

# Essay Questions

Directions: After you have finished reading your book, choose ONE of the essay questions that corresponds with your book to answer. You cannot answer both questions. Essays cannot exceed 500 words. For any questions, please contact BDM Curator of Education, Tenda Byrd at [tenda.byrd@maryland.gov](mailto:tenda.byrd@maryland.gov).

## 3<sup>rd</sup> - 5<sup>th</sup> Grade Books

### ***Souder* by William H. Armstrong**

1. Loneliness is a recurring theme throughout *Souder*. How does the boy try to combat the loneliness and isolation of his life? Does his loneliness offer him any inspiration to better his circumstances? Explain your answer.
2. Using descriptions and details in the book compare the life of the boy's family with the life of the landowner's family.

### ***Bud, Not Buddy* by Christopher Paul Curtis**

1. During the depression, many children were forced to travel by themselves. Think about Bud's experiences in the library, the bread line, and the Hooverville. Do you think he was luckier than most children on their own? Why or why not?
2. Bud's story takes place during the 1930s, when orphanages are still common and lots of children and families have lost everything due to the Great Depression. How do you think life would be different for Bud if he was growing up today?

### ***The Land* by Mildred Taylor**

1. Why is owning land so important to Paul? What did owning land mean to blacks during that time?
2. Why did Taylor entitle the novel *The Land*? Write one or two other possible titles and explain why they are appropriate.

## 6<sup>th</sup> - 8<sup>th</sup> Grade Books

### ***Monster* by Walter Dean Myers**

1. Even though the ending of the book is ambiguous about Steve Harmon's guilt or innocence, how does the author show Steve to be more human than monster?
2. Life in prison is a big adjustment for Steve Harmon and has a major impact on the way he feels about himself. Describe the details of prison life that most affect Steve, including specific examples from the text. You should include information on how prison changes Steve and/or does not change him? Explain in detail.

### ***A Raisin in the Sun* by Lorraine Hansberry**

1. Discuss the title of the play. How does it relate to the dreams of each of the characters?
2. Think about the role of money in the play. How does it affect different characters?

### ***Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry* by Mildred Taylor**

1. Discuss the role of nature in this novel. Does it work in opposition to human interests?
2. Analyze the non-corrupt white characters like Jeremy Simms. Can you identify any others? What seems to motivate them? Are they better or worse off than the black characters?

## **9<sup>th</sup> - 12<sup>th</sup> Grade Books**

### ***47* by Walter Mosley**

1. Compare Eloise, 84, and Nola. How do they as characters debunk stereotypes of teenage girls today?
2. Compare this book with another that you have read that is set during the period of slavery.

### ***Flygirl* by Sherri Smith**

1. After returning home, Thomas uses a derogatory term for the Japanese, “Nips” (pg 196). Why isn’t Ida Mae or anyone else offended? Are there any circumstances in which derogatory terms like this one are acceptable? Explain your answer.
2. In *Flygirl*, Sherri L. Smith uses the terms “Negro” and “colored,” which were commonly used in the 1940s but aren’t used now. What do you think of her choice to use these terms? How would using contemporary terms have changed her novel?

### ***Dope Sick* by Walter Dean Myers**

1. Compare and contrast Lauryn and Sabrina. How are their relationships with Lil J similar and how are they different?
2. Lil J doesn’t get a good look at Kelly’s face until the final chapter. Why do you think the author conceals Kelly’s identity? Are there any clues in the book that give you information about Kelly? Explain your answer.