

Questions for Discussion

1. In the first paragraph, Annie is identified as a mama at age seven. We see her mother her siblings, her students, Esther, the Seys children, and Peter's children, loving and having to let go again and again. Was Annie a good mother? Was Elizabeth? Was Esther? Do you think Susan will be a good mother?
2. Annie, who has five brothers, longs for a sister? Are there any characters in the book who can fill this role for her?
3. Annie laments that Smee will never remember their father. Who becomes a father figure for this brother?
4. Do you have any ideas about Elizabeth's opinions regarding the controversial issues that separate the viewpoints of her children?
5. The Goheen siblings all become independent-thinking people with strong convictions. They often do not agree with each other. How do they manage to love and respect one another?
6. This story comes from the author's own family history. Do you know any facts, other than names and dates, about your own ancestors? Can you see something of yourself and/or your current family members in their stories?
7. Both the abolitionists and the supporters of the colonization movement in this story agreed that no person should be enslaved. What is the basis of their disagreement?
8. What is the higher moral imperative: an individual's right to seek the best possible life for his or her family or the sacrifice of the individual in order to secure that right for everyone?
9. Consider the two free Black men Stephen Smith and George Brown, both historical figures who chose to use their freedom and opportunities to serve their fellow man. Compare the ways they did this.
10. On page 99 Esther responds to Annie's questions by saying, "Freedom looks different to different folks." How does freedom look to Jonas? To Sylvanus? To Peter? To John Seys?
11. What did Davis think of Annie's efforts with the Female Anti-Slavery Society? Why did he choose to leave Philadelphia and move to Illinois?

12. As you think about different groups of people who sought freedom in America in the early nineteenth century who do you think has made the most progress? Consider Blacks in America, women in America, and Native Americans.

13. Sylvanus arrives in Liberia and notes the mansions that remind him of southern plantations in the United States, owned by early emigrants who have grown wealthy in trade and have in turn begun to exploit the indigenous people and recent arrivals in Liberia. Why do you think this might have happened?

14. Consider the tragedies in Annie's life. How might her life have turned out differently if her father had not died when he did? Do you think she would have been happy if she had married Jonas?