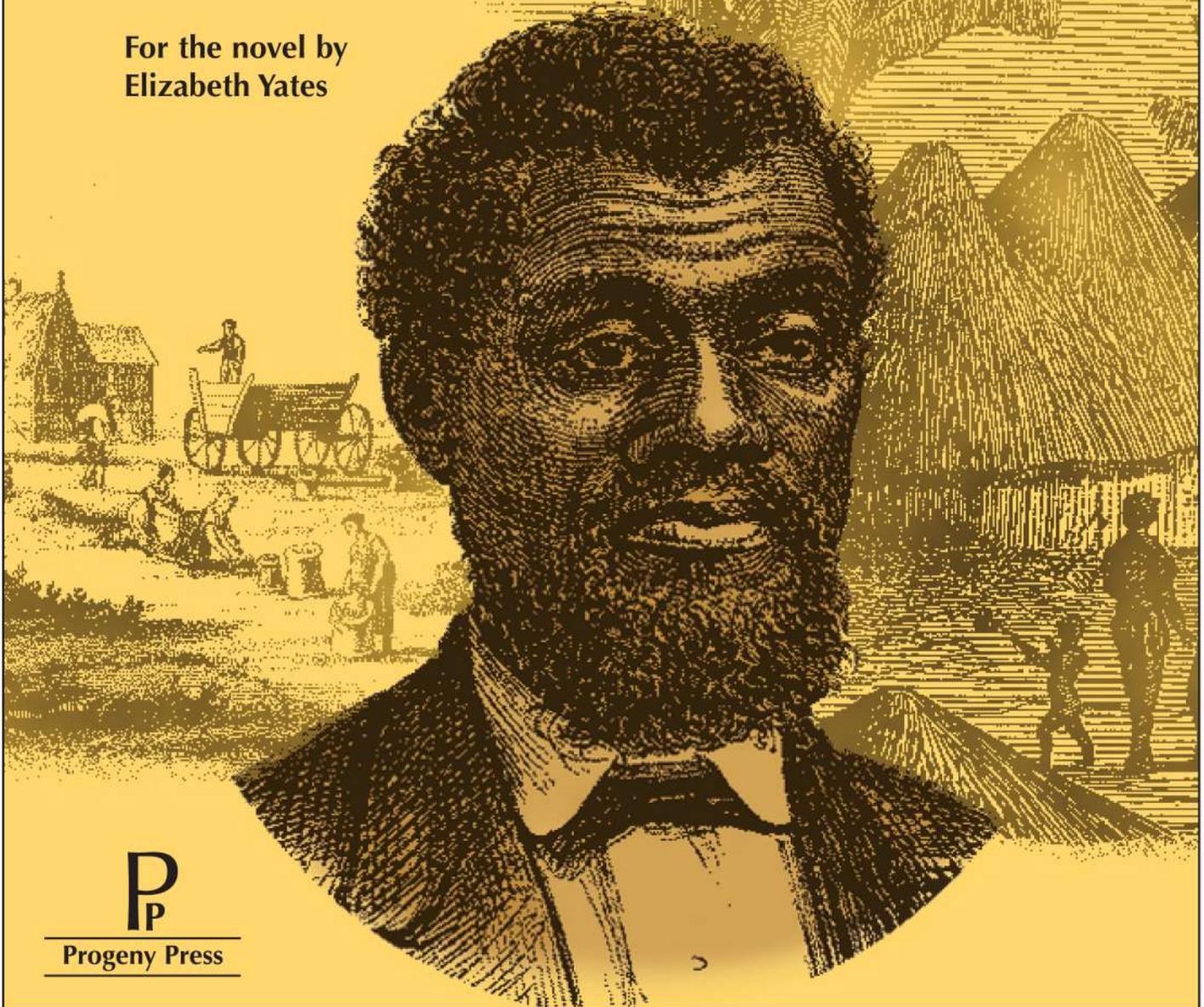


Amos Fortune, Free Man

Study Guide

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For the novel by
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Progeny Press

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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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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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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.

Questions:

1. Amos serves the Richardsons more than 20 years.
2. Amos realizes how many years have passed when he looks in the mirror he purchased for Mrs. Richardson. When he sees himself as an old man, he realizes his sister will also have aged. He realizes that he never found his sister at the harbors because he was always looking for a young girl. On the day he gains his freedom, Amos feels no remorse about his age. "He was almost sixty years old and he was ready to live." He finds encouragement by remembering all that Moses had done at his great age.
3. The condition is that Amos has to buy his freedom from Mr. Richardson. Amos does not fulfill this requirement because Mr. Richardson dies and Mrs. Richardson releases him from further obligations.
4. Amos buys Lily from Jonathan Twombly. Although the practice was accepted, Amos doesn't marry Lily while she is a slave because he believes they should both be free first.
5. The second slave Amos frees is Lydia. She had become crippled when she tried to escape on the journey from Africa and her legs were broken as punishment.

Thinking About the Story:

6. Opinions will vary. Mr. Richardson's rules were: teach slaves a trade, make Christians of them, pay them a small amount (but not the amount one would pay a white man), and give them their freedom before they are too old to enjoy it.
7. Answers will vary. At the Copelands' Amos was essentially a member of the family. He lived in the house and ate with the Copelands. At the Richardsons' Amos lives in Mr. Richardson's workshop hut across the grass from the house. Mr. Richardson treats Amos well, but regards him as property.
8. Amos wants to achieve his freedom by his own efforts, not by the kindness of any man.
9. Amos will accept nothing without fair payment. He does agree to continue working at the tannery while he saves to build his own home and business.

Dig Deeper:

10. One should lead a quiet life, mind his own business, and work with his hands. Amos does exactly this, is well-respected, and is not dependent on anybody.
11. He was unhappy because the people were pretending to be holy on the Sabbath and on holidays, but were doing evil other times.
12. The white people Amos knows keep many rules regarding the Sabbath, and treat it as holier than other days. Amos believes that every day belongs to the Lord and lives his life that way. Answers will vary.

Chapter 5

Vocabulary:

Original sentences will vary. Sentences from the book: 1. "Cyclops was old, though he was a robust horse . . ." 2. "Early in the morning he paid the shilling asked for the horse's accommodation." 3. "Angry words could ensue . . ." 4. "He went on his way to seek Mr. Samuel George to whom the leather was consigned." 5. "'How about your go-to-Meeting hat,' Amos began tentatively." 6. ". . . he went to the house of James Baldwin where Violet was a domestic . . ."

Questions:

1. Amos treasures the freedom to come and go without being owned by another man, but he is saddened by lack of household cares and family ties.
2. Violet's purchase price includes Violet's 4-year-old daughter, Celyndia. He is pleased because with one act he will give freedom to two people. Also, he is glad that Celyndia will be raised in freedom.
3. Amos buys it from a man who wants to sell the horse so its hide can be made into leather.
4. Amos carries his certificate of manumission. It is a document that declares he is a free man.
5. Amos gets off his horse, looks at the surrounding mountain and fields, and kneels down and kisses the earth. This was part of the ritual dance of his youth, meaning that "all that he had, all that he ever would be, he gave to his people."