

Biddy Mason

Critical Thinking & Discussion Questions

Attitude/Mindset:

What are some disadvantages Biddy Mason faced in her life?

What are some advantages that she had?

Which external obstacles did she face?

What internal capabilities did she have that helped her?

Were there any external advantages that helped her? [It was a time when the country was opening up and laws were starting to be changed in ways that allowed her to demand and receive her freedom. She was in a part of the country that was growing and increasing in value.]

What about you? Do you face any disadvantages in life? Any external challenges? How can you overcome them or minimize the difficulty of them?

What advantages do you have? [Youth is an advantage all young people possess. Time is on your side.]

What sorts of inner resources do you have that will see you through challenges and difficulty?

How hard is it to maintain a positive mindset in the face of adversity?

What is most inspiring about the life of Biddy Mason? What surprises you the most?

What kinds of adversity have you faced in your life? Everyone faces some kind of adversity. Has anyone ever surprised you with how they were able to overcome or bounce back from a difficult situation?

Why do you think that Biddy Mason was able to be generous to others, even though she was born into slavery and had endured so many hardships?

How do you think her life would have been different if she had become discouraged and given up during difficult times? What kept her going?





“Two men looked out from prison bars: one saw mud, the other stars.”

What does this saying mean to you? How could you apply it to your own life?

Who are some knowledgeable or skilled people that you admire? What sorts of things have they learned to do?

What skills would you like to develop in your life?

What are some achievements you are proud of? What are some achievements you would like to work towards?

What does success mean to you?

Saving, Investment, and Profit

What is an entrepreneur? Have you ever thought about starting or running a business of your own?

What kind of business venture interests you? Does anyone in your family own a business?

Have you ever worked for a businessperson?

What does it take to start a business? How could a person acquire what is necessary to begin?

What is a profit? Why is a profit essential for a business to operate?

It has been said that a difference between the rich and the poor is that the rich invest in assets that appreciate and the poor invest in assets that depreciate. What is an asset? What does it mean for an asset to appreciate? What does it mean for something to depreciate? Can you give an example of an asset that would appreciate? [A common example of an asset that typically appreciates is real estate. This is what Biddy Mason invested in. Real estate includes land, or property, upon which homes and businesses are constructed.]

How about one that would depreciate?

[A common example of an asset that depreciates is a car. They say that as soon as you drive a new car off the parking lot that it depreciates a few thousand dollars immediately. There was a book called the **Millionaire Next Door** that you might want to read. It explains how, despite what you might think, many wealthy people actually prefer driving used cars because they know that a car is not a good investment.]

Biddy Mason saved her money and invested wisely. What is an investment? Can you think any of any examples?

[One example is a savings account. When you put money in a savings account, you can earn what is known as interest. This means that the bank will pay you some money for putting your money in the bank. That is one way to earn money without having to work at a job for it. Another type of investment is the stock market, where you buy shares of a company called stock. Other people invest in businesses of their own, such as a store or restaurant.]



“If you hold your hand closed, nothing good can come in. The open hand is blessed, for it gives in abundance, even as it receives.” — Biddy Mason

Philanthropy and Generosity:

What does this quote mean to you? Do you agree with it?

Have you ever been generous to someone else in need? How can you be generous to others? If you don't have money, what else can you give to them? What are some things that you possess that others might not? Can you share these “gifts” with them? How might that benefit both you and others?

Have you ever given money away to charity? If so, what kinds of causes have you donated to? If not, what kinds of causes interest you?

Would you like to become wealthy enough to become a philanthropist (a person who donates money to causes she/he believes in)? Biddy Mason started an orphanage, school, and a church.

[Biddy Mason visited prisons with gifts and aid, provided food and shelter to the poor who stood in line in front of her house, donated to churches attended by both blacks and whites, and founded a traveler's aid society and an elementary school for black children. When floods hit the region in the late 1800s she notified local merchants that the victims—regardless of color or social status—be provided with their needs and that she would cover the costs. When Los Angeles suffered a smallpox epidemic, Biddy used her knowledge of herbal remedies to care for the afflicted, at great risk to her own health and safety.]

Skill Development

Biddy Mason developed several valuable skills while she was still enslaved. She learned how to be a healer and how to deliver babies from those around her.

“He that hath a trade hath an estate.” —“Poor Richard,” aka Ben Franklin

What does this saying mean to you? How could you put it into practice?

Would Biddy Mason agree with that? Do you agree with that?

What skills would you like to develop in your life? If you could become a high-paid expert in one field, what would it be? Would you be willing to spend years learning how to do something, if it meant you could command a high salary for the rest of your life? [They say that it takes about 10 years of work and practice to become an expert in a field, and experts are paid the most.]

Ten years from now what would you like to be able to do that you can't do right now?

Have you talked to your guidance counselor about your future career possibilities?

Have you started looking into places where you could learn the skills to get the education you might need?

[You can request an appointment with your guidance counselor and tell him or her that you would like to discuss your career options. It's easier to select the right college or training program when you know your career goals.]

Investing

"A penny saved is a penny earned." —"Poor Richard," aka Ben Franklin

What does this saying mean to you? How could you put it into practice?

Would Biddy Mason agree with that? Do you agree with that?

Albert Einstein supposedly said that, **"Compound interest is the eighth wonder of the world. He who understands it, earns it; he who doesn't, pays it."** What is compound interest? What's so great about it?

[The key to success in compounding interest is starting when you're young. You have a big advantage: time.]

Legacy

What is a legacy?

If you had enough money to start a new organization, what would you like to start?

If someone erected a monument to your life, what events would you like it to list?

What quote would you like to be remembered by?

Here is a list of Bob Woodson's 10 Principles:

Competence	Innovation
Integrity	Inspiration
Transparency	Agency
Resilience	Access
Witness	Grace

Which do you think Biddy Mason most embodied in her life?