



Copper Sun

Discussion Questions

1. *Copper Sun* is a work of historical fiction. How does the merging of history and fiction in a novel affect the reader's response to the story?
2. What do you know of the village of Ziavi from the descriptions given in the text? How would you describe the social structure, family structure, and cultural structure of the community? How did the custom of graciousness to guests become a death sentence for the town? Explain why the Ashanti helped the European killers.
3. As the ship is approaching the Carolina coast, Amari is surprised by the beauty of the land she sees before her. She tells Afi, "...the land is lovely. I thought it must surely be an ugly place." Why is she surprised to find that America is a beautiful place? What does Afi mean when she says, "Find beauty wherever you can child. It will keep you alive."?
4. Amari is purchased as a birthday gift for Clay Derby the same day that Mr. Derby purchases Polly's indenture. How is an indentured servant different from a slave? How are they similar? Does Polly really have it any better than the slaves on Mr. Derby's plantation?
5. It is clear early on to Amari that the lives of the slaves do not carry the same value as the lives of the whites. Describe some instances in the story that prove this idea. Why did the white people think it was OK to treat the slaves the way that they did? Can you think of any examples in modern society where a group of people are treated differently because of the color of their skin or their country of origin? Why do people mistreat other people?
6. On the plantation, the slaves greatly outnumber the owner and overseers. Why didn't the slaves take advantage of their greater numbers and rebel?
7. The night that Mrs. Derby's baby is born, the slaves are terrified for their lives, but they tried to help her anyway. Why were they so afraid? Why did they try to help? What were Mr. Derby's social and legal justifications for what he did to Noah and the baby?
8. Discuss Dr. Hoskins. Why didn't he try to intervene to save Noah and the baby? Why did he let Amari, Polly and Tidbit go free?

9. Discuss Amari, Polly and Tidbits experiences on the road. Were you surprised that they found people willing to help them along the way. Fiona O'Reilly, for example, gives them clothes, food and a wagon, yet she owns slaves herself. How can she justify helping Amari, Polly and Tidbit escape but not see that it is wrong to own slaves?
10. Discuss the gradual developing of the relationship between Polly and Amari. How is each girl unique? What are the strengths and weaknesses of each? What does each girl offer that the other needs? What makes a friendship?
11. How is Amari able to accept and love the child she is carrying, despite the fact that the child's father treated her so badly?
12. Is Fort Mose all that Amari, Polly and Tidbit hoped it would be? Why or why not?

In Her Own Words – About the Author

I am a creator, an educator, a visionary. I approach the world with the eyes of an artist, the ears of a musician, and the soul of a writer. I see rainbows where others see only rain, and possibilities when others see only problems. I love spring flowers, summer's heat on my body, and the beauty of the dying leaves in the fall. Classical music, art museums, and ballet are sources of inspiration, as well as blues music, dim cafes, and the jitterbug. I love to write; words flow easily from my fingertips, and my heart beats rapidly with excitement as an idea becomes a reality on the paper in front of me. I use all of these elements to encourage my students as well as myself. I'm a learner and a seeker of knowledge, and I take my students along on my journey. I smile often, and laugh easily, and I weep at pain and cruelty. I love what I do, and I'm good at it. I learned to dream through reading, learned to create dreams through writing, and learned to develop dreamers through teaching. I shall always be a dreamer.



Slavery is a topic that should not be ignored, but discussed and remembered. I chose a character who undergoes the humiliations of slavery and who survives to pass on her history to the next generation. Her survival is important, for her descendents give strength to those of us who live today. I think it's vital to remember the past and never forget those who came before us. It is our job to tell their stories. This novel speaks for the untold multitudes of my ancestors who needed a voice. I speak for them. Amari carries their spirit. She carries mine as well. The generation that does not remember the evils of the past may be forced to repeat them. Knowledge is power, and truth is all we have to keep us free.