

Discussion Questions for Uncle Tom's Cabin

Use examples from the text when discussing your answers.

1. Compare Mr. and Mrs. Bird's positions on the Fugitive Slave Law.
2. What risks do the Birds take in assisting the runaway slaves?
3. What was the message or moral of this chapter?
4. Is Mrs. Bird a weak and helpless creature? Why or why not?
5. Good writers write from experience. What in Harriet Beecher Stowe's white, middle-class, Northern background would be the basis for this story? Remember that you first "met" her in a film about abolitionists. She was the young woman who witnessed a slave auction in which a woman was being separated from her child in Kentucky. What explains the bond between Mrs. Bird and Eliza, the runaway? What do they both have in common?
6. How realistic is this story? What parts are the most or least realistic? Why?
7. What do you think was Harriet Beecher Stowe's view of separate spheres? Find at least 3 examples from the story which illustrate the concept and explain how it is an example of heart s. Head, religion, vs. politics, home vs world etc.
8. Mr. Bird is a state legislator who breaks a law *for which he voted*. At what point is it justifiable to break a law? Was Mr. Bird's action justifiable? Why or why not?
9. While it is not likely true that Abraham Lincoln said (upon meeting Harriet Beecher Stowe), "so this is the little lady that started the big war?", it is true that *Uncle Tom's Cabin* was wildly popular and antislavery. Why do you think it became so popular? And in what ways would it bring the nation closer to Civil War over the issue of slavery?