



A LONG WALK TO WATER: DISCUSSION GUIDE #2



Sample answers

Chapters 9 – 12

Comprehension:

- What are the visitors to Nya's village trying to do?
The visitors are trying to find water. In Chapter 12, the visitors bring a giant drill and a work crew in order to start drilling a well for the village.
- Describe how the Akobo Desert is different from Salva's village, Loun-Ariik.
Loun-Ariik has grass, shrubs, and trees, enough to feed the grazing cattle. The Akobo desert is dry, hot, and stony. No plants can grow there except the tiny evergreen acacia bushes, and there is almost no water.
- How do some members of Salva's group help the men they find collapsed in the desert?
A few of the women from Salva's group use their water to wet the lips of the men who had collapsed in the desert.
- What does Uncle plan to do once they reach the refugee camp, and what does he say will happen to Salva?
Uncle plans to return to Sudan to fight in the war. He says that Salva will stay in the refugee camp and make friends there, forming a new kind of family.
- As Salva's group is roasting a bird in the desert, a few men from the Nuer tribe approach the camp. What do they take and what do they do to Uncle?
The men from the Nuer tribe take clothing and other items from Salva's group. They tie Uncle to a tree and shoot him.
- Describe the refugee camp and the people who are there. How is life better for Salva at the camp than it was on his journey?
The refugee camp is crowded with people of all ages but mostly boys and men. Life is better for Salva at the camp because it is safe from war and there is food.
- After Salva realizes that the woman in the Itang camp is not his mother, what does he begin to think has happened to his family?
Salva begins to think that his family is completely gone—either killed in the attack on the village or dead from starvation or sickness.
- Salva asks the aid workers about the rumors that the camp will close. What does he learn?
Salva learns that the Ethiopian government is close to collapse. The new rulers might not let the refugee camps stay open.
- What happens when the Ethiopian soldiers arrive at the camp? Where do Salva and the other refugees go?
The Ethiopian soldiers chase Salva and the other refugees out of the camp. The refugees run into the Gilo River back toward Sudan.



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Analysis:

- Nya notices that the work of the visiting men and the villagers “did not sound at all like water.” Explain what she means by this. Why is Nya skeptical?
Nya does not understand how the machinery and the work of her village will lead to water. She does not believe that the men will find water in her village because she has only ever known water to come from the pond or the lake.
- Why do you think Uncle uses Salva’s full name when he encourages him to keep walking through the Akobo Desert?
Uncle uses Salva’s full name to get him to focus. Hearing his full name also helps Salva to remember his home family, which gives him the encouragement to keep going.
- Explain how Uncle motivates Salva to keep walking in the desert. How does Salva use the same strategy to survive the time he spends at the camp?
In the desert, Uncle tells Salva that he only has to walk to each new landmark, like bushes or a pile of rocks. This helps Salva focus only on the next few steps instead of getting through the entire desert. When Salva is in the refugee camp, he thinks of Uncle and reminds himself that he only has to get through one day at a time.

Personal:

- “The clangor of machinery and hammer greeted Nya each time she returned from the pond—unfamiliar noises that mingled with the voices of men shouting and women singing. It was the sound of people working hard together.” Describe a time when you have seen or been part of a group that came together to work on a project. What did it sound like? What did the sounds reveal about the nature of the work?
Student answers will vary.



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Sample answers

Chapters 13 – 14

Comprehension:

- What does Nya mean when she says that “you had to have water to find water”?
Nya is talking about the fact that the workers who are drilling the well must keep water flowing constantly into the borehole so that the drill runs smoothly.
- How long does it take for the workers to reach the new water in Nya’s village? What does the water look like?
It takes three days of drilling before water comes out of the borehole. The water is brown and heavy and full of mud.
- How do Salva and the other refugees try to escape from the soldiers? About how many refugees die trying to escape?
Salva and the other refugees try to swim across the Gilo River. At least a thousand refugees die while trying to escape, either drowned or shot or attacked by crocodiles.
- Where does Salva walk after crossing the river, and why does he decide to go there? Who walks with him?
Salva walks toward Kenya because he knows there are supposed to be refugee camps there. He walks with a large group of about 1,500 boys.
- Salva uses his memories to help him lead the boys to the next camp. Who and what does he think about?
Salva thinks about his family and Marial. He thinks of what he misses about his family.
- How many boys arrived in Kenya? How long did it take them to get there?
More than twelve hundred boys arrived in Kenya. It took them a year and a half to get there.
- Describe the camp at Kakuma. Why do Salva and other boys leave?
The camp at Kakuma feels like a prison, and it is not safe. Salva and the other boys are not happy and want to find a better place to live.
- Why does Salva want to work at Ifo?
He wants to earn money to buy extra food and save up to one day leave the camp and continue his education.
- Who is Michael? How does he help Salva?
Michael is a foreign aid worker from Ireland working at the refugee camp. He starts teaching Salva how to read English and how to play volleyball.
- Where are some of the refugees being sent? Where does Salva learn he is going?
Some of the refugees are being sent to America. Salva learns he is moving to Rochester, New York.



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Sample answers

Chapters 13 – 14

Analysis:

- Salva waits for years at the camp at Ifo with no sign of change or what the future might bring. The author explains, “It was hard to keep hope alive when there was so little to feed it.” Explain what this means.
It is difficult for Salva to remain hopeful when there seems to be no reason for him to do so. He pictures hope as something that needs to be fed to stay healthy. Without anything hopeful happening, Salva’s hope for a better future could die.
- Michael tells Salva that Salva’s name is finally on the list of people being sent to America. Why do you think Salva tells himself that Michael is wrong?
Salva is afraid to get too excited about going to America. He has been waiting for so long that he has a hard time believing that his name is really on the list.
- Why does Nya frown at the water that comes from the borehole? Why do you think she reacts this way?
Nya frowns because the water isn’t clear, it’s brown and muddy. Nya knows that her sister got sick from drinking dirty water, so she’s probably wondering how dirty water from the ground under their village is any better than the water from the pond.

Personal:

- Think of someone from history, a book, or your own life who is a good leader. What makes this person a good leader? How are they similar to Salva? How are they different?
Student answers will vary.