

# Study Questions

## Interpretation/Analysis Questions for "Cora Unashamed"

Use the questions below for in-class discussions or writing assignments. They have been formulated to stimulate thinking about the social messages that Hughes conveys through the short story.

1. Why is Cora Jenkins considered one "of the least citizens of Melton?" Explain why you believe she is or is not one of the "least citizens." Use specifics from the story to support your opinion.
2. People are not born racist; racism is learned. Support this statement by providing examples from the story.
3. Why does Cora tolerate the treatment she receives?
4. If you have a sibling or a very close friend, at times you may call that sibling or friend a derogatory name. However, what is your reaction when a person in your sibling's or close friend's class consistently calls him/her this name? (**Teacher's Note:** After the students respond, relate this to people within a specific group calling each other a name which would be totally inappropriate and demeaning for someone outside the group to call them.)
5. The narrator in "Cora Unashamed" tells us that Cora's lover was "some kind of foreigner." Upon what facts is this judgment based? Do you believe Joe is foreign? (**Teacher's Note:** Here is a good place to initiate an explanation of the IWW). What makes a person alien to us? Each culture has different traditions and customs -- aspects of life that make us strange to people of other cultures. As Americans, what are some of our behaviors which may seem strange and may be misunderstood by people of different nationalities?
6. Describe the different worlds of Cora and Mrs. Art Studevant. What are the advantages and disadvantages of these worlds?
7. "Cora Unashamed" is included in a collection of Hughes' works entitled **The Ways of White Folks**. In your opinion, after reading the short story, is the collection's title racist? Explain.
8. Explain the significance of the epigraph which appears in the anthology **The Ways of White Folks**, which reads: "The ways of white folks, I mean some white folks..."
9. How does Mrs. Art Studevant use her power to remedy what she considers to be unpleasant situations? Can you cite an example how power is used in today's society in much the same way? (e.g., Is it by chance that landfills more often than not are located on the "wrong" side of town?)
10. Explain the irony in Mrs. Art Studevant's "campaign of purity."
11. Explain how we can determine who has power and authority simply by listening to a conversation. Use examples from the story.