

Discussion Questions

Rebels & Revolutions: Real Tales of Radical Change in America

Chapter 1: Soldier of the Revolution

1. What issues caused tensions to grow between the American colonies and the British government in the 1760s and early 1770s?
2. What was Joseph Plumb Martin's first act of rebellion?
3. Why did Joseph want to join the Continental Army?
4. What aspects of army life made Joseph question his commitment to fighting in the revolution?
5. What transformed Joseph's rebellion from one aimed against the British army to one aimed at his own American commanders?
6. What was Joseph's final act of rebellion?

Chapter 2: Make Us Free

1. What were the conditions like for Sengbe and the other kidnapped Africans during the Middle Passage?
2. What act of abuse finally pushed the Africans into breaking their chains and attacking the crew of the Amistad?
3. In what way were abolitionists rebels?
4. In addition to their attack against the crew of Amistad, in what other ways did Sengbe and the other Africans fight against the injustice of their imprisonment?

Chapter 3: The Heart Mountain Resisters

1. How were the Issei discriminated against in the early twentieth century?
2. What did the Issei advise their children, the Nisei, to do in order to be accepted into American society?
3. How did President Roosevelt's Executive Order 9066 impact people of Japanese ancestry living on the West coast?
4. Describe the living conditions for people imprisoned at Heart Mountain Relocation Camp.
5. Why did so many Nisei at Heart Mountain resent the loyalty questionnaire the government gave them in February of 1943?

6. Why did members of the Fair Play Committee decide to resist being drafted into the United States military?
7. What price did the draft resisters pay for rebelling against the United States government?

Chapter 4: A Cry for Justice

1. How did the Jim Crow system affect Claudette Colvin and other African Americans living in the South in the mid twentieth century?
2. What incident marked the turning point in Claudette's life and why was that event so important to her?
3. In what way did Claudette's teachers inspire her to stand up for herself?
4. According to Claudette, why did she refuse to give up her seat on the bus on March 2, 1955?
5. When Rosa Parks refused to give up her seat on the bus on December 2, 1955, the black community of Montgomery responded with a bus boycott. Why didn't African American leaders boycott city buses nine months earlier when Claudette was arrested?
6. Since Claudette Colvin's rebellion came before Rosa Parks, why have so few Americans ever heard of Claudette?

Chapter 5: Viva La Causa

1. What factors made life difficult for migrant workers like the family of Cesar Chavez?
2. What eventually led Cesar to begin to work to improve the lives for migrant workers in California?
3. Why did the migrant workers need a labor union so badly?
4. When the National Farm Workers Union went on strike on September 30, 1962, how did the farm owners and local law enforcement try to break the strike?
5. What actions did Cesar take to keep the strike alive and how effective were these actions?

Reflection:

- Which of the rebels in this book do you most admire and why?
- Have you ever rebelled against an injustice and what was the outcome of your rebellion?

- In your opinion, what is the most effective way to rebel against injustice?