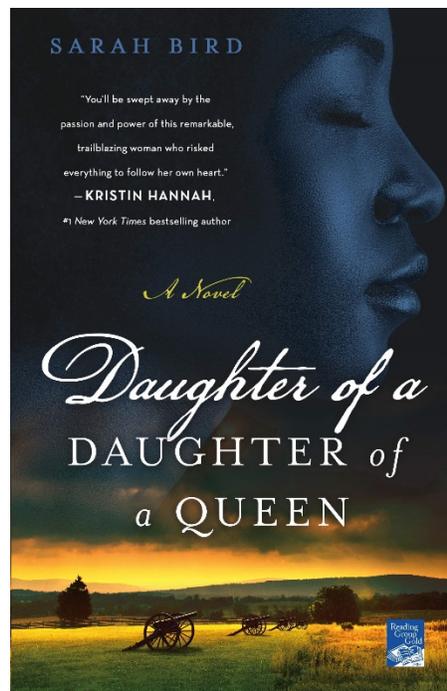


1. Discuss Cathy Williams lineage and how she sees herself through the lens of her family's history and culture. Do you or could you imagine carrying such a sense of self possession or having such a destiny to chase?
2. Were you surprised by any realities of a soldier's life in this era? The sheer inexperience of the young recruits ("strawfoot, hayfoot")? Did you get a strong sense of how an army shapes up together?
3. How do Cathy's fellow cooks help her integrate into their camp? Are they sympathetic or mostly apathetic to her plight? How does she bond with Solomon?
4. What is the distinction Cathy makes between being a slave or being a captive? How does this difference shape the way she resists and persists?
5. What is Cathy's native tongue? What ideas or thoughts might only be expressed in her innermost language? If you are multilingual, are there words or ideas that you find are best kept in your native language? What are they?
6. Why are Clemmie and Cathy both motivated to go West, even if they are following vastly different paths and troops to get there? Is one mode more risky than the other? In what ways?
7. When does Cathy decide she is going to pose as a male soldier? How does she keep up the act and disguise her female characteristics and hygiene needs? What is at stake if her cover is blown? Do you think you could have had the same level of endurance?
8. How does Iyaya color the story, even though she never appears physically in the book? What mark has she left on her ancestors, especially on Cathy?
9. What dangers - societal, environmental, physical, emotional - does Cathy face along her journey? Yet how does Cathy embody fearlessness? Where does her battle acumen and ferocious instincts come from?
10. Did you find any of the villains or more unsavory characters of the novel, like Dupree or Vickers, somewhat sympathetic? Who and what actions could you understand the motivation for in a time of war? How does Cathy get her revenge on Vickers for his cruelty?



Questions courtesy of LitLovers:

11. How does Lem and Cathy's relationship grow and what do they mean for each other? How is Lem's compassion expressed?
12. Is it hard to imagine this juncture in history where the West is perceived as pure and free place to chase one's destiny? What does Cathy find waiting for her out West? Does it fulfill its promises to her?
13. How might we honor women lost to history with stories like Cathy's, for their service and sacrifice? In what ways was she a (literal) trailblazer?
14. How did you react when Wager and Cathy at last reunited? How does this union create danger and uncertainty for Cathy? Is the risk worth everything they have both suffered for?
15. Discuss the significance of the meeting with the Black Seminole tribe, John Horse, and key cavalry members? Are their plights not so dissimilar? How are the tribes and the cavalry unit both mistreated by the white military leaders, government officials and settlers? Also, discuss the perception of Native Americans at this juncture in history? How do field reports and graphic storytelling effect policy or treatment of the tribes?
16. Did you think Cathy's great mentor General Sheridan betrayed her at the medal ceremony? What did you expect to come up from the up-close interaction? Does he redeem himself ultimately? Why did you think Cathy regards him with tenderness and respect?

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