



A LONG WALK TO WATER: DISCUSSION GUIDE #1



Chapters 1 – 4

Comprehension:

- Who is Salva? Where does he live and what does he do during the day?
- Why do Salva and his classmates run from the school and away from their villages?
- During the novel, southern Sudan is fighting for independence from the rest of the country. Why do they want independence?
- Who are the rebels?
- Salva and others flee their homes and walk into the wilderness. How and why do they form groups once they are far from the fighting?
- What does Salva discover when he wakes up in the barn?
- Why does Salva trust the old woman?
- Who is Nya and what does she do every day?
- Why does Nya's mother want Nya to take Akeer with her to gather water?

Analysis:

- At one point, rebel soldiers divide Salva's group of villagers into two groups: women and children, and older boys and men. Why does Salva have trouble deciding which group he belongs in?
- What is similar about Nya taking Akeer to the lake and the Dinka group allowing Salva to walk with them? Use evidence from text to support your answer.
- "The days became a never-ending walk. Salva's feet kept time with the thoughts in his head, the same words over and over: *Where is my family? Where is my family?*" Explain what the author means when she says "Salva's feet kept time with the thoughts in his head."

Personal:

- Salva is abandoned by the people from his village because he is a child. "*I would not have been any trouble—I would not have complained!*" he thinks. Have you ever felt like Salva in this situation? Tell about a time when you were frustrated because you felt like others did not understand you or saw you differently than you see yourself.



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Chapters 5 – 8

Comprehension:

- Why does Nya like living at the lake camp?
- While they are at the lake camp, why is Nya's mother afraid when her husband and son go hunting?
- Why does Akeer get sick, and why does it worry Nya?
- What does the doctor recommend to Nya's family, and how does Nya's mother respond?
- Who is Marial and what is his relationship to Salva? What happens to him?
- Why do Salva and the other Dinka need to make the boats with reeds?
- Why is Salva amazed when he first arrives at the island community of Nile fishermen? Use evidence from the text to support your answer.

Analysis:

- How does Salva feel when he first sees Uncle Jewiir? Provide an example from the text to support your answer.
- Marial sighs after telling Salva that he is looking for his family. The author says that Salva "heard that sigh all the way to his heart." Explain what this means.
- Both Salva and Nya feel a sense of uncertainty about the future. Describe some of the challenges they each face.

Personal:

- The sweet sugarcane reminds Salva of happier times when his father would bring him mangoes. Do certain foods trigger memories for you? Do you have any happy memories about specific foods with your family? Share a memory of a certain food and what it makes you think of when you eat it.