



Book Club in a Bag

Discussion Questions

James by Percival Everett

1. *James* is a retelling of Mark Twain's 1886 novel *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, which is widely regarded as a classic work of American literature. Have you read *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* before? How does Everett subvert Twain's original text? Did *James* change your perspective of the original novel?
2. Twain is well known for his satirical writing. Where does Everett use humor and satire in *James*? What social and cultural conditions does the novel's satire mock or critique?
3. Reflect on Jim's narration. Why does he switch between vernacular and standardized English? How does this code-switching affect your reading experience?
4. Describe Huck's role in the story. How does Jim's fugitive status, as well as race, color, class, age, and education influence the relationship between the two characters?
5. *James* depicts the brutalities of slavery, particularly the violence inflicted upon slave women and girls, through the stories of Sadie, Lizzie, Sammy, and Katie. What are the unique threats that these characters must navigate? How does Jim react to the gendered violence that he encounters?
6. Jim's quest for freedom parallels his quest for literacy. Discuss the key moments on his journey to writing his story. What are the texts that he studies? Who are the characters who give him the tools and encouragement to write?
7. Were you surprised by Jim's revelation in chapter one of part three? Returning to earlier passages, can you identify any moments of foreshadowing from Everett? How would you characterize Huck's reaction?
8. What was your reaction to the ending? What do you think the future holds for James and his family?

The above questions were taken from
<https://www.penguinrandomhouse.com/books/738749/james-by-percival-everett/9780385550369/readers-guide/>
to enhance your discussion of the book.

Author Biography

Percival Everett is one of the most innovative, provocative, and prolific writers of our time. A finalist for the Pulitzer Prize and winner of the National Book Award for Fiction, he has produced a captivating and immensely diverse collection of genre-bending literary works that challenge and inspire readers to contemplate and reconsider the societal and cultural forces that shape our worldviews.

<https://www.prhspeakers.com/speaker/percival-everett>

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