



Amos Fortune, Free Man

Study Guide

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For the novel by
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Synopsis

For the first 15 years of his life, Amos Fortune was At-mun, prince of a tribe of Africans. It was his belief that, as a future king, he was born to serve his people. But At-mun's life is turned upside down when he and many of his people are captured and brought to the United States to be sold as slaves.

At-mun is purchased by a kindly Quaker family who give him the name Amos and welcome him into their family. Under the care of the Copelands, Amos learns to read and speak English, and learns about their God. When Amos comes to understand that as a child of God his royal heritage has been restored, his life is transformed.

For the rest of his life, Amos continues the work he believes he was born to do: serve his people. Through the many turns his life takes Amos shows a trust and assurance in God, and though he works to achieve his own freedom and the freedom of others, he knows that true freedom is found in God alone.

Chapter 9, “Auctioned for Freedom” and Chapter 10, “Evergreen Years 1794–1801”

Vocabulary:

An *antonym* is a word that means the opposite of another word. When you know the antonym of a word, it helps give a clearer picture of the word’s meaning. Write a definition for each of the underlined words in the following sentences. Then choose an antonym from the list below for that underlined word. The first one is done as an example.

Word Box

unforgiveness	difficulty	action	dullness
rich	alertness	affirmed	heaviness

1. He read its books during the winter when tanning operations were somewhat in abeyance.
definition: temporary inactivity
antonym: action
2. Vendues were auctions at which townspeople could bid for the privilege of affording care to the indigent.
definition:
antonym:
3. . . . Amos would sometimes call to her to break her from too long reverie and she would shake her head and blink her eyes with a start.
definition:
antonym:

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3. What is a vendue? Why is it given to the lowest bidder?

4. The author writes that some of the people at the vendue look shame-faced. Give two reasons why bidding at vendues might be considered shameful.

5. In response to Violet's question, how much of the world does Amos say he wants to set free?

6. How do Violet and Celyndia earn money?

7. How does Amos feel when he does not get paid the full price for the leather?

8. As Amos sits and watches the fires on the mountain, what comparison does he make? What does he decide about how he is feeling?

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14. The author writes that “the fund designated for the school in Jaffrey is still in use.” How could \$243 still be in use today?

Dig Deeper:

15. Amos said of Polly, “She’s crossing Jordan unafraid.” The Jordan River was the last barrier for the Israelites to cross before entering the Promised Land. (See Joshua 1:11.) It has come to symbolize death—the last barrier before a Christian enters heaven. Why do you think Amos said Polly was “crossing Jordan unafraid”?

What are your feelings about death? Is death something you fear?

Read Psalm 23, John 11:25, 26; John 14:1, 2; Romans 10:9–13. How can people face death unafraid?

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Questions:

1. Celia is upset because as Quakers, they are opposed to slavery. Caleb says that they need someone to help in the house and they will give him a Christian home with kind treatment and an opportunity to learn.
2. Celia first begins to teach Amos by showing him things to do, then saying the words.
3. Answers may vary. At-mun is not only Amos' name, but it is all he has left of his former life. It is the only African thing he has left, and his worth as a human being—his identity—is connected to it.
4. Amos reads the Bible with Roxanna and realizes that God still loves him and he is still a king. Amos now knows that true dignity and worth have been offered to all human beings by the God of the universe.
5. Amos sees that freedom is a “harder lot to bear than servitude.” As a member of the Copeland family, Amos has his dignity and is given respect. Apart from them he would have no status in the white man's world and would be kept apart from white men.
6. Amos hopes to find his younger sister.
7. Caleb dies before giving Amos his certificate of freedom. When the Copeland house with all its belongings are sold because the family has debts to be paid, Amos is included in the sale.

Thinking About the Story:

8. Amos' African friends look up to him because he remembers Africa. He tells them stories and sings them songs about it. They call him Mr. Fortunatus because he is lucky to be so well-treated and to have been purchased by kind people.
9. Amos views Caleb as an older and wiser protector. It is a custom of the At-mun-shi people.
10. When he first purchased Amos, Caleb said that Amos would not know how to use his freedom if it was given to him. Later, Amos declined the offer of freedom. Answers will vary.

Dig Deeper:

11. Answers will vary. Amos understands that, as a child of God, he is given a spiritual inheritance, and therefore is still a king as he was in Africa. When he learns this, he realizes that his earthly situation does not matter. He can still serve his people as a king is required to do.
12. Answers will vary. The verses from Ephesians focus on the hierarchy of master and servant. The verses from Galatians admonish everyone to help each other. Amos is treated like a member of the Copeland family. He is expected to help, not because he is a slave, but because he is a family member. Many other slaves were simply expected to obey whatever their masters instructed them to do for no other reason than because they were slaves.
13. As trust in God is modeled by other family members, Amos would learn this for himself. Amos shows trust and confidence when he is sold to the Richardsons. He is confident that God will direct his path and keep him safe. “. . . Amos had comforted [the Copelands] with his assurance of a right outcome for them all.”

Chapter 4:

Vocabulary:

1. tanner: person who tans hides into leather; chattel: a piece of moveable property; property other than real estate, a slave; 2. profess: declare openly; 3. impassive: not feeling or showing emotion; 4. remonstrated: presented different reasoning; 5. aghast: shocked; 6. severance: the act of breaking apart or keeping apart; 7. byword: proverbial or frequently used saying; 8. spavined: lame and crippled by a disease.