

DREAMS FROM MY FATHER READING GUIDE

ENGL 108 / SEC. H & I / SUMMER LEAP 2009 / OLDHAM & RUBASKY / CHANG & LEE

WEEK

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Chapter One

1. The book begins when Obama is age 21, and recounts a significant moment in Obama's life. What is so important about that dreary November morning?

2. How does Obama receive most of the information he knows about his father?

How do the sources influence the kinds of stories he hears?

3. What are some of the character traits of Obama's father? As you continue to read the book, add to this list.

4. Starting on pg 12, Obama begins to go into the biography of his maternal grandparents. Why is this important for readers to learn? What are some of the important things we learn about their background?

5. Why do you think Obama tells the story of his mother as a child in Texas on pgs 19-21? What does it add to our understanding of his mother? His grandparents?

5. On page 26, Obama explains that while he enjoys hearing stories about his father, they all leave something out. What do they leave out and why is that important to Obama?

6. Does Obama take a metacognitive approach to telling his own story? If so, give an example of where he does so. If not, explain what he would need to do to be more metacognitive.

7. Although Obama is not writing a literacy narrative, is he writing a particular kind of narrative? What seems to be his goal in his writing? What kinds of questions do you think this chapter is trying to help us answer?

8. Does this chapter make you think of Obama in a new way than you did before? Did you have a ideas about what this book would be like before you started reading? How did this chapter fulfill or challenge those expectations?

Chapter Two

1. The previous chapter takes place in Hawaii, where is the setting of this chapter?

2. Why do you think Obama starts the chapter (much as he does in Chapter 1) with an anecdote before moving to a more linear narrative style?

What effect does the writing strategy have?

What effect does this particular anecdote have on you as a reader?

3. Who is Lolo? What are some of his characteristics?

4. What gift does Lolo have for Obama?
5. How well does Obama adjust to life in Indonesia? What details help you to know?
6. Starting on page 42, Obama discusses some difficulties his mother was having with living with Lolo. What are they, and how does her perception of Lolo change as she learns more about him and his country?
7. Why is the word “power” italicized on page 45? What does his mother mean when she thinks “Power was taking her son” (46).
8. What was the shift in Obama’s mother’s perception of her son (pg 47)? Why is that important to his larger narrative?
9. Why do you think Obama returns to the anecdote of the picture in *Life* magazine? What is the rhetorical effect?

How does that picture make Obama reconsider who he is?

10. How do you react to this chapter? What new insights have you gained on Obama and this part of his childhood?