

The Illiterate Daughter Reading Guide

Name: _____ Hour: _____

Chapter One Questions

1. What is Nou's dream?
2. Why was Nou worried when the crow landed on her?
3. Describe Father and what he carried with him.
4. Question: Why did Nou's mother yell at her?
5. Why didn't Nou want Der to get married?

Chapter Two

1. Describe Nou's village Thao.
2. How did Nou feel about her parents treating her and the boys?
3. What were Nou's treasures?
4. Nou loved listening to stories and said stories helped her. Explain how stories helped Nou.
5. Why did Nou risk her life to go back to their hut after they had fled? What would you do in her place?
6. Do you believe the crow brought the attack or a warning? Explain.

Chapter Three

1. What secret was hiding inside Nou's father's knife's handle? Why was it important?
2. What predictions do you have for Nou's family? What do you think happened to Pheng?

Chapter Four

1. What was Mother's reaction to the news Der was pregnant and why?
2. What were the consequences of Der being pregnant?

Chapter Five

1. Describe the village the family settled in.
2. Why didn't Father fight in the war? How much did he get for being a soldier?
3. Why couldn't American soldiers fight on the battlefield?
4. Why would the family want a shaman for the sick boys?
5. Nou had changed after the attack. Describe the change.

Chapter Six

1. What did Nou learn about her parents from her grandmother?

2. Why would Nou want to be a son for her mother?
3. How did Nou prove that she'd keep her promise to her mother?
4. What was the meaning of Nou's name? How did her name make her feel?
5. Talking to her mother, what did Nou learn about herself and what did she plan to do for her family?

Chapter Seven

1. Who was the old woman and what did she tell the family?
2. Grandmother told Nou that there were good and evil spirits. House spirits were good. Why weren't their house spirits protecting them?
3. So far, what did you learn about Toua's character?
4. Nou wanted to bring hope to her mother. What did she do to show that?

Chapter Eight

1. Why did Nou want to learn to build hut?
2. Than Pop was his code name for the war. What was his real name?
3. Nou asked Than Pop for two things. What were they?

4. What was unique about Nou that Than Pop was willing to take her to America?
5. If you were Nou, what would you choose? Family or your dream? Why?
6. What concerned the villagers?

Chapter Nine

1. Why do you think Der didn't say anything about Pheng to Neng Moua?
2. Explain Father's reasons for pressuring Der to marry Neng.
3. Why couldn't Der have her baby in the family home?
4. If you were in Der's situation, which option would you choose? Explain.

Chapter Ten

1. At the beginning of the story, Nou hated weeding the rice field and couldn't keep up with her family. In this chapter, she worked hard, harvesting with her family. Explain the difference.
2. Where did Der have her baby and why?
3. According to culture, what was important about the third day for a newborn?
4. Why was Nou satisfied being the middle child now?

Chapter Eleven

1. How long had the family been fleeing war since the burning of their hut?
2. Why didn't Nou's family flee with the others?
3. Who were considered to have the American brain? If people were caught having the American brain, what would happen to them and why?
4. Why did Nou burn her book instead of hiding it?
5. Why was it hard for her to burn the book?

Chapter Twelve

1. Who were the Chao Fa?
2. Why did the family go to Phou Bia?
3. Describe Phou Bia and the family's new life.
4. What do you think would happen? What prediction do you have for the family?

Chapter Thirteen

1. Describe the weather in the mountains during December.

2. How did Nou keep track of how many days her father had gone to the village?
3. What kept Nou's hope alive?
4. Father returned from the village and shared his plan with the people. None of the men wanted to go back to live in the village for fear. What made Father decide to surrender? If you were him, would you do the same when you know your risk?
5. What do you think of Father's decision to return to the village to surrender when none of the men thought it was good?

Chapter Fourteen

1. Describe the new village?
2. Who was Uncle Nao Pao and why was he in the village?
3. How did Aunt Chia Koua get her candies? Who was her husband?

Chapter Fifteen

1. The family was safer in the fields, but they came home. Explain.
2. Give two reasons Nou decided to attend the party on behalf of her sister.
3. How did Nou learn Laotian language from Bane and the others?
4. How did the family keep Der away from the soldier who was visiting her regularly?

5. Why did Father say Nou was the chosen one?
6. Do you believe in blessings? Do you believe Nou would have a good life for receiving blessing from her grandmother?

Chapter Sixteen

1. Who was Chia Koua and how was he related to Pheng?
2. What were the items sent to Der from Pheng?
3. How did Der and Nou learn to read the letter?
4. Reading the letter, what insights did Nou gain?
5. What was Nou's new dream?
6. What was the news about Chia Koua and his family?
7. What were the two things the Pathet Lao demanded from the villagers?

Chapter Seventeen

1. What happened to Pa's family?
2. Explain yellow rain.

3. Soldier Keng asked to marry Der but Father extended the date to after the New Year celebration. Why do you think Father did that? Do you think Father agreed to the marriage?
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4. What kind of man was Soldier Keng?
5. What is your prediction for the family's future?

Chapter Eighteen

1. How much did each family pay for the guide to be escorted?
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2. Why was Pa worried about the journey?
3. Why was opium needed on the journey?
4. What was Nou's duty?
5. What was Mother's concern for Father being in the front line?
6. How did Nou quiet Nhia?

Chapter Nineteen

1. Who came across the group's path? What was done to the person?
2. What prevention could Mee's parents have taken to prevent Mee's death? How could the group help prevent this tragedy?

3. As Nou searched for her missing family members in the forest, what did she do to communicate?
4. Why do you think that was the way to communicate?
5. The family is alone and scared. What do you think they should do to save themselves? If you were them, what would you do?

Chapter Twenty

1. Wa Meng believed the Hmong hunter told the enemy about the group. Nou suspected it could be the hunter or the soldier. Who do you blame for the attack? Explain your reasons.
2. Why do you think the women didn't voice their opinion at the meeting?
3. If you were trapped like the group, what would you do? Would you return, move on or find other way? Explain your reasons.
4. Do you think the Laotian men would take them to safety in Thailand? Explain.

Chapter Twenty-One

1. How long did it take the group to reach Phu Hau from their village?
2. Provide information about the Mekong River.
3. What made crossing the village and Mekong River danger?
4. List the food eaten during the trek.

5. What do you think happened to the Laotians?
6. What do you think happened to Tong Pao and Youa Cho?

Chapter Twenty-Two

1. How did Song die?
2. Toua said, "Once we cross to the wooded area, we'll have a good chance." What made him believe this?
3. What did Nou's family eat that night for dinner that was considered a decent meal and why?
4. Who did the family pray to for protection?

Chapter Twenty-Three

1. Describe how Nou and her sister-in-law caught up with the group.
2. Describe what happened to the group?
3. If you were Nou, would you have left the terrifying scene with Toua and Pa? Explain.
4. Describe Nou's character in this situation.

Chapter Twenty-Four

1. If you were Nou, what would you have done differently for your dying sister?

2. When Nou learned of Mother and Nhia's wounds, she was devastated. How did she stay strong?
3. How did Nou care for Mother and Nhia's wounds?
4. What is your prediction for the pregnancy? Would Pa make it to Thailand before giving birth?

Chapter Twenty-Five

1. With all the tragedies, what kept Nou strong and hopeful?
2. Nou refused to leave her wounded family and cross the river with Toua. Was that a good decision? Did she think of helping Toua get a canoe for her wounded family? Explain.

Chapter Twenty-Six

1. What do you think happened to Toua?
2. Nou was determined to protect her family and bring them to safety, but what could she do in their situation? Her family was wounded, starved and trapped. What would you suggest Nou do? What would you do in their situation?
3. What items did Nou carry?
4. Why couldn't the family use the knife to cut Nhia's umbilical cord?

5. Nou's lack of strength, exhaustion, and low morale made her frustrated at Pa and she ignored Pa's suffering. What gave Nou courage in this chapter?

Chapter Twenty-Seven

1. Nou bowed to the bird, begging it for help. What does this show?
2. Pa was hungry and thirsty and she was the reason Nou left to find food and water. What does her refusal to drink the polluted water show you?
3. Was Mother right that Toua was still alive? Do you think she made it up just to give Nou the strength she needed? Explain.
4. Despite hunger, exhaustion, and the pain in her arm, Mother tried her best to be helpful. How did she help Nou?
5. In this chapter, what gave Nou the courage to stay strong?
6. How many people were in Nou's family including the new additions?
7. Nou blamed the Americans for their miserable life. Right or wrong. What would have happened if the Hmong hadn't fought against the Communists? Would they have taken over the country sooner? Would things have been better or worse if they had refused to fight at all? Explain.
8. What else can Nou do to bring her family to safety?

Chapter Twenty-Eight

1. After the nap, Nou was able to think. What was her plan?
2. What was the phrase that Father said to her that gave her courage?

3. Do you think Nou would get food and water from the girl without the ring? Explain your reasons.
4. Why did Nou have to travel to Thailand alone? She refused to cross the Mekong with her brother before because she didn't want to leave the family alone. Why would she leave them now?
5. Without tools, except the knife, how did she make the raft?
6. What skills did Nou possess that had helped her fulfill her goals in this chapter?

Chapter Twenty-Nine

1. On the river alone, cold, scared, and in pain, what made Nou not give up and push herself to her limit?
2. Who are the people in your life that you care and love so much that you would do anything no matter how difficult to be their hero or make a difference in their lives? And why would you do that?
3. The canoeists asked for money before taking the family across the Mekong. Nou wouldn't give them money even if they had some. Why?
4. What happened to Nou's family after they reached the Thai shore?
5. What made the man change his mind to send the family back to Laos?
6. Who rescued Nou's family from the canoeists and how?
7. How was Kou trying to help Nou?

8. What was the one thing that Nou still had that belonged to her father?

Chapter Thirty

1. Compare Nou's family's journey to Chong Doua's.
2. How much is a silver bar worth in Thai money?
3. The Xiong family paid the Thai couple a silver bar to take them in. The couple took Nou's family in and provided them with food and baby formula. Do you think the couple would treat Nou's family the same without the Xiong family?
4. How did Nou prove stories have value?
5. Noises like the sound of a car engine frightened Nou. What does this show?
6. What kind of man was Kou Xiong? Explain with details.
7. How did Nou feel wearing the knee-length skirt and why?

Chapter Thirty-One

1. What were Toua's reasons for not bringing a canoe to the family? Do you think he had good reasons to abandon his family? Explain.
2. Describe living conditions in So Khao Toe.

Chapter Thirty-Two

1. Describe Ban Vinai Refugee Camp.
2. What were the women stitching and why?
3. Pheng and Der were separated for over three years. How did Pheng show Nou's family that he truly loved Der and missed her?
4. Why do you think Nhia was scared of Pheng, Kou and strangers?

Chapter Thirty-Three

1. Explain the importance of the BV.
2. Where did people get their water in the camp?
3. Why didn't Yer's father want to go to America?
4. What was the camp curfew and what happened if one was caught outside after curfew?
5. What motivated Nou to go to America?

Chapter Thirty-Four

1. What food was provided to the refugees and how often?

2. What did Pheng do to try to make Nhia like him? And why didn't it work?
3. What would you suggest Pheng do to make Nhia trust him?

Chapter Thirty-Five

1. Why didn't Nou and the women eat with the men?
2. What does the eating tradition tell you about the culture?
3. Why do you suppose Kou was worried about losing Nou to Pheng? What did Pheng have that Kou didn't?

Chapter Thirty-Six

1. Why do you suppose Pheng suddenly asked Nou to marry him? Do you think he had good reasons to want to marry Nou? Why or why not?
2. After all the tragedies the family suffered during the trek, what do you think make Toua want to go back to Laos? Was his decision good? Why or why not?
3. When Toua said, "I am a man. I make decisions for the family." What does this tell you about the culture?
4. Why was Mother worried about her funeral?
5. As a daughter, Nou would do things her way. What could she do?

Chapter Thirty-Seven

1. How did Pheng and Kou propose to Nou? How were their proposals different from other culture?
2. Nou loved Kou, but why did she refuse his proposal?
3. What values must one have in order to have the courage to choose family and dreams over love? How many people do you know that have chosen their families and dreams over love?
4. If you love someone very much, would you choose love over family and dreams? Explain

Chapter Thirty-Eight

1. Explain how Kou was able to connect with Nhia and play with him.
2. Was Pheng wrong to give Nhia candies as a way to build trust? What should Pheng have done? Explain.
3. How did Nou convince her mother to go to America?

Chapter Thirty-Nine

1. Why was Nou's family giving high priority?
2. Who sponsored Nou's family?
3. Where in America was Nou's family going to?

Chapter Forty

1. What's your prediction for Nou, Kou and Pheng? What would happen to their relationship? Would Nou see Pheng and Kou again and would she be able to achieve her dreams? Explain