

Uncle Tom's Cabin Study Questions

Chapter 1

1. Briefly describe Mr. Shelby and Mr. Haley. Why do you think Mr. Shelby is referred to as having "...the appearance of a gentleman...?"
2. How does Mr. Shelby describe Tom? Why does he think Tom is valuable slave?
3. What is ironic about the following passage from this chapter?
"I am sorry to part with Tom, I must say. You ought to let him cover the whole balance of the debt; and you would, Haley, if you had any conscience."
4. Define quadroon. Why do Eliza and her son Harry catch the eye of the slave trader?
5. Define Jim Crow. Why do you think Mr. Shelby calls Harry "Jim Crow"?
6. In the following excerpts from the story, both Mr. Shelby and Mr. Harley profess to be "humane" men. What is ironic about their claims? Who do you think Stowe is referring to in the title of this chapter, "In Which the Reader is introduced to a Man of Humanity"?
"I would rather not sell him." Said Mr. Shelby, thoughtfully; "the fact is, sir, I'm a humane man, and I hate to take the boy from his mother, sir."

"And I lays it all to my management, sir; and humanity, sir, I may say, is the great pillar of *my* management."
7. Stowe frequently breaks away from the story, in an aside, to speak directly to the reader. Find an example of an aside in this chapter.
8. Who is Tom Loker? Why did Haley "break off with him"?
9. What is the "shadow of the law" that hangs over the slaves in Kentucky? Why is slavery in Kentucky an example of the "mildest form of the system of slavery"?
10. Briefly describe Mrs. Shelby. In what way might she be called "blind"?

Chapter 2

1. Stowe frequently criticized for racially stereotyping the slaves in this book. In what ways does she stereotype Eliza and George Harris in this chapter?
2. What does George Harris do that makes his master "...feel an uneasy consciousness of inferiority"?
3. How does George demonstrate that he is not the kind of man who can "become a thing"?
4. "A very humane jurist once said, the worst use you can put a man to is to hang him. No, there is another use that a man can be put to that is worse."
What in George's life is worse for him than hanging?

Chapter 3

1. In this chapter both George and Eliza express their opinions of slavery and how to survive its horrors. Briefly state their views and point out in what ways they differ.
2. What dangers does George see for his wife and son, even though they have a kind master?
3. Why does Eliza not tell George about her fear that Mr. Shelby might be planning to sell Harry?
4. How does George plan to escape his miserable life?

Chapter 4

1. Briefly describe Aunt Chloe and Uncle Tom.
2. How do Uncle Tom and Aunt Chloe feel about George Shelby's presence in their cabin?
3. What happens in Tom's cabin after their evening meal? Why are Tom's prayers appreciated by the other slaves?
4. Find an example of racial stereotyping in this chapter. In what way is Uncle Tom's dialect and his wife's dialect an example of racial stereotyping? (Hint: look at the dialogue in the previous chapter.)
5. For what reason can Mr. Shelby be called a hypocrite?
6. The title of a novel is often indicative of its overall message. At this point in the story, why do you think Stowe calls her book *Uncle Tom's Cabin*.

Chapter 5

1. One of the themes in this book is that of the definition of Christianity includes love and forgiveness for all people as well as self-sacrifice. List two ways Tom illustrates the concept of self-sacrifice in this chapter?
2. "This is God's curse on slavery! – a bitter, bitter, most accursed thing! – a curse to the master and a curse to the slave! I was a fool to think I could make anything good out of such a deadly evil."
3. Support or refute the following statement by citing incidents from the story: Tom has more courage and moral fortitude than his master.
4. At the time this story was written, some critics questioned the actions of some of the slaves in this story. They believed that slaves were not accurately portraying real life. Read the following not Eliza leaves for Mrs. Shelby. Do you find this not to believe? Cite incidents from the story to support your answer.
"O Missis! Dear Missis! don't think me ungrateful, - don't think hard of me, any way – I heard all you and master said to-night. I am going to try to save my boy – you will not blame me! God bless and reward you for all your kindness!"
5. Find an example of an aside in this chapter where Stowe tells the reader how to feel about Mr. Shelby's decision to sell Tom and Harry.

Chapter 6

1. How do Mr. and Mrs. Shelby react to the news that Eliza has fled with Harry?
2. What aspects of Black Sam's behavior support Stowe's description of him as a man who "... would have done credit to any white patriot in Washington"?
3. Many critics consider this chapter an interlude of comic relief giving the reader a break from the serious issues presented earlier in the novel. List the ways the slaves on this estate are able to manipulate the situation, all the while seemingly obeying this master.

Chapter 7

1. How does Eliza care for her son while they are traveling to the Ohio River?
2. Why does Eliza decide it is safe to stop at a farmhouse to buy some dinner?
3. "You oughter think what an awful state a poor crittur's soul's in that'll do them ar things—you oughter thank God that you an't *like* him, Chloe. I'm sure I'd rather be sold, ten thousand times over, than to have all that ar poor crittur's got to answer for." Tom is talking about Haley in the above quotation. Why does Tom feel sorry for Haley?
4. Mr. Shelby says to Tom, "My good boy, . . . the Lord know you say the truth; and if I was able to help it, all the world shouldn't buy you." For what reasons do you believe of disbelief that sincerity of Mr. Shelby's statement?
5. How do Sam and Andy use Haley's prejudices to delay Haley's pursuit of Eliza and Harry?
6. The Fugitive Slave Law of 1850 makes it a crime for anyone in a free state to assist a runaway slave from a slave state. Why then does Mr. Symmes help Eliza once she reaches the Ohio shore? Find a quotation in this chapter where Stowe breaks away from the story to lecture the reader about his kind of law.

Chapter 8

1. In this chapter, Tom Loker is reintroduced. What deal does Tom Loker and Marks make with Haley?
2. What is the "greatest mod'm improvement" Haley can think of concerning slaves?
3. Find a sarcastic passage in this chapter that criticizes the laws which protect the slave trader and slave catcher.
4. Why does Mrs. Shelby consider Sam's story about Eliza's escape to be apocryphal?

Chapter 9

1. Mrs. Bird is normally a gentle, sympathetic woman. What circumstances must be present for Mrs. Bird to become passionate?
2. How does the following passage help the reader to understand why a caring man like Mr. Bird votes for the Fugitive Slave Law? "...there is such a state of public agitation rising, that we must put aside our private feelings."
3. Cite incidents from the story to support or refute the following statement: Good men vote for bad laws.
4. Why is Mrs. Bird particularly moved by Eliza's problems?
5. What steps does Mr. Bird take to help Eliza?
6. Find a passage in this chapter where Stowe openly appeals to maternal sympathies.

Chapter 10

1. Find an example of stereotyping that tries to explain Tom's feelings the morning Haley takes him away from his family.
2. Why do many slaves, who belong to kind masters, take the risk and feel to Canada? What, if anything, do you think is wrong with Stowe's explanation?
3. What vow does Mrs. Shelby make to Aunt Chloe and Uncle Tom before he leaves with Haley?
4. What does Master George give Tom? Why?

Chapter 11

1. Why does the long-legged veteran tell Mr. Wilson he would like to brand George's master?
2. Who is Mr. Butler of Oaklands, Shelby County? Why does he invite Mr. Wilson to his room?
3. For what reasons does Mr. Wilson believe it is wrong for George to run away from his master? What does he agree to do to help George?
4. What is George implying when he says "All men are free and equal in the grave"?
5. At the end of the chapter Mr. Wilson tries again to convince George to trust God. What does George finally agree to "think of" in the last line of the chapter?

Chapter 12

1. What evidence is there that Stowe believes the idea of a happy, cheerful slave is ludicrous?
2. How are the two opposing views of slavery found in the Bible?
3. Briefly state the two opposing views of slavery found in the Bible.
4. Find an example of sarcasm in this chapter when Stowe is criticizing the lawmakers for permitting slave trading inside the county, even after it has long been outlawed to import slaves from Africa.
5. In what way does Tom try and help Lucy? Is he successful? Cite incidents from the story to support your answer.

Chapter 13

1. Briefly describe Rachel Halliday. Why are Eliza and Harry staying in her home?
2. Some of the characters in this book undergo a change. How does George's view of religion begin to change at the end of the chapter?
3. George is worried that the Hallidays are putting themselves at risk by helping him and his family. How does Simeon put George's mind at ease?

Chapter 14

1. How is Tom's Bible different from other Bibles? What does the Bible mean to Tom as he reads it traveling to an unknown fate?
2. Find a passage stereotyping black and describing Tom's reaction to Eva.
3. Briefly describe Eva.
4. Why do you think Tom tries to make friends with Eva? How does he accomplish it?
5. Why does Eva want her father to buy Tom?
6. Find an example of sarcasm in the conversation between Mr. St. Clare and Haley.
7. What evidence is there that Mr. St. Clare, despite his good intentions, cannot view Tom as an individual?

Chapter 15

1. Briefly identify each of the following characters living in the St. Clare New Orleans home.
Marie St. Clare-

Ophelia-
Mr. Adolph-
Mammy-

Chapter 16

1. What is ironic about Marie St. Clare's opinion that Mammy is selfish?
2. In the following passage Marie complains about her husband's attitude towards their slaves.
"He says we have made them what they are, and ought to bear with them. He says their faults are all owing to us, and that it would be cruel to make the fault and punish it too."
3. Why does Marie want to send unruly slaves to the calaboose?
4. How does Ophelia think slaveholders ought to treat their slaves? Why?
5. "Not that there is a particle of virtue in our not having it, but custom with us does what Christianity ought to do, - obliterates the felling of personal prejudice. I have often noticed, in my travels north, how much stronger this was with you than with us." (pg. 176)
6. What does the following passage from this chapter tell the reader about Augustine's opinion of Tom and Augustine's religious beliefs?
"...and he the most wonderful Tom that ever wore a black skin. This is one of the roses of Eden that the Lord has dropped down expressly for the poor and lowly, who get few enough of any other kind." (pg. 176)
7. Why does Eva want to go to church, even though the services make her sleepy?
8. What is Augustine's opinion of the religious leaders who claim the Bible supports slavery?
9. "I say what do you think, Pussy?" said her father to Eva, who came in at this moment with a flower in hand.
"What about, papa?"
"Why, which do you like best, - to live as they do at your uncle's up in Vermont, or to have a house full of servants, as we do?"
"O, of course, our way is pleasantest," said Eva.
"Why so?" said St. Clare, stroking her head.
"Why, it makes so many more round you to love, you know," said Eva, looking up earnestly. (pg. 183)

How do you interpret Eva's statements about slavery in the above quotation? Do you think she supports it, or could her statements have a different meaning?

Chapter 17

1. Who is Phineas Fletcher? How is he different from the other Quakers?
2. Some critics believe that Stowe thinks the black race has more right to eternal salvation than whites. Cite incidents from this chapter to support or refute this statement.
3. How do the men tracking George and his family react to his statement, "We don't own your laws; we don't own your country; we stand here as free, under God's sky, as you are; and, by the great God that made us, we'll fight our liberty till we die"? (pg. 195)
4. Why does Phineas stop to help Tom Loker? What do you think is going to happen to Tom in the Quaker house?

Chapter 18

1. Why do you think Tom tries to get Mr. St. Clare to take better care of himself and stop drinking?
2. Find an example of stereotyping in Stowe's description of Dinah.
3. Support or refute the following statement. Dinah is a strict master, a cooking genius, and a very disorganized person.
4. Why are Ophelia's efforts to put the household in order compared to Sisyphus, from Greek Mythology?
5. For what reasons does Augustine St. Clare believe it is inevitable that slaves grow up to be dishonest?
6. Why does Prue state that she would rather go to "torment" than to heaven? What new "horror" of slavery is revealed by Prue's life story?

Chapter 19

1. Why doesn't St. Clare report Prue's death to the authorities?
2. St. Clare tells Ophelia that he, and many other Southerners, know that slavery is wrong. If he feels this way, why does he own slaves? Why doesn't he free his slaves?
3. How does St. Clare's father justify permitting Mr. Stubbs to occasionally be cruel to his slaves?
4. What justification does Alfred, Augustine's twin brother, give for hundreds of slaves to run his plantation?
5. Why did Augustine leave the plantation he and his brother inherited to make a life for himself in New Orleans?
6. What do you think Eva means when she says "...these things sink into my heart?" (Pg. 233)
7. Since St. Clare is so against slavery, why doesn't he return Tom to his family?

Chapter 20

1. Briefly describe Topsy when she arrives at the St. Clare home.
2. How does St. Clare convince Ophelia that she should try to educate Topsy?
3. Where was Topsy living before St. Clare brought her home? Where are her parents?
4. Briefly describe Ophelia's ideas of education. How does Ophelia demonstrate the Christian principle of self-sacrifice when she is working with Topsy?
5. Why does Topsy confess to stealing Eva's necklace and Rosa's earrings?
6. Compare Topsy and Eva. In what ways is the character Topsy a foil for Eva? Which character do you think will have the greater influence over the other? Cite incidents from the story to support your answer.
7. Support or refute the following statement: Topsy is an appropriate name for this child because of the impact she has on the Clare household.
8. For what reasons does St. Clare refuse to whip his slaves?
9. How does Topsy manage to keep the other servants from tormenting her?
10. Overall, what do you think Stowe is saying about the complexity of the slavery issue in the South?

Ch. 21

1. How is Aunt Chloe planning to help Tom?

Ch. 22

1. Find an example of foreshadowing in this chapter.
2. What does Eva want to do with the money from her mother's jewels?
3. What evidence is there that St. Clare knows Eva is dying?

Ch. 23

1. Briefly describe Henrique.
2. Why is Alfred St. Clare planning to send Henrique North to be educated?
3. For what reason is Alfred against educating the black race?
4. Why does Eva make Henrique promise to try and love Dodo?

Ch. 24

1. How does Marie feel about Eva's impending death?
2. Why does Eva say to Tom, "I would die for them, Tom, if I could"?
3. For what reason does Eva say that she wishes their slaves were free?
4. List two things Eva wants her father to do after her death?

Ch. 25

1. Why does Topsy not at least try to be good?
2. How does Eva finally convince Topsy to try to be good?
3. Ophelia overhears the conversation between Topsy and Eva. What does she learn?

Ch. 26

1. Why does Eva ask Topsy to fill her vase with flowers every day?
2. For what reason does Eva give each of the servants a lock of her hair?
3. What is Eva's definition of being a Christian?

Ch. 27

1. How has Ophelia's attitude toward Topsy changed since Eva's death?
2. In what ways has Marie changed since her daughter's death?
3. How does St. Clare test Tom's faith? Why does Tom stay by St. Clare's side?

Ch. 28

1. List two ways St. Clare becomes "another man" after Eva's death.
2. How does Tom explain to St. Clare his desire to be free, even though it means he will not live as well without St. Clare's protection and money?
3. Why does Ophelia insist that St. Clare immediately sign the papers legally transferring ownership of Topsy to herself?
4. List the reasons St. Clare thinks life would be difficult for freed slaves.
5. In what ways does the following quotation apply to today's world?
"We are in a bad position. We are the more *obvious* oppressors of the negro; but the unchristian prejudice of the north is an oppressor almost equally severe."
6. Why do you think St. Clare is often thinking about his mother? State a theme for this story concerning the power of women, particularly mothers, to influence the world.
7. What does the last paragraph in this chapter imply about St. Clare's final fate?

Ch. 29

1. How does Stowe explain the grief slaves feel when a kind master dies?
2. Why is Rosa nearly hysterical over the prospect of a whipping?
3. Support or refute the following statement by citing incidents from the chapter: Ophelia does all she can to try and help Tom.

Ch. 30

1. How are the slave in the warehouse treated by the dealers?
2. The dealers try to get the slaves to act cheerful. Why do the slaves comply with their directions?
3. Briefly describe Susan and Emmeline. How does Stowe criticize the northern position on slavery by presenting their story?
4. Briefly identify Simon Legree. What is Tom's first impression of him?
5. What is Stowe saying about men who make a profit by selling slaves, as revealed in the last paragraph of the chapter?
"On the reverse of that draft, so obtained, let them write these words of the great Paymaster, to whom they shall make up their account in a future day: 'When he maketh inquisition for blood, he forgetteth not the cry of the humble!'"

Ch. 31

1. What voice does Tom hear that Legree will never hear as shown in this excerpt?
"Fear not! For I have redeemed thee. I have called thee by my name. Thou are MINE!"
But Simon Legree heard no voice. That voice is one he never shall hear. He only glared for a moment on the downcast face of Tom, and walked off.
2. In what way does the stranger on the ship insult Legree without Legree realizing it?
"Tell ye, sir, the flesh on't has come jest like a stone, practicing on niggers, --feel on it."
The stranger applied his fingers to the implement in question and simply said,

- “ ‘Tis hard enough; and, I suppose,” he added, “practice has made your heart just like it.”
3. Why does the stranger tell his friend that “It is your respectability and humanity that licenses and protects his brutality”?

Ch. 32

1. Briefly describe Legree’s plantation.
2. Who are Sambo and Quimbo? How does Legree govern his plantation workers?
3. Describe the first act of charity Tom commits on Legree’s plantation?
4. Cite incidents, from the end of this chapter, to support or refute the following statement: Tom has not lost his faith in God while living in this terrible place.

Ch. 33

1. For what reasons does Legree dislike Tom?
2. Briefly describe Cassy. What power does she deem to have over Sambo, Quimbo, and Legree?
3. Why do you think Cassy stays by Tom’s side on their way to the fields? What does she do to support Tom?
4. What does Tom say to Legree that surprises him and sends a “thrill of amazement” through the other slaves?
5. How does Tom react to the following question from Legree?
“Didn’t I pay down twelve hundred dollars cash, for all there is inside yer old cussed black shell? An’t yer mine, now, body and soul?” he said, giving Tom a violent kick with his heavy boot; “tell me!”

Ch. 34

1. How does Tom respond when Cassy tells him “you are in the devil’s hands:--he is the strongest, and you must give up!”
2. Why doesn’t Cassy’s father marry her mother? How does his wife treat Cassy after his death?
3. How does Cassy feel about her new master? Why does he sell her and their children?
4. Why does Cassy kill her third child?

Ch. 35

1. How does Cassy’s sporadic episodes of raving insanity help her to control Legree?
2. What is the “Something that niggers gets from witches. Keeps ‘em from feelin’ when they’s flogged?”
3. Why is Legree afraid of the curling yellow hair?

Ch. 36

1. Why doesn’t Cassy kill herself?
2. What advice does Cassy give Emmeline on how to survive in Legree’s household?
3. Why does Legree decide to put off dealing with Tom?

Ch. 37

1. How does Tom Loker help George and Eliza?
2. What is the meaning of the word “freedom” to George?

Ch. 38

1. What is the “. . . true searching test of what there may be in man and woman”?
2. How does Legree, unwittingly, help Tom hold onto his faith? In what ways does Tom change after talking to Legree?
3. Why does Legree cry out and say “What have we to do with thee, thou Jesus of Nazareth? – art thou come to torment us before the time”?
4. Cite incidents from the chapter to support or refute the following statement: Tom is a coward when he refuses to kill Legree when Cassy gives him the chance.
5. Why do you think Cassy is miraculously, after many years of captivity, able to think of a plan so that she and Emmeline can escape?

Ch. 39

1. Briefly outline Cassy’s escape plan.
2. Cite incidents from the story to support or refute the following statement. Cassy only tries to scare Emmeline with her knife; she has no intention of hurting the girl.

Ch. 40

1. Why is Cassy unable to pray?
2. In the following passage, Tom tells Legree that he would die for him. Some modern critics of this book claim that the character of Uncle Tom tries to please his white master and lacks the strength to fight for his freedom. What evidence is there in this chapter to support or refute this idea?
“Mas’r, if you was sick, or in trouble, or dying, and I could save ye, I’d give ye my heart’s blood; and, if taking every drop of blood in this poor old body would save your precious soul, I’d give ‘em freely, as the Lord gave His for me.”
3. In what ways is Tom’s death similar to Eva’s? How are Sambo and Quimbo like Topsy?

Ch. 41

1. What final message does Tom want George to deliver to Aunt Chole?
2. How do Tom’s final words offer the slaves and the slaveholders hope for their future?
“Who, - who, - who shall separate us from the love of Christ!”
3. Why doesn’t George report Tom’s murder to the authorities?
4. George has the money to buy Tom. At Tom’s grave he swears to do what one man can to drive slavery from his land. Why then, do you think George does not buy the men who help him bury Tom?

Ch. 42

1. How do Cassy and Emmeline manage to sneak away from Legree's garret?
2. It is not uncommon for authors in the 1800s to tie up all the loose ends of their stories at the end of their books. How does Stowe wrap up the story of Cassy's life?

Ch. 43

1. Why do George and his family want to leave the country to live in Liberia, Africa? How does he think he can combat slavery in America by relocating to Africa?
2. What happens to Emmeline and Topsy?
3. Do any of the characters who manage to escape slavery opt to stay in America? What do you think of Stowe's decision to write their "happy" endings in this way?

Ch. 44

1. How does George Shelby fulfill his promise to do everything in one man's power to eliminate slavery from the South?
2. George Harris moves to Africa, but George Shelby tries to fight slavery by freeing the slaves and teaching them to be free. Which of these two plans do you think Stowe considers to be the most viable? Cite incidents from the story to support your answer.
3. How does the following passage from this chapter help to define the significance of the title of this book? State an overall theme for this story based on this quotation:
"Think of your freedom, every time you see UNCLE TOM'S CABIN: and let it be a memorial to put you all in mind to follow in his steps, and be as honest and faithful and Christian as he was."

Ch. 45

1. What part of this story does the author claim to be true?
2. Why do you think Stowe writes that she "hope she has done justice to that nobility, generosity, and humanity, which in many cases characterize individuals at the South"?
3. In what way did the politics of the time help to motivate Stowe to write this story?
4. What part of the slavery issue does Stowe say she has only given a "faint shadow, a dim picture"?
5. Find a passage in this chapter where Stowe appeals to mothers everywhere to sympathize with the slave women who are separated from their children.