

**Senior AP English**  
**Must read all 4 of the required books.**  
**Required**

*The Color of Water*.....James McBride  
*Siddhartha*..... Herman Hesse  
*The Sunflower*.....Simon Wiesenthal  
*Johnny Got His Gun*..... Dalton Trombo

For *The Color of Water*, You are to answer the attached packet of questions and be prepared to discuss this book in detail during the first week of class, using your knowledge of book to analyze the text, as well as develop thematic statements for the nove.

For the other three novels, you are to write a 1-2 page Literary Analysis, using scholarly sources as research material. Papers are to be written in MLA Format and cited correctly as well as include a works cited page.

# The Color of Water

## Chapters 1 and 2

1. The memoir begins with a supposed interview in which the author's mother talks about her family history. Explain the irony of her first statement, "I'm dead."

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2. Who is the narrator of Chapter 1? Who is she addressing?

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3. What does the narrator's diction reveal about her attitude toward the interview?

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4. How does the narrator characterize her father in this chapter?

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5. Who is the narrator of Chapter 2?

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6. In describing his stepfather, McBride says, "He took no guff and gave none." Paraphrase this idiom describing Daddy's character. What kind of man is he?

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7. Why does the narrator's mother choose riding the bicycle over driving her deceased husband's car?

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8. Analyze the following quotation from Chapter 2 and explain what the metonymy within conveys about the preachers:

It was clear that Mommy was no longer interested in getting married again, despite the efforts of a couple of local preachers who were all Cadillacs and smiles and knew that she, and thus we, were broke.

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9. How does the narrator characterize his mother in Chapter 2?

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10. Chapter 2 is not structured chronologically; explain how this structure affects Chapter 2's development.

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Chapters 3 and 4

1. Explain the conflicts that McBride's mother establishes in Chapter 3.

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2. What does the choice of words—the diction—contribute to Mommy's characterization?

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3. Chapter 3 does not follow Chapter 2 chronologically. What effect or effects does the author's manipulation of narrative structure have on the text?

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4. In Chapter 4, what can you infer about Mommy's attitude toward race and skin color from the way she answers James's questions?

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5. James McBride's childhood impressions of the Black Power movement are contradictory. What positive attributes does he perceive?

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6. What are James McBride's negative impressions of the Black Power movement? What is the source of his information, and what does James imply about the veracity of this source?

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7. How does McBride's depiction of the Black Panther father near the end of Chapter 4 challenge the media's depiction of the Black Panthers?

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Chapters 5 and 6

1. What elements link Chapter 5 to Chapter 4?

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2. What is the narrative function of Chapter 5? Explain your answer.

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3. Compare the values of Mommy's parents with the values she teaches her own children.

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4. How is McBride's mother's need to stay in constant motion developing into a motif?

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5. How does Chapter 6 function as comic relief?

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6. Explain the symbolic connotations in the metaphor "God is the color of water."

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7. Explain the function of Chapter 6's title, "The New Testament."

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Chapters 7 and 8

1. Why is Tateh's attitude toward his black customers ironic?

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2. Read the following quotation from Chapter 7 and explain how the ideas it presents contributed to McBride's mother's personal development:

Tateh hated black people. He'd call the little children bad names in Yiddish and make fun of their parents, too. "Look at them laughing," he'd say in Yiddish, "They don't have a dime in their pocket and they're always laughing." But he had plenty of money and we were all miserable.

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3. In Chapter 8, how does the author create humor in the paragraph about his brother Dennis?

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Chapters 9 and 10

1. What is the effect of the narrator's use of polysyndeton at the end of the first paragraph of Chapter 9?

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2. Ruth says that people were a "better kind of poor" years ago. What does that mean?

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3. In Chapter 10, explain how James's confusion about the existence of Jews produces dramatic irony.

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4. Explain the causes of Helen's conflict with her family.

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5. Read the following quotation from Chapter 8 and explain how the author's diction reflects how the protagonist experiences the events portrayed.

More commotion. I heard the boys downstairs saying, "All right, break it up. Hold her, Billy, wait—" *Boom!* Laughter by the boys, an agonized cry by Rosetta. "Oh, you're gonna get it now!" *Whomp!* Helen's scream. Another tussle. The sound of furniture flying, David shouting, a lamp breaking. More laughter and cursing ... A vehement argument ensued, and I heard Helen declare she was leaving. Suddenly the boys got serious.

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6. How does Helen's experience in Chapter 8 parallel Sam's experience in Chapter 7? How does the connection between these two chapters reflect the structure of the book as a whole?

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Chapters 11 and 12

1. Explain the factors detailed in Chapter 11 that prevent Ruth from assimilating into American society.

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2. In the paragraph beginning with "I loved that boy ..." and ending with "... and you never will," what is Ruth's attitude toward the South, and how does her diction convey this attitude?

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3. When Ruth responds to Hunter Jordan's request for a date in Chapter 12 by saying, "But I got eight kids and they go to the movies too," what is she conveying to him?

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4. What might the simile comparing tearing down Hunter Jordan's house to ripping out half his arteries suggest about the effect that his home's destruction had on him?

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4. What does the "boy who lived in the mirror" represent to James?

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5. Explain the symbolic significance of the mirror.

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6. Explain what "tragic mulatto" means.

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7. Explain how Chapter 10 develops the idea that racism is harmful.

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Chapters 13 and 14

1. Read the following quotation from Chapter 13 and explain what it conveys about Ruth's opinions on her extended family's values.

Now they were a funny family. They kept their feelings secret, bottled up inside them till they swelled and burst out like a water balloon you squeeze.

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2. In Ruth's opinion, what makes her relatives "American"?

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3. How does Chapter 13 further reinforce that Ruth's need to stay in constant motion is being used as a motif?

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4. How is James's attitude in Chapter 14 similar to that of Ruth's extended family in Chapter 13? How are his reasons for his actions similar to his mother's?

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5. How do the events of Chapter 14 parallel the events of Chapter 13?

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6. How does the imagery the author uses to describe Chicken Man produce humor while also conveying James's affection for him?

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7. How does the scene in which Chicken Man chastises James for "flunkin' school" foreshadow an eventual change in James's character?

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Chapters 15 and 16

1. How does Chapter 15 affect Peter's characterization?

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2. Explain how the author builds reader sympathy for Ruth in Chapter 15.

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3. What can you infer is the reason that Tatch gives Ruth the money for her cap and gown?

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4. How does McBride create suspense in Chapter 16?

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5. How do the second and third paragraphs of Chapter 16 create dramatic irony?

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Chapters 17 and 18

1. In Chapter 17, how does the narrator build suspense?

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2. In Chapter 18, what can you infer is the reason that Ruth insists that David not plead guilty to a traffic violation?

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3. How does the author's diction help convey James's conflicted feelings about working on the Dawson estate?

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Chapters 19 and 20

1. What does the antiphrasis in the following quotation from Chapter 19 convey about Ruth's attitude toward both her father and prevailing societal practices?

The way Tateh treated her, they'd call her an "abused woman" today. Back then they just called you "wife."

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2. Explain why Ruth's promise to Dee-Dee in Chapter 19 is appropriate in terms of Ruth's characterization.

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3. Explain the irony of Ruth's hostility to James's girlfriend Karone in Chapter 20.

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4. Explain the meaning of the term "sugar days" in the context of the paragraph in which it appears.

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5. How does James's conversation with Eddie Thompson indicate that Ruth McBride-Jordan is likely a reliable narrator?

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6. What can you infer from the fact that Eddie Thompson points to the ground in response to James's declaration that he would like to find his grandfather?

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**Chapters 21 and 22**

1. Explain why Chapter 21 is the climax of Ruth's narrative.

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2. Explain the symbolic significance of "a bird who flies."

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3. In Chapter 22, what can you infer is the reason that James feels uncomfortable when introduced to the black janitor of a Jewish school?

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4. Explain why Chapter 22 represents the climax of James's narrative.

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Chapters 23 and 24

1. How does Chapter 23 express the fact that racism was culturally acceptable during the 1950s?

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2. The anniversary celebration for New Brown Memorial Church is described *in medias res*. Explain why this literary technique is suited to Chapter 24's theme.

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3. How does Chapter 24's narrative structure frame the chapter around Ruth's return to New Brown Memorial Baptist Church?

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Chapter 25 and Epilogue

1. How does McBride convey his disdain for his black reporter coworkers who “[wield] their race like baseball bats”?

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2. Explain how the following simile reflects the overall structure of the book:

... as she laid her life before me, I reassembled the tableau of her words like a picture puzzle, and as I did, so my own life was rebuilt.

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3. In the epilogue, how does the narrator indicate that his mother has indeed accepted her past?

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