

Discussion Questions: **Born a Crime**

1. Trevor Noah opens *Born a Crime* with the Immorality Act of 1927, which banned sexual intercourse between unmarried white people and black people. What was your initial response to this passage? What did you learn about the history of South Africa by reading Noah's story?
2. How was apartheid similar to American Jim Crow? And how was it different? Does Trevor's experiences with racism 30 years ago seem similar to racism in America 60 years ago? How similar is it to racism today?
3. Trevor Noah learned to speak six different languages growing up. Trevor explains that under apartheid, the coexistence of multiple languages promoted division and oppression. How did Trevor and his mother use language to cross legal and social boundaries and navigate challenging situations? How can language create both barriers and a sense of unity. Have you had a time when language acted as a barrier to working with others?
4. Why did Trevor's mother decide to throw him from a moving minibus? Trevor writes, "I just knew what to do. It was animal instinct, learned in a world where violence was always lurking and waiting to erupt." How do you think Trevor was affected and influenced by the prevalent violence and explicit racism that he witnessed throughout his childhood? What are some examples of how the lives of children and families are impacted by oppression and violence today, either in the US or in other countries?
5. One of the most impressive characteristics that Noah conveys about his mother is her faith. How did Patricia's faith impact young Noah, and what do you think has been the lasting impression of Patricia's faith on Trevor Noah's life?
6. Throughout the book, Trevor's mother uses humor to cope with difficult and often painful challenges. How does this approach support Trevor, and when did it challenge or frustrate him? What role does humor play in Trevor's upbringing? How did that role affect his career choice?
7. Noah and his mother lived in a variety of neighborhoods over the years. How does racial segregation affect the daily lives of young Trevor and his mother? What connections can you identify between the challenges in transportation and housing faced by Noah's family and those faced by people living in poverty in racially segregated communities in the US and Canada today?
8. Why did Noah's mother choose to stay in South Africa rather than live in exile in a European country? What sacrifices did she have to make as a black woman living in a predominantly white neighborhood, apart from Trevor's father? Why was Trevor surprised by his mother's choice to stay in South Africa?
9. Discuss Trevor's relationship with his mother, father and step father. How does his background make his commentary on America so meaningful?
10. **Some Go-Around Questions**
 - A. Noah describes with hilarious detail, an incident that happened when he was home along with his great-grandmother (Koko) and didn't want to use the outhouse. Which incidents, friends, family, or family members described in *Born a Crime* are most memorable to you?
 - B. Do any of his stories/comments challenge your beliefs?
 - C. Do you think any of his opinions are provocative? Which ones and why?
 - D. How can this book contribute to understanding the current state of race relations in the US?