



Book Club Questions

The Mountains We Call Home by Kim Michele Richardson

1. Cussy has spent her entire life being judged because of her blue skin. How did her condition shape the way she saw herself, and how did it influence the choices she made? Do you think society's prejudice or Cussy's own resilience defined her more?
2. Cussy went to jail, not because she did something wrong, but because of an unfair law. How did her time in prison change her? What moments showed her strength and kindness?
3. Cussy and Jackson understood the risks of getting married, but they chose to follow their love anyway. What does their relationship show about bravery and the impact of unfair laws? If you were in their situation, would you have made the same choice?
4. Throughout the novel, Cussy struggles with where-and whether-she truly belongs. By the end of the story, do you think she finally finds a sense of home and acceptance? What does "home" ultimately come to mean for her?
5. Cussy faced both kindness and cruelty while in prison. What did the novel reveal about the prison system at that time? In your opinion, what factors determined if someone received care or faced abuse, and why, in particular, did Cussy receive more privileges?
6. Was Cussy treated fairly in prison, or did she have advantages that many other inmates did not have? This raises questions about inequality within the prison system.
7. Effie Claxton risked everything-including her own freedom-to help Cussy escape. What do you think motivated her to make such a dangerous choice? Was it compassion, a belief that the law itself was unjust? Would you have taken the same risk if you were in Effie's position?
8. How did Jackson's loyalty and support contribute to Cussy's survival in a world filled with prejudice?
9. Cussy's greatest motivation was to protect Honey and give her the opportunities she never had. In what ways did motherhood shape Cussy's decisions throughout the novel? Did Honey represent the possibility of a different future?



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10. Why do you think Warden Sanders eventually showed more compassion to Cussy?
11. The novel depicts women being subjected to lobotomies, forced sterilizations, and abortions with little or no choice. What do they reveal about the way society viewed women, especially poor women, prisoners, and those considered "different"?
12. Many of these procedures (lobotomies, forced sterilizations, and abortions) were justified as being "for the public good". Why do you think so many people accepted these practices? What lessons can we learn from this part of history about protecting individual rights and questioning authority?
13. Talk about the ending. Did it feel realistic or too optimistic? What message do you think Kim Michele Richardson wanted readers to take from Cussy's journey?
14. The title emphasizes the mountains they call home. Discuss why leaving Kentucky is both a heartbreaking loss and a necessary survival step.
15. The novel blends historical fact with fiction. What part of Cussy's story surprised or shocked you the most? Did reading this novel change your understanding of Appalachian history, the Blue People of Kentucky, or the eugenics movement in America?
16. If you could change the ending, would you have Cussy legally released from prison? Or do you think her escape and fake death were the only ways for her to be free? Which ending would feel more satisfying, and why?

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