

The Call to Shakabaz

Study Questions

1. Why is Doshmisi afraid to try to help Crystal get well? What makes people afraid to learn something new?
2. Doshmisi discovers that she can communicate with trees. Do you think that trees have anything to tell us or teach us? If trees could talk, what do you think they would say?
3. Even though the butterflies are very small, they are able to protect the travelers from harm. Can you think of a time in your life when something small accomplished something big? Can you think of an example of many small things joining together to accomplish something big that they could not each accomplish alone?
4. Why do you think that Doshmisi's conversation with her mother at Akinowe Lake makes it easier for her to accept her mother's death? What things can people do to help them recover from the death of a loved one?
5. Things are not always as they appear. Do you think Denzel had a right to get angry at Jasper? Do you think the Four had a right to blame Jasper for the robbery? If you were one of the Four, how would you have handled the situation?
6. Sonjay takes on the role of a leader and the others accept him in this role. Why do you think they accept his leadership? What qualities does a person need to be a good leader?
7. The Goodacres did not know that they are part Faracadaran. There are many people who don't know where their family originally came from or who their ancestors are. For instance, people who are adopted may not know anything about their birth family. Many African Americans who had ancestors who were slaves do not know much about their ancestors. Why is it important for people to know about their ancestors? What do we learn from the history of our ancestors?
8. Clover warns Sonjay, "Beware, for those who carry weapons are likely to have weapons used against them." What does she mean by this? Do you think a person who owns a gun is more likely or less likely to be shot than a person who doesn't own one? (Look up the statistics on this.) Do you think people should be able to have guns or not? Do you think everyone should have the right to own a gun? If not, who should be able to have one and who shouldn't? How have guns helped our society progress? How have guns prevented our society from progressing? What do you think our world would be like if we had no guns?
9. There is an expression taken from the bible that says "an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth." What does this expression mean? Mahatma Gandhi said that if everyone followed the belief of "an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth" then the whole world would be blind and toothless. What did he mean by that? Is there a difference between revenge and justice? What is the difference? Can justice satisfy the need for revenge? How?

10. If you had the chance to kill the man who murdered your mother would you do it? Do you think it is OK or not OK for a murderer to be put to death by decision of a judge and jury? Who do you think should decide if a person who has committed murder should be put to death? Are there any instances in which murder is acceptable? What are they?

11. Music is very important to the Coast People. Maia knows that they need their music and their drummers to help them recover from the attack by Sissrath. How can music be healing? Has music ever changed you or helped you change your life? Why do you think music is so powerful?

12. At first Crumpet and his friends seem hostile but then it turns out they are on the same side as the Goodacres. Can you remember a time when you met someone you didn't trust at first but then you later changed your opinion and wound up trusting them? How did they earn your trust? Sometimes our first impressions of people are very different from the way we feel about them when we get to know them. How do first impressions benefit us? How do they lead us astray?

13. While in the dungeon, Hyacinth regrets trusting Amaranth, who turned out to be a double agent. He apologizes to the others. Sonjay tells him not to feel bad because he made "the best choices he could make at the time." What is the value of an apology? In some cultures, if someone begs forgiveness of you then you are required to forgive them. Why is forgiveness so important? How can it provide healing to both the person asking for forgiveness and the person granting forgiveness?

14. Denzel leaves the armor vest behind in Spriteland. He says, "If one of us falls, we all fall. I don't see any point in wearing the vest now. It can't cover everyone." What does he mean by this? If you were Denzel, would you take the vest?

15. The whales tell Doshmisi that violence will only create more violence and that she must find a way to "fight" without doing harm, using weapons, or engaging in violence. What ways can you think of to work for the defeat of an enemy without using violence? What alternatives are there to war?

16. The people successfully use nonviolent protest to remove Sissrath. Can a powerful leader really be defeated using nonviolent means? When has this been done successfully before? (Visit the Metta Center website at www.mettacenter.org to learn more about nonviolence.) What is the power of nonviolent protest? Under what circumstances do you think it would not work? Can you imagine what it would require? What would it look like? People could be killed. Is it worth that? If you believe what the whales say in the book, that violence will make more violence and that bad energy will make more bad energy, then how do you use positive energy to resist a powerful leader who will use violence against you?

17. The Goodacres become the Four. What are some of the things that contribute to their change? What kinds of things cause people to make a positive change? Can you think of a time in your life when something you experienced caused you to make a positive change in who you are or how you think? What has made you change your mind in the past? Think about something you would like to work on to change about yourself. How will you go about making that change? What can help you make that change?