos? What did he base it upon?
23. Amos had live 15 years with the Copelands in Boston. He’s now 30. Describe Amos as he was when he arrived. Describe him now, at age 30. How has he changed—in abilities, learned skills, knowledge, habits… How has he stayed the same? What about Amos survives from his African boyhood? How has his adaptation to the life of a slave in Boston been different than the adaptation of most other slaves in Boston? How does one know how to go about adapting if forced into a different setting? Is adapting to new ways destructive? Is it a death? Or a way into a new life? How do we discern? Consider Jesus’ adaptation as noted in Philippians 2:7-9.

**Ch. 4—Woburn 1740-1779**

1. What was Ichabod’s philosophy on how to treat his slaves?
2. Amos is defined as “chattel.” What are the differences in connotation between being *chattel* and being a *slave,* a *bondman*, or a *serf*? Each has its own meaning. Do all these titles apply to Amos? If not, which?
3. Why do you suppose Ichabod and Amos will get along well together?
4. Ichabod’s “severely tightened lips” as he reminded Amos that the privilege of traveling to the dock on occasion would be contingent upon “good behavior” is no surprise to Amos. Based on this insight, what would you say is one of the major differences between a benevolent employer’s treatment of his employees and a “benevolent” slaveholder’s treatment of his slaves?
5. Mrs. Richardson expressed appreciation for hearing their slaves’ songs over the years. But she noted that their songs are “like those of a bird in a cage.” What does that mean? Have you ever heard a difference between a caged bird’s song and an outdoor bird’s song? Compare this to Psalm 137:1-6: “singing the Lord’s song in a strange land.” What kinds of songs is it appropriate to sing while in captivity? Did you ever feel “captive” when you had to persist in some task of “drudgery” such as weeding the garden or washing dishes? What songs should you sing in such a situation?
6. What are several reasons Ichabod became pleased with his investment in his purchase of Amos?
7. What puzzled Amos about the white man’s emphasis on Sunday?
8. Amos apparently took as much delight in being a Christian while he worked in the tan yard on a daily basis as he did in church on Sundays. What do you suppose this means—how could it be so? What did his delight consist of?
9. What did the colonists’ struggle to “tame a wilderness” have to do with their interest is gaining independence from Britain?
10. Sometimes his reading of the *Gazette* alerted Mr. Richardson to the arrival of a ship with *human merchandise.* Note the euphemism. What’s a euphemism? What are some common euphemisms we use? Do you use any? Is it proper to use euphemisms? Are they polite? Are they sometimes misleading or even dishonest? How do we know if it’s proper to use one?
11. It’s actually to his economic advantage for Ichabod to allow Amos to go to Boston instead of going himself. Why? Does this show Ichabod’s business shrewdness? Does it show a degree of humility? Or both?
12. What’s the purpose of the written paper Amos carries with him on his business trips to Boston?
13. Amos had become fluent in English, with a corresponding loss of his native At-mun-shi language. Why did this cause him sorrow? Do you think it was just the words of At-mun-shi he lost—or was it something more? Was he actually thinking differently now as he thought in English? What does his loss demonstrate about the implications of “giving oneself to” a new language and people and thinking? Are there any connections between this and “thinking digitally?”
14. What did Amos try to communicate to the “dark faces of the Africans” awaiting their sale to new white owners? Amos realized that even if he *could* offer them hope that their new life could be happy, they might not believe him even if they did understand him. Why not? Was Amos right—*was* there a way to be happy in bondage, based on his own experience up to this point? If so, what was it?
15. Why isn’t Amos interested in advertisements for the sale of Negro boys or men? What’s he seeking, and why?
16. How long did Amos work for Ichabod before he requested his freedom? The “air he breathed” helped to embolden Amos to ask for his freedom. What “air” did he breathe? (Consider the “rush of bold ideas afloat in the colonies in those days.”) What are some things in the “air you breathe” today? (Consider individualism, trends, conformity…) How are you being affected? What are some similarities and differences between the “air you breathe” and peer influence?
17. Mrs. Richardson and Amos express profound insights as they regard their faces in the polished tin (mirror) Amos bought at market and presented to her. What are some of them? And an awful realization caused a sob to wrack Amos. What was it? He responds by singing—what does he sing?
18. Mr. and Mrs. Richardson are puzzled by Amos’s sudden shift of delight from seeing himself in the mirror to his strange, sorrowful behavior. This prompts a short conversation between them about slavery. It sounds like Ichabod fears that the white men, too, will soon be slaves if they “don’t keep watch.” What does he mean? Is there a sense in which *everyone* could see himself as in a form of bondage? (see Romans 7:23-24)
19. Ichabod writes out a lengthy document granting Amos his freedom four years hence. What are some of its key provisions?
20. As they discuss “pounds and pence” and “diverse good reasons,” Mrs. Richardson says her husband is “a hard man.” What does she mean? She had said this before “in silence.” What does that mean? Have you ever said anything “in silence”? Why would anyone ever say anything “in silence”? Why not say it aloud so it’s sure to be heard? Does God want us to “voice things to Him in words,” or is it sufficient to say things to Him “in silence”?
21. When Amos learned the terms of Ichabod’s document, he was pleased to learn that his freedom would be contingent upon payment of an agreed upon sum. What was it about this arrangement that pleased Amos?
22. After Mr. Richardson died, why did his wife give Amos his freedom before the contract time had elapsed?
23. What was different about the air outdoors on the day Amos became free?
24. Amos could carry all his personal possessions in one packet: Bible, garments, silver buckles. What does each represent? If you were to leave behind all your possessions except what you could carry in your backpack, what would you take along? How would you ago about deciding this?
25. As Amos ponders starting a new life at age 60, he thinks about Moses. Even though he’s 60, what gives him hope?
26. When Mrs. Richardson offered that Amos could continue working at the tannery and “establish it as his own,” he was delighted. But “he had his own pride and would accept nothing without fair payment.” What does this mean? Was this a character flaw in Amos? Is there such a thing as proper self-respect? If so, how do we distinguish between inordinate pride and healthy self-respect?
27. What does it mean that Amos had become “accepted as a citizen of Woburn”?
28. Amos wanted to marry. He loved Lily and could have married her. She wanted to marry him. They would be allowed to marry. Why did they wait? He *comforted* her by reminding her that their people are “used to waiting.” How could waiting be a comfort? Does waiting comfort you? Why/why not? How would you describe you and your people if you (as Amos did) were to complete the blank,

“We \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ are used to \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_-ing”?

1. How many years did it take for Amos to earn enough to purchase Lily’s freedom? What satisfied Amos when Lily died within a year?
2. In his mind, how did Amos connect his purchase of Lily to the distant memory of his handicapped sister, Ath-mun?
3. When Amos inquires of Mr. Bowers about purchasing his slave Lydia, Mr. Bowers sets the price for the lame slave high, at 50 pounds. What personal qualities make her so valuable to him?
4. Why were the words “All men are created equal…” hard to explain to the “black man who looked to the white for wisdom and understanding”?
5. Amos’s mode of providing freedom for a few others was hard and slow. What was it?
6. Amos visited Lydia weekly during the three years he worked for her freedom. She wondered aloud what it would mean to “know freedom.” She had no idea…no memory…no categories to grasp it. Amos had some distant memory from before his capture. But all her pre-captive memories were blotted out by pain. How had she tried to get “freedom” on her voyage across the ocean?
7. What released Lydia’s tears? What effect did Amos’s stories and song have on Lydia?
8. Why did Amos refuse to bargain with Mr. Bowers to get him to agree to a lower price for Lydia?
9. What could it mean that “freedom was almost too sweet” for Lydia? Might she have lived longer if she had just remained a slave with Mr. Bowers? What comforted Amos when she died within a year?

**Ch. 5 Journey to Keene 1779**

1. As Amos completed a three day leather delivery trip to Keene, he meditated on his ten years of freedom, a treasure that he “brought forward in his mind and meditated on with delight.” What treasures do you “bring forward in your mind” that bring you delight? How does one do such a thing?
2. Amos’s freedom had both shadow and light. Something about Amos’s most recent “freedom” saddened him…something about being free of *domestic ties*. That sounds a bit like… free of domestic *responsibilities.* How could freedom from house cares sadden someone? Can a “free” person be lonely? Why?
3. Amos now has his heart set on marrying Violet, who is younger. What will be different about Violet as a wife as compared to Lily and Lydia, who both had died? What complications will be involved with his purchase of Violet’s freedom? What did Amos see when he looked in Celyndia’s young eyes?
4. What parallels did Amos see between his and Joshua’s lives?
5. As Amos stood on a hilltop, he surveyed an area below him that represented his own “promised land.” His gaze focuses on two “two strong things.” What were they? These are *symbols.* What’s a symbol? What do these two things *symbolize*? How are they alike? Different? What are some symbols in your home? (kitchen table? Flower garden?) What do they symbolize—and how?
6. Why does Amos suddenly kneel and press his lips to the earth? (Is he becoming a pantheist ☺) When he stands, why does he hold his hat in his hands? (This is something men did symbolically in the days when men wore hats.) What “sign” do you suppose Amos is asking for?
7. Notice the skilled writing in the paragraph beginning with “Amos Fortune went on his way singing.” Can you identify the four part harmony? Just for fun, try assigning Amos’s voice, birds, brook, horses’s hoofs to the part it fits best, given the four choices of soprano/alto/tenor/bass.
8. What feeling “comes over” Amos as he repeats the name *Jaffrey* to himself over and over?
9. How was the way Amos acquired Cyclops similar to the way he had gotten his first two wives? What was the “something more than care” from Amos that helped Cyclops take a new hold on life? What is “a new hold”?
10. What’s *ironic* about the overnight lodging Amos is able to find in Keene for himself and his horse? For what does he pay? Why isn’t he upset—in fact, what pleases him?
11. Why does Amos always carry on his person his certificate of manumission? Does the Christian carry such a certificate?
12. What does Mr. George note about the hide Amos tanned for him? Note the sentence: “The best that was in the hide had been coaxed from it by knowing hands.” What does that mean? What might other tanners have gotten out of same hide? Apparently Amos had mastered the **art** of tanning. Can you unpack additional profound applications of that expression: “the best that was in \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ had been coaxed from it by \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_” Consider such things as a garden plot, ingredients for a recipe, an inexperienced employee, a simple toy, a sand box, a discussion with your friends…
13. What did Samuel George notice about Amos’s aged face? What kind of marks does time normally leave? Aged faces are normally furrowed. What are some things that furrow faces? Apparently, many of Amos’s furrows were from what mood? What does this show about Amos’s character? What furrows does your face naturally make as you look at yourself in the mirror and practice different expressions, such as smiling, frowning, thinking deeply, or worrying… What kind of furrows would you like to have 40 years from now on your face?
14. What prompts the twinkle in Amos’s eyes when he asks Samuel how far people might be willing to travel to get hides tanned?
15. What does Amos mean by offering Samuel to have some of the leather “on credit”? Why does Samuel quickly take up the offer? What does he mean by “offering any security you like”?
16. Why are both Amos and Samuel happy with the arrangement of *selling* the hat, coat, and jacket?
17. Why does Samuel conclude that “those black people are nothing but children?”
18. What decision has Amos made?
19. When Amos married Violet, what two gifts did he give her?
20. Why does Celyndia’s incipient smile turn to tears when Amos tells her she’s as free as the birds in the air? (How free are birds? Can they do what they wish as much as they wish wherever they wish?)

**Ch. 6 The Arrival at Jaffrey**

1. As Amos prepared to move, Amos lived frugally to save up extra funds to live on until he could reestablish himself in a different community. How is being frugal different from being stingy or spartan or miserly? Do you know people who live frugally? How do we know if we are being frugal?
2. Why was it important that Amos move in the early Spring? What does it mean for sap to “rise” in trees?
3. If you can, identify the purpose of these tanning tools: spud, barking mallet, roller, knife, and beam.
4. Amos, Violet, and Celyndia each take something special on the journey. What’s the purpose of each, and what does each symbolize in itself and also reveal about the person taking them…
5. Amos takes an ax and bag of beans.
6. Violet takes root of lilac, japonica seedling, lily-of-valley pips and yellow tea rose.

What did Violet intuitively understand about the Bible words that the wilderness could blossom like a rose? Why does Violet hold her treasure on her lap? What does she “hear” and “see” as she gazes at her treasure?

1. What prompts Celyndia to smile as she looks into the face of her special doll? What makes this simple doll special to her? How does one *croon*? From what dialect does the word croon come?
2. Amos’s move from an established place to Jaffrey was a move away from what he had found “familiar, known, safe, and secure.” He could easily have stayed and prospered. Why was he moving into this new part of the land? What was he leaving behind? (Is he “running away from” something?)
3. Amos no longer had his youth or the strength of his early manhood. What *did* he have as clear as ever? What’s the difference between being “born a king” and “knowing how to become a king”?
4. Why does Celyndia ask “What’s that?” when they see the mountain ahead of them? What can you recall seeing for the first time as a child, and having no name for it?
5. After divulging the mountain’s name (Monadnock), Amos says, “Beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth.” This is an *allusion.* What’s an allusion? What is Amos alluding to? (see Ps. 48) Understanding allusions requires us to tap into things we know from other parts of our lives in order to understand them. They enrich our reading.
6. Celyndia’s hungry stomach prompts her to ask which “big folks’ house” they will live in. What does this show about her understanding of their new situation?
7. Amos had arrived at the “common” of Jaffrey with his family. What’s a town common?
8. What’s a *constable?* Interpret the bow Amos gave to the constable. What would be the difference between a respectful bow and a subservient bow?
9. What *formal* message must the constable deliver to Amos? When someone delivers a formal message to you, can you tell from his message what he himself thinks about it? Why or why not?
10. Because we traveled to this area with Amos in the last chapter, we can recognize *dramatic irony* in the question Amos poses to the constable after he’s informed that he’d best be gone from town. Why does Amos ask the constable if there are any good tanners in the area? (What is dramatic irony?)
11. What formal purpose did the strict warning that the constable gave to Amos (We don’t want your business, no matter what—leave—all of you) serve? From this paragraph, we can infer that legal residents of a town in New Hampshire in those days could count on something if they became poor—what was it?
12. Amos declares that he will stay in Jaffrey. What paperwork must he show?
13. Although the constable almost smiles (why?), he maintains his professional constable demeanor. Why do you suppose he now directs Amos to the parson’s house?
14. Why is the parson so glad to learn that Amos would like to settle here? What will Amos contribute to the community?
15. How does the little conversation between the “bread boy” and Celyndia represent childhood innocence and wonder?
16. What deal had Amos and the parson made in their two-hour walk to the parson’s property?   
    “A man has to show his thanks in a way that comes best to his hand.” What does that mean? Can you think of a way you can show thanks by doing something with your hands?
17. Why did Amos’s first “house shelter” get built so quickly? What did this action show?

**Ch. 7 Hard Work Fills the Iron Kettle 1781-1789**

1. Amos, Violet and Celyndia worked hard to transform the *shelter* that the neighbors helped them erect into a *home*. What are some differences between a shelter and a home? What makes a house a home? There are several categories of things, such as physical aspects both essential (good roof) and aesthetic (windows and trim), activity aspects (life-giving daily work), security aspects, etc. Try to list additional categories and develop a list of specific elements for all of them. Begin by considering what makes your house a home.
2. What was involved in making *tannin?* Why do they work so hard at preparing tannin before completing their house?
3. Violet anticipates future comfort and beauty every time she walks past the loom in their cabin. What does the loom have to do with her vision?
4. Celyndia’s grasp of what it means to be free grew on her slowly. What *existential* experience helped her to “live her way” into realizing for herself what freedom means? (something she did with other children)
5. Amos used a “teachable moment” to nudge Celyndia’s developing concept of freedom in the right direction. What’s the difference between “walking through, looking at, and rejoicing in” the world vs. “having” it. How does one go about “sharing together” instead of “having”?
6. Celyndia reveled in picking strawberries, but teared up at the thought of eating them. Why? Why was she eventually able to enjoy the eating of them as much as she had the picking of them?
7. Amos greatly missed the use of the smokehouse he had had in Woburn. But he controls his thoughts. How? What feeling does he avoid? What does he purposefully focus his thoughts on?
8. When Violet announces that they are out of lime, how does Amos get more? What three elements did the production of new lime require? Probably Amos was the only person for miles around who could have made lime from the resources readily available in the surrounding woods. Why so? How is it possible that one can be surrounded by necessary resources and yet be “in want”? Is the skill or “know-how” to do something as important of a resource for a person to possess as are material supplies themselves?
9. Why did the people who came to Amos with their hides respect him?
10. People paid Amos in “cash or in kind.” How do you pay “in kind”?
11. Amos’s soul had a longing for heaven. But in the meantime, he had a dream in his *heart*. He was working hard and steady to pursue it. List 6 or more specific items he pictured for his future. This represents the experience of every man. While we live here on earth, we must live here on this earth. Hope for the future has two major parts: eternal and temporal. As Christians, we have a common eternal hope. But our temporal hopes vary greatly according to our circumstances (geographical, economic, family, community…). What are some of your *heart*-longings? Psalm 37:4 provides a solid source of meditation for these desires.
12. Why were visitors to Amos’s tannery sometimes envious of his family?
13. As Amos gazed daily at the mountain, he derived something “more than strength.” It seemed that somehow the mountain “spoke” to him through its “moods.” What practical advice did Amos “hear” from the mountain?
14. By this time you should be noticing how skillfully the author of this biography, Elizabeth Yates, is able to use every short “scene” of each chapter to reveal something meaningful. For example in the short exchange between Celyndia and Amos about the meaning of the name *Monadnock* for the mountain, Celyndia gains an insight that causes her to feel friendlier toward the massive mountain. She learns that they have something in common. What is it? Do you “get” it? If so, you are in for a treat as you continue reading, for every page offers additional insightful experiences.
15. What are *breeches*? When did they go out of style in America? What does Amos mean when he says “I’ll not *hurry* leather?” Can you *hurry* a garden, bread-baking, or growing up?
16. The description of Amos’s work details the sequential and meticulous work required to clean and tan hides. To understand this better, it would be helpful to sketch the various steps in the process. And also to list the dozen or so steps with a brief description of each one.
17. List the differences in Amos’s attitude, activities, and dress that set Sunday apart from the other six days.
18. Violet bowed *demurely* as they met their friends at the Meeting House on Sunday morning. Try bowing *demurely* to someone and have them tell you whether you are doing it right.
19. In three quick sentences, we learn to know the Burdoo family. What do we learn about their hopes, their father’s abilities, and their economic condition?
20. How did the preacher’s one useless arm and his daily work serve to make his message have a greater impact on the congregation?
21. What was it about the “after meeting” pleasantries that caused Amos to appreciate them as much as the sermon? What value is there in “exchanging news” with each other?
22. What special event occurred after Amos lived in Jaffrey for eight years? Why could this wait have been a source of bitterness for Amos?
23. Amos “knew what the church had done for him.” Had you asked Amos to explain, what would he say?
24. Try your hand at sketching Amos riding Cyclops to the Burdoo cabin with Violet riding *pillion* behind him and Celyndia *straddling* the saddle before him.
25. Polly Burdoo’s life was *hedged round* by *poverty* and *misfortune.* Explain each of these three terms.
26. What did Amos hope to accomplish by their visit to the Burdoo’s?
27. Violet *scorned* Lois Burdoo’s inability to *rise above the conditions* of her life. What causes someone to “scorn” something? Can you scorn the *inability* of someone without scorning the person? What does it mean to “rise above the conditions” of one’s life? How is this possible? Must everyone do so, to some extent?
28. The Burdoo family was singing mournfully. Are you familiar with their song? (*Swing low, Sweet chariot*). Is this song by its very nature a *mournful* song—or can it be sung in other ways, such as hopeful or even joyful? If so, how? Does our mood create the effect of our singing of a song? Does a song affect our mood? Or some of each?
29. Why do you suppose these *hungry* children were so anxious for a story?
30. The children knew hardly anything about Africa, but were excited to hear stories about Africa. In some way they didn’t understand, both Africa and heaven evoked the same feeling of “reverence and ultimate longing” in them. How so? Consider a distant past and a distant future.
31. As Amos told his story, both Violet’s and Lois’s eyes filled with tears—for similar—yet different—reasons. What were they?
32. What can you “feel” with the children as they listen with rapt attention to Amos’s story? How do they participate with their voices?
33. Why did the tribe in Amos’s story refrain from weeping and send their aged chief on his way “with strength and not with sadness”? (How was this different from the way the Burdoo family had been singing this same song when Amos and his family arrived?) Perhaps you might catch a slight allusion to a Bible story from this song. See II Kings 2.
34. Why does Amos send the children from the house? What are they to hear? When do whip-poor-wills sing? What does their song sound like? What do they eat? Have you heard one?
35. When Amos left Polly, she felt comforted—but nothing in her circumstances had changed. How could this be?
36. Violet guessed what Amos was going to do when she heard him counting the money in the iron kettle that night. Do YOU know Amos well enough by this time to “guess what he’s going to do” with his money?
37. To whom does Amos say “Good night” just before he drifts off to sleep? What does this show about his relationship with his Lord?
38. Violet decides to use the freedom Amos gave her to do something she never did before. As he goes to sleep beside her, she does not weaken in her *resolve.*  What does that mean? What does she do the next morning? Why does she do it? In what way is she using the freedom Amos gave her in doing this act?

**Ch. 8 Amos on the Mountain**

1. Amos had plans and sufficient funds to purchases a 25 acre plot of his own. What were three characteristics of the plot that made it particularly suitable for his work and his family?
2. What plans were brewing in Amos’s mind that may force him to postpone his purchase of the property? He shares the details of his plan with Violet. What are the details? How will this affect his land purchase?
3. Why does Amos send Celyndia away on an errand?
4. Violet’s hiding of Amos’s iron kettle so he can’t have access to its money is probably the most audacious act of her married life. But she thinks she’s doing right. It’s important to understand her insight.
5. “There’s a fire that burns fast the more fuel goes on it and that’s shiftlessness,” she said. What does *shiftless* mean? Why does Violet think that Amos’s intended support of Lois would not actually improve Lois’s situation?
6. Whom does Violet think should help Lois? In what way would they at the same time be “helping themselves”?
7. Violet insists that she will only tell where she hid the money if Amos agrees to do what?
8. Throughout his lifetime, Amos has always had a big heart and tried to help as many people as he could. Now he wants to help Lois “in the only way he thought she could be helped.” What is Amos’s way of helping? Does that way always work? What are some other ways of helping people who are “badly, sadly off,” as Amos described Lois and her family?
9. Violet tells herself that her action in hiding the money is “to help him [Amos] to a good life.” What does that mean?
10. What is Amos’s plan as he takes his bread and water and climbs the mountain?
11. As Amos stands on the mountain summit and looks back over his life, it dawns on him that he still had three important things. What were they? But what *didn’t* he have? What would be the consequences of that if he died and left Violet a widow with Celyndia to support?
12. According to what others told him, what caused the roar he heard on the mountain that night? What effect did this roar have on Amos?
13. In the morning, Amos came out from the cavern on the top of the mountain where he had spent the night and sat looking over the valley as he slowly ate the bread and drank the water he had brought along. He sees *stalwart* houses and *rugged* cabins with *trickles* of smoke coming from their chimneys. He saw mists rising, and small patches of cleared land. Try your hand at using these word pictures to sketch this scene.
14. As Amos sits there on the mountain, he meditates about the value of having his own land. How would owning his own land be similar to—but also different from—having money in an iron kettle?
15. As Amos sits there, he smiles broadly as something was “dawning in him like the light of morning dawning on the world.” What does it mean for something to *dawn* in (or on) someone? (Has anything ever dawned on you? What?)
16. Amos thanked the Lord there on the mountain, gave the Lord a gesture of respect, and then bent over and touched his lips to the ground.
17. What is Amos thanking the Lord for? (Has it “dawned” on you what Amos is realizing☺?)
18. The author says Amos didn’t know why he bent and touched his lips to the ground. Do you?

When did Amos touch his lips to the ground earlier in this book? What were the circumstances then?

1. An ancient proverb says that “If you give a man a fish, you feed him for a day, but if you teach him how to fish, you feed him for a lifetime.” How does this proverb apply to Amos’s new understanding about land ownership?
2. When Amos returned to the house and silently rested his hands on Violet’s shoulders, she could feel that there was peace between them. How can you sense someone’s attitude just by the way his hands rest on your shoulders? Maybe you could try this. Place your hands on someone’s shoulders, and without a word try to communicate what you are feeling. (Such as: *It’s about time you come and help me!* Or *I’m finished, so now we can go play.* Or *You’re doing a good job—keep at it.*) See if your friend can guess what you are trying to communicate.
3. Why had Violet replaced the iron kettle to its old place, where Amos could find it?
4. What does Amos mean by telling Violet, “You were right to guard it.” (the money in the kettle).
5. Amos soon built a house on his own property, strong enough to withstand the *stress of time* and the *force of storms.* If you were designing a house to last a long time, you would need to plan for both of these problems. Describe what you would do to make your new house stand up against each:
6. Stress of time
7. Force of storms
8. What *treasures* did Violet plant? What important purpose did they serve?
9. How old was Amos when he became a landowner *in his own right?* What does it mean to have or do something *in your own right*? What had Amos done that enabled him to own this land in his own right?
10. How long had Amos been dreaming of having his own land? What important part had Violet served in helping him reach his dream?

**Ch. 9 Auctioned for Freedom**

1. Amos, now in his early 80’s, continued to work hard. In addition to necessities, his hard work earned enough to purchase many *comforts*. List 8 household comforts he purchased. What’s the real meaning of *comfort*—both in its noun and verb form? What does a truly valid comfort do for us? (Is there such a thing as false comfort?) What are some *comforts* you have in your home? Why is a heavy wintertime bed cover called a *comforter*? In St. John 14:16 & 26, what’s the significance of the Holy Spirit being referred to as *Comforter*?
2. Amos’s reputation as a tanner spread far and wide. Find Jaffrey, NH on a map, along with the other four towns named. Which is the most distant town from Jaffrey? How long do you suppose it took a man to travel that far to take a hide to Amos?
3. Amos was able to do even more work in his old age because he had help. Simon Peter was *indentured* to Amos as an apprentice for three years. How did apprenticeship work in those days? What’s an “indenture”? Is apprenticeship still practiced in our day? What’s the major difference between being an apprentice and working for wages—even if you are working for the same person and doing the same type of work?
4. Considering his future and the future of the community he served, Amos did something very wise by taking on an apprentice. What was it?
5. Amos’s ability to build a new house and barn and set up his trade on his own land shows that he earned a *profit* through his work. What is *profit*?Did the surrounding community also *profit* from Amos’s work? If so, what was it? How is it that both Amos and the community could profit?
6. Amos’s customers began trusting him with something more than their animal hides. They trusted him *matters of pounds and pence.* What are pounds and pence, in this context? And what does *trusting* someone in *pounds and pence* mean?
7. Actually, Amos’s supply of skins in the barn and the extra coins in his iron kettle became a type of bank for the community. How did it work?
8. When Amos told Violet that there are coins in the iron kettle “like a family of rabbits in a burrow,” he smiled at her broadly and she bowed her head slightly. In doing so, Amos was “paying a debt of thanks” to Violet that he “would go on paying as long as he lived.” And Violet accepted “what she knew in her heart was her *due*.” Explain what’s going on here: What is Amos’s debt, and what is Violet’s *due*?
9. Amos earned a *dignity* (what’s that?) in town by “work well done and life well lived.” In addition, his opinions were often *sought after* (what does that mean?). How did Amos’s reading serve to add to his reputation?
10. What two “differences” about Celyndia gave her some difficulties as she attended school?
11. Violet knew what it was to carry through life the heavy burden of illiteracy. What does that mean? List a dozen problems illiteracy could cause for someone in everyday life. (Example: inability to read a recipe, a song, or a menu) Now list some of the feelings an illiterate person would likely live with. (Think of how you’d feel around others who are literate, or if someone gave you a birthday card.)
12. Why does Violet insist that Celyndia attend school in spite of her difficulties?
13. Why did Amos’s prosperity, achieved as fruits of his hard labor, cause his heart to ache even more for those who had to survive on *charity*? What is charity, as the word is used here? Why are some people embarrassed to receive charity? We learn something about the Burdoo family by the way they treated new clothes given to them as gifts. What happened to these clothes? What do you think this shows about them?
14. List 5 or more things you know about the Burdoo family by this time that show they were truly *indigent.*
15. Explain in your own words how New England towns in these days sometimes used a public vendue to arrange care for their indigent. In your explanation, use the words *auction, contract, responsibility, bid(der), care, board.*
16. What does it mean to *afford* something? (It means much more than “to have enough money to purchase something.”)
17. Amos enters the Meeting House on the day of the vendue and sees the “eight luckless” people sitting in front waiting to be “auctioned off” to someone for a year of work in exchange for a place to live. Try to imagine yourself sitting there in front of the townspeople. Describe your feelings. Start by making a long list of adjectives such as *fearful* or *embarrassed.*
18. What were two reasons that some of the townspeople who planned to bid actually felt a bit ashamed of themselves? Why were they surprised to see Amos here?
19. In most auctions for merchandise, the item goes to the highest bidder. But in this vendue, the person went to the lowest bidder. Why?
20. Why does the auctioneer gasp when Amos places the “winning bid” on Polly at the low figure of one pound and sixteen shillings?
21. When Moses Burdoo is “struck off” to Joseph Stewart, why does Amos think it may be a good thing for Moses?
22. What attitude do Violet and Celyndia display in helping Polly fit into their household? What do they attempt to teach her? How successful are they? Was Polly willing to try to learn?
23. Try to describe Polly’s typical behavior in your own words. What does she do repeatedly? How does she explain herself when they ask her what she’s thinking about? (Have you ever had reveries that you could not explain?)
24. Why must Amos pay the school teacher an extra amount to keep Polly as a student? Why do you suppose Amos insists that Polly go to school even if it seems she can’t learn?
25. As Polly weakened and lay in bed, she craved Amos’s stories more and more. Which story did she especially want to hear over and over? What song did they sing together?
26. Just before Polly died, she sat up with a look of peace on her face. What does each of these three details communicate to you? She had her…
27. Right hand in Violet’s—worn and coarse with care she had given to others.
28. Left hand in Celyndia’s supple, strong hand.
29. Eyes on Amos.

Now try your hand at sketching this glorious scene.

1. Explain these two points of view.
2. Violet: Polly wasn’t ever a slave. She was born free.
3. Amos: She wasn’t free when she was so poor. But now she died free.
4. Amos says Polly was a *frightened* little girl. What is fright? What effect does fright have on a person—especially a child? How does fright affect one’s ability to function normally? How might “fright” have affected Polly’s ability to do even normal chores in the comfortable household of Amos and Violet?
5. At Polly’s sudden death, Celyndia is deeply moved. Amos tells “Lyndia love” to go the barn and give the creatures an armful of hay and “tell them what’s happened in the house.” How does this advice show deep understanding and wisdom on the part of Amos?
6. Now Amos shares a deep secret with Violet: He tells of the time when he considered killing the white men who were taking them captives. (He had sufficient strength and fire within to do the deed.) But he didn’t. Why is he very glad, now, that he did not do this—what has he learned about freedom?
7. What had Amos been seeing in Polly’s frightened eyes? What does he mean by “Africa” as used here?
8. What do you suppose Amos has just now seen for the first time? What’s the vision of “what’s ahead for us” that’s “worth waiting for?
9. What does Amos do with the money the town gave him for his care of Polly?
10. One struggle confronting a person or people suddenly uprooted and forced to live in a strange place would be the feeling of *disorientation*. How might that feeling affect the ability of Africans uprooted from their ancestral homes to function when taken to America to live in slavery? Try to imagine how you might feel if you were suddenly taken to live in the setting described in the opening of chapter 1. How well might you function? Would you be an “Amos” or would you likely be a “Polly”?

**Ch. 10 Evergreen Years 1794-1801**

1. What are *linens*? How was flax grown, harvested, and prepared in those days to make linen?
2. How do we know that Violet and Celyndia’s linens were of excellent quality?
3. Why was the doctor who fell on hard times anxious to have Amos take on his boy as apprentice? Why was Amos so happy to do so?
4. Amos said that young Charlie Toothaker “has got it in him” to be a doctor sometime. What does Amos mean? How do we go about identifying what a growing young person “has in him”? What are some qualities you “have in yourself”?
5. What does Amos mean by “learning a trade”? If young Charlie is to eventually become a doctor, why does Amos think that learning the trade of tanning leather “is as good a way as any to start in life”? What might Amos say to Charlie if Charlie asked him one day while tramping in the stinky, ooze of the hide pits, “When will I ever use this skill?”
6. Several times in the indenture papers, we read that Amos is to teach his young apprentice his trade or *mystery.* What connotations of the word “mystery” fit the context here? Is there “mystery” about the work of a chef or a skilled woodworker? If so, what?
7. In addition to what Amos is bound to teach Charlie because of the apprenticeship indenture, Violet is sure that Charlie will learn something more in the process. Whatis it?
8. As Amos reviews his life work, he realizes that he has been dedicated to “helpless folk.” What does it mean to be truly *helpless.* (If someone is not helpless, how might he be hindered by helping him?)
9. Ath-mun, Amos’s lame younger sister had been the “fount of freedom” to all the other people Amos set free. How could this possibly be so?
10. What is the difference between “caring for” someone and “cherishing” someone?
11. Even after many years of faithful, dedicated service to the church, what limitations did Amos still live under as a church member?
12. The respect that the community held for Amos was based upon his character and the excellent services he provided in tanning. But with Violet and Celyndia, it was different. What was their standing in the community based upon?
13. Amos recalled a tavern scene…one in which a drunken customer refused to pay him the agreed-upon price, but instead threw a handful of coins on the floor for Amos to retrieve. Was Amos *humiliated* by this experience? If not, why not? Amos had requested payment in new *tender*. What does tender mean in this context?
14. What “fire” burned in Amos as he trudged home? In this context, it’s important to understand certain words used in this passage. What does each mean, as used here?
15. Trudge
16. Pittance
17. Redress
18. What does the expression that Amos sat on a boulder by the roadside and *faced his mountain* mean?

What are some other “mountains” people face? What are some ways to meet them?

1. What was the purpose of the fire Amos observed on the mountain as he watched from his boulder?
2. Amos compared the results of that fire to what hatred can do to a man. What does he mean? How would giving in to hatred be a way to put himself into bondage? Are all bad character qualities a form of bondage?
3. How is Amos’s “walking with his friend Moses” somewhat like his relationship to his long-lost crippled sister, Ath-mun? What had Moses kept himself free from? How does one go about “keeping himself free from the bickerings of his people”?
4. Amos dedicated the handful of coins he had picked from the floor in his special pot of coins. His action is ironic in two ways. What are they?
5. Amos thought much about the suffering in the world. He told himself that if people knew what it was they did that caused suffering, they would no longer do it. Do you agree? Do you think some people know it when they cause others to suffer? Why would anyone ever want another to suffer? What is *suffering*?
6. The author uses a powerful simile to describe how Amos’s strength is gradually leaving him with age. What is it? What makes it so apt? Try making another that conveys a similar effect. Begin with “Amos was aware that strength was leaving him (or running from him) like \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.”
7. Why does Amos not share his growing *heart hunger* with Violet?
8. Amos is still praying for some way to accomplish two things at once:
9. To help free the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ men. What bondage were they in!?
10. To bless his own \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.
11. Deacon Spofford understood that Amos Fortune had brought much *renown* to the town of Jaffrey. What does that mean? What evidence do we have from what we’ve read that this is true?
12. Amos makes his *will*. What’s a will, and what is its purpose?
13. What does Amos leave to Violet? What will this do for her, in Deacon Spofford’s opinion?
14. Amos willed that Celyndia should keep the loom and foot wheel. What good would they do her?
15. After Amos’s will is completed, he presents his specially consecrated (what does that mean?) money to Deacon Spofford, to be used for two things that stood out in Amos’s life: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ & \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. He gave $100 for a silver communion service (Based on the story of the man at the tavern, this represented the work of tanning how many hides? \_\_\_\_\_) What’s the deacon’s first response to Amos’s request? How does the use of only the best silver in the “holiest of moments that was shared by all alike” fit with the “whole meaning of Amos’s life”?
16. Next Amos gave the deacon $143 to benefit the school. It included special coins from what two special occasions? How was this money to be used?
17. What was Amos’s reply to Deacon Spofford when the deacon observed that “those under Amos’s care” hadn’t always fared well at the school? What does Amos mean by this reply?
18. As Amos walked home he prayed that as the boys and girls in the town school learned more, they would

*know what they did* and so *do only what was worthy of men and women.* This requires some interpretation. What does it mean to say that you “know what you are doing”?

What are some things that are *worthy* of men and women?

What are some things that are NOT *worthy* of men and women?

1. Amos said it should be left up to the town’s parson to write whatever goes onto his tombstone. Whoever wrote it did well. Explain the significance of each expression:
2. *Born free* in Africa
3. A *slave in America*
4. Purchased liberty
5. Professed Christianity
6. Lived reputably
7. Died hopefully

If you were allowed to add a significant phrase to Amos’s tombstone, what would you add, based on what you have learned about his life?

1. Now comment on the messages on Violet’s tombstone:
2. By sale the slave of Amos Fortune
3. By marriage his wife
4. By her fidelity his friend and solace

**Concluding Activities**

1. Research the Amos Fortune school fund. Is it still in existence? What is it used for?
2. What happened to the silver communion set? Where is it?
3. Does the Amos Fortune house still exist? Does someone live in it?
4. Can you find “Amos Fortune Road” on a New Hampshire map?
5. Find out what you can about Monadnock Mountain, near Jaffrey, New Hampshire.
6. Find out what personal possessions of Amos Fortune are kept in a special collection in Jaffrey’s library.
7. What other biographies have been written about Amos’s life? Find one, read it, and compare and contrast it with this version by Elizabeth Yates.
8. This book is a fictionalized biography developed on a framework of facts. Make a list of events or scenes that are definitely historical fact and scenes that are obviously developed by use of the author’s imagination as she puts together a narrative to tell the story of Amos’s life.
9. Writing suggestions:
10. Conduct an interview with Amos. Develop a list of questions you’d like to ask him. Then try to write what you think he might say, based on his character. Then role play the interview with friends. Try this with other characters in the story. Or create a short list of questions to ask a dozen characters that knew Amos well and write out their responses to build a composite description of Amos through their eyes.
11. Choose two characters and make a list showing how they are alike and different. Some good choices would be: Lily and Lydia (Amos’s first wives), Caleb Copeland and Ichabod Richardson (Amos’s first owners), Roxanna Copeland and Celyndia.
12. Make up a list of maxims based on Amos’s life story. For example, *One cannot live free just by being born free. Flowers cheer the heart.*
13. Imagine that some character such as Roxanna or Celyndia kept a journal. Write a series of imaginary journal entries that would fit both the events of the story and the character of your chosen person.
14. Write an extended character sketch of Amos Fortune, using anecdotes from the story to illustrate a dozen or more of his character qualities.
15. Choose a theme from the book and write an essay exploring the theme. Some ideas:
16. **Freedom vs. bondage**. What is freedom? Explore its many aspects, how to become free, stay free, live free, help others find freedom. What are its benefits, responsibilities, limitations…? At the same time include bondage as a comparison.
17. **Poverty.** What is it? What are its causes, its roots? What are some of the many forms that poverty takes? (such as lack of will, illiteracy, shiftlessness, handicap) How does one rise above poverty? How can we help a poor person? Must a poor person want to be helped? What does it mean to “rise above one’s circumstances?
18. Entrenched **attitude** or prejudice. Consider the impossibility of Amos’s being a full member of the church, or Violet’s freedom to be valued in her own right, apart from her association with Amos. Consider the view sometimes expressed that the Negroes were “like children.” What are the roots of prejudice? How does one recognize his prejudices?
19. **Hope** and aspiration. How does a vision of how to live amid life’s circumstances offer hope.
20. **Eternal and temporal** hope and vision. The importance of each. How to balance them. The importance—and the limits—of pursuing a good life here, remembering that we have “only one life that will soon be past.”
21. **Memory** and remembering. The effects of loss of one’s history. How we remember. How memory gives direction for life.
22. Explore the **Bible themes** alluded to in the story of Amos’s life. Moses and the mountain. Joshua and the Promised Land. Hatred and its results.
23. Compare and contrast the life of Amos Fortune to some other person you have learned to know through another biography, or some person you know in real life.
24. Using the story of Amos Fortune’s life for illustrative support, write a persuasive essay supporting a thesis such as…
25. The life of Amos Fortune bears testimony to the truth that a person can rise above the circumstances in which he finds himself.
26. Although a person might, in a sense, be set free by someone else, he cannot remain free without effort.
27. Many people are unaware of the bondage that they live under.
28. When people work well together, they can both profit greatly.
29. Knowing who you are, remembering who you are, and living up to that knowledge honors God, blesses others, and yields personal riches.
30. Vision gives hope.
31. Settled soul-hope provides rest that opens the door to realizing temporal heart-hopes.