

Paul Robeson Guided Reading Questions

Guided Reading questions for the ATHLETE group on pages 28 to 31:

1. What was the major indication that Coach Sanford thought Paul Robeson was a great football player?
2. Why did Robeson become a household name?
3. Why was it important to Robeson that he do well in athletics?
4. Why was it important that he remain cool and levelheaded and that he exhibit good sportsmanship?
5. How did Paul Robeson earn the respect of the white players who refused to play with him?

Guided reading questions for the SCHOLAR group on pages 35 to 39:

1. Why was the choice of race relations for his valedictory speech ironic?
2. What was the theme of his message?
3. What was Robeson's vision of a "renaissance for the Negro"? What did he think would be the way for African Americans to win "just recognition from the rest of the human race"? Do you agree?
4. What is his solution for achieving national unity?
5. On page 39, the author describes the speech as "daring." Explain why.

Guided reading questions for the PERFORMER group on pages 206 to 211:

1. Why was success in the "talkie" film industry important to Robeson both from a professional point of view and from a racial perspective?
2. How does Robeson deal with his cultural, racial and political image in his acting career? (Think about how he negotiated his contracts and the types of roles that he accepted.)
3. What does Robeson mean in the following quote and how does he live up to it? "Meanwhile, in my music, my plays, my films, I want to carry always this central idea: to be African."
4. Why do you think Robeson wanted to "inspire in his people a pride in their heritage"?
5. What is "melting pot" assimilation? Why does Robeson reject it outright?

Guided reading questions for the ACTIVIST group on pages 286 to 287:

1. The May 1936 edition of the Sunday Worker quoted Robeson saying, "If other young Negroes got the chance, they'd outstrip me a thousand times. But how can they with this damned system of discrimination plugging up every hole of opportunity? And then after they get it, they can't get any recognition for what they really achieve." What does he mean by this? Do you think the situation exists today?
2. List the philosophers and leaders that Robeson studied. Research who they are. Why do you think Robeson studied all of these different people?
3. What does anti-colonialism and anti-fascism mean?