

Discussion Questions

The character of Captain Kidd

The Captain ran messages during the war and later owned a printing press. What did he like about both of these activities?

What are the similarities between running messages and printing the news?

What does the Captain like about delivering the news? How does he grow disillusioned with it? Why does he think delivering the distant news is important?

At the beginning of the book, how does the Captain want to live out his days? Why is he unhappy?

From the beginning of his task of taking Johanna to her family, he's always thinking of things to teach her. Why does he immediately take on that task? Why does he not just simply take her the distance and leave the teaching to her family?

The character of Johanna

How would you describe Johanna's personality? What aspects of her go beyond her Indian culture?

What do people in the novel get wrong about white children brought back from Indian tribes? What makes it so hard for Johanna to readjust to her life among white people?

Texas history

Who is creating the laws in Texas at this time? What does it mean for Texas to be under military rule? How safe do you feel the people are under military rule? What can people do if they are wronged or if they are exploited by criminals?

Did the two sides of the nominees for governor matter? Could you tell the difference between them?

What surprised you most about the history in the book?

The News

Why did the Captain refuse to read local or state news?

Does the Captain do more than entertain when he reads the news from far off places?
Why does the Captain refer to the news he reads as “fairy tales”?

What makes newspapers so important and dangerous that the military feels they must be regulated during this time?

Texan Landscape

Sometimes the location of a book, if done well, can be its own character. If the Texas landscape is a character, what would its personality be like? How would you describe it in terms of gender, best and worst qualities, etc.? In what ways has Texas not changed?

Water

The Captain procures a wagon with “Curative Waters” printed on it. What kind of business would the original owner of the wagon have been doing?

Johanna says, “You are my cuuative watah” to the Captain right before she gets married. What does she mean by this?

Texas rivers are flooding during the novel. What might water symbolize in the book?

Style

Read your favorite passage. In what ways does the style of the author’s descriptions add to the story?

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