



A LONG WALK TO WATER: DISCUSSION GUIDE #3



Sample answers

Chapters 15 – 18

Comprehension:

- How is Salva's new neighborhood in Rochester different from where he grew up in Sudan?
The roads in Rochester are paved, and there are lots of fast cars. The buildings have electricity, and lots of white people live there. It is cold and there is snow.
- What is Salva studying in school? What does he hope to do when he finishes school?
Salva is studying business. He hopes to eventually return to Sudan and help the people there.
- Why does Salva travel back to Sudan?
Salva receives an email that his father has been found.
- Why does Salva's father say Salva should not go see the rest of the family in Loun-Ariik?
Salva's father says that there is still war near the village and both sides would try to get Salva to fight for them.
- What gives Salva the idea for his project to help Sudan? What is his idea?
Salva visits his father in the hospital where he is sick after years of drinking contaminated water. Salva thinks of his father's illness and the cool water his father sprinkled on Salva's forehead in the hospital. He has the idea for a project to bring clean drinking water to Sudan.
- At first, Salva finds himself overwhelmed by the amount of work involved in his project. What does Salva remember about Uncle? How does this help him move forward?
Salva remembers Uncle's advice from the desert to move forward one step at a time. This helps him see that he can solve one problem at a time instead of trying to fix everything at once.
- When the water first comes out of the hole being drilled in Nya's village, it is brown and muddy. Uncle Dep tells Nya it won't always be this way. What does Uncle Dep explain needs to happen before the well will be able to provide clean water?
Uncle Dep explains that the men need to drill down deeper to find clean water. They also need to install pipes and complete other construction before the well is usable.
- What do the men build in Nya's village after digging a well? Why?
The men build a school. Since the children in the village no longer have to spend the whole day getting water, they will have time to go to school.
- What surprises Nya about the crew leader helping her village? Why?
Nya is surprised that the crew leader is a member of the Dinka tribe. The Dinka are usually enemies with Nya's tribe, the Nuer.



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Analysis:

- When Salva recalls his time in Nairobi, he says it was “all a blur,” but there was one clear moment. What is the moment, and why do you think it stands out so clearly for Salva?
The clear moment is when the aid workers give Salva new clothes. He recalls how he wore the same worn-out shirt and shorts for years in the refugee camps and how there were never enough new clothes for everyone who needed them. This moment probably stands out for Salva because he had been so used to living for years with barely enough, and this is the first time since leaving his home that he has been given more than enough.
- Reread the section where Salva travels to America—first to Nairobi and then on a long plane trip that ends in New York. What is this trip probably like for Salva? What are some words that come to mind that describe how he must feel? Use examples from the text to support your answer.
Student answers may vary, but should reference the fact that Salva is in a new situation and may be feeling anxious, overwhelmed, and/or hopeful. Text examples may include the following:
 - Salva’s unfamiliarity with the plane
 - Salva’s worry about misunderstanding the aid worker on the ride to Nairobi
 - The fact that Salva has never seen so many white people before
 - Salva meeting his new family at the airport for the first time
- When Salva returns to Sudan after living in America, he feels that everything is very familiar but also very different. “How could memories feel so close and so far away at the same time?” he asks. Explain what Salva means and why you think he feels this way.
Salva has become accustomed to life in America, which is much different than life in Sudan. However, when he returns to Sudan, everything still feels familiar because it is his original home. Being back in Sudan puts him face-to-face with the memories of his past life. At the same time, these memories feel far away because so much has happened and changed in Salva’s life.

Personal:

- Some people have mottos, or phrases that help them remember what is important to them. Some examples of mottos include “Always do your best,” and “Treat others the way you would like to be treated.” What do you think Salva’s motto would be? What would be your own motto?
Student answers will vary.



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Answer Key

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Salva's Message and Author's Note

- Salva says that he wants others to learn about the Lost Boys and Sudan from reading *A Long Walk to Water*. Do you think the book achieves this goal? How did the book help you to learn about the Lost Boys and Sudan? What would you like to have seen more of or learned more about from the book?
Student answers will vary, but should provide specific examples from the text regarding the life of the Lost Boys and the reality of civil war in Sudan.
- How did the author, Linda Sue Park, learn the details of Salva's story? How did she gather information for Nya's story?
Linda Sue Park interviewed Salva and read his writing about his journey, as well as writing about other Lost Boys. For Nya's story, she interviewed people who had seen water wells drilled in Sudanese villages and looked at their photos and video footage.
- Describe the impact of the Sudanese Civil War.* What happened to many Sudanese people during this time? How did the civil war end?
The Sudanese Civil War brought violence and uncertainty to Sudan. During this time, many Sudanese people were killed, imprisoned, enslaved, or displaced. The civil war ended when the north and south signed a peace agreement.
- Where did Salva's organization, Water for Sudan (now called Water for South Sudan), drill its first well?
Water for Sudan drilled its first well in Salva's home village of Loun-Ariik.
- How do you think *A Long Walk to Water* might help the people of Sudan?
***A Long Walk to Water* tells a story that not everyone knows. Once more people read the book, they will understand the challenges of living in Sudan during a time of civil war. They will have a greater awareness of how others live. They may also learn about Salva's organization and want to support his work.**
- The author says that it has been "an honor," or a special privilege or responsibility, to write a book about Salva. Explain what this means. Why might writing about someone's life be "an honor"?
Student answers will vary, but they may include some of the following points:
 - The author feels that she has a special responsibility to tell Salva's story accurately and well.
 - The author knows that many people may learn about the situation in Sudan through her book.
 - The author feels lucky to know Salva and to have him trust her with his story.

**Note for teachers: The conflict described in the book is actually the Second Sudanese Civil War, which took place from 1983-2005. The First Sudanese Civil War (1955-1972) was also between the northern and southern parts of Sudan.*