



# Meet Addy

## A Conversation Guide

Below are suggested topics and passages to use when reading *Meet Addy*.

**1. People who were enslaved resisted slavery in many ways, not just by running away. What types of resistance do you see in Addy's story?**

Talk about the ways children, women, and men might have resisted. Examples include pretending to be ill, not producing their best work, working slowly, or misplacing tools. It is important to remember that any act of resistance was dangerous for a person who was enslaved to pursue, but these everyday acts of defiance were often hard for enslavers to prove. For example, how does this exchange between Addy and Sam show resistance?

- "I better get on," Addy said, worried that the overseer might come over to them... "Naw," Sam said... "I ain't done drinking yet, and you ain't answered my riddle." (p. 12)

**2. The night before Addy escapes, Uncle Solomon gives her a half dime and tells her she'll need it, because "Freedom's got its cost." What do you think Uncle Solomon means when he says this? Are there moments in Addy's story that show what he means?**

Discuss the difficulties, or "costs," for Addy and Momma in taking their freedom. Examples include leaving family members behind, experiencing pain and fear while running away, and risking severe punishment if they were caught. What would it take to make these difficult decisions and bear these high costs and risks?

**3. Hiding their true feelings was a survival skill children who were enslaved had to learn. Where do you see Addy and other characters hide their emotions? Why do you think they needed to hide their feelings in these moments?**

Discuss why showing emotions could be dangerous. For example, showing emotions might put yourself or members of the family at risk of being punished. Poppa explains to Addy that just because her parents weren't showing emotions on the outside, that didn't mean they didn't care:

- "Just because you don't see us crying and carrying on don't mean we don't care. It don't mean we ain't crying, either. Me and your momma crying on the inside. We ain't always free to show our feelings on the outside. But on the inside we is free. There's always freedom inside your head, Addy." (p. 6)

**4. After Addy saves Momma in the river, Momma tells her, "You a brave girl." Where else in the story do we see Addy and the other characters demonstrate bravery?**

Throughout the story, Addy and each member of her family demonstrates bravery in different situations. Use examples like the scenes below and others to discuss what bravery means to the different characters and how they display it.

- Poppa’s face was covered with dirt, but it was calm. She ran to him, falling on the ground next to him. “Oh, Poppa. No. No!” She threw her arms around him. He looked up at Addy. “Everything’s gonna be all right, honey. You go on,” he said. There were no tears on his face, but Addy knew he was crying inside. (pp. 19–20)
- “My great-grandma must have been brave to come across the water all alone. I’m gonna be brave just like she was,” Addy said. (p. 40)
- Outside, Miss Caroline hid Addy and her mother in the back of her wagon and covered them with some old sacks. (p. 58)

**5. Why does Momma give Addy the cowrie shell? Where did the shell come from, and what does the shell mean to Addy and her parents?**

Discuss the significance of the cowrie shell for Addy and her family, and how attaching the cowrie shell to Sam’s shoelace provides Addy with another tangible reminder of her family’s love.

- “I want you to have this,” Momma said. “It’s something me and your poppa been saving for you. This cowrie shell belonged to Poppa’s grandma. She was stole from Africa when she was no bigger than you. None of her family was on the ship with her when she came here from across the water. She wore this shell on a necklace. Your poppa was gonna give it to you when you was older, but I think you should have it now, Addy. Your great-grandma’s name was *Aduke*. That name got a meaning where she come from. It means ‘much loved.’ I saved her name for you, Addy.” (pp. 38–39)
- “Momma, that’s one of Sam’s shoelaces,” Addy said. “I wanted you to have something of his, too,” her mother said. She pulled the cord through a small hole in one end of the shell, knotted it, and then put it around Addy’s neck. “Remember what I told you about the love you need to carry in your heart. It ain’t nothing you can touch like this shell, but when you find yourself feeling sad or scared, you dip into that love, Addy. It’s a well with no bottom, and it can give you strength and courage.” (pp. 39–40)

**6. In *Meet Addy*, the characters talk in a dialect, or a particular way of speaking that is specific to a group or place. A dialect can shape the words you choose and the way you say them. Today, many different dialects are spoken in the United States. Can you think of examples?**

One example to discuss with readers is how people living in different regions, such as the South, New England, Midwest, and West, typically sound different from each other. They not only have different accents, but they also use different words. A common example is the word for carbonated drinks. In New England and the West, it is common to hear “soda,” while in the Midwest people usually say “pop.” In the South, people typically say “Coke®” to describe all carbonated drinks, not just Coca-Cola®.

As you discuss, note that it is important to respect people’s dialects. It is unkind and offensive to mock how another person speaks.

