



6700 Merle Hay Road, Johnston, IA 50131 • Voice: 515-278-5233 • Fax: 515-278-4975 • info@johnstonlibrary.com

Johnston Public Library Book Discussion Questions

Born a Crime by Trevor Noah

Summary

Trevor Noah's unlikely path from apartheid South Africa to the desk of *The Daily Show* began with a criminal act: his birth. Trevor was born to a white Swiss father and a black Xhosa mother at a time when such a union was punishable by five years in prison. Living proof of his parents' indiscretion, Trevor was kept mostly indoors for the earliest years of his life, bound by the extreme and often absurd measures his mother took to hide him from a government that could, at any moment, steal him away. Finally liberated by the end of South Africa's tyrannical white rule, Trevor and his mother set forth on a grand adventure, living openly and freely and embracing the opportunities won by a centuries-long struggle.

Born a Crime is the story of a mischievous young boy who grows into a restless young man as he struggles to find himself in a world where he was never supposed to exist. It is also the story of that young man's relationship with his fearless, rebellious, and fervently religious mother—his teammate, a woman determined to save her son from the cycle of poverty, violence, and abuse that would ultimately threaten her own life.

The stories collected here are by turns hilarious, dramatic, and deeply affecting. Whether subsisting on caterpillars for dinner during hard times, being thrown from a moving car during an attempted kidnapping, or just trying to survive the life-and-death pitfalls of dating in high school, Trevor illuminates his curious world with an incisive wit and unflinching honesty. His stories weave together to form a moving and searingly funny portrait of a boy making his way through a damaged world in a dangerous time, armed only with a keen sense of humor and a mother's unconventional, unconditional love. (from the publisher)

Discussion Questions

1. Discuss the role of religion in Trevor's family's life. Why did he and his mother attend so many services and what did they get from each? How do Trevor and his mother view the importance of religion?
2. How and why does Trevor's mother change her parenting style with Trevor's younger brother?

3. How does witchcraft figure into South African society and belief systems?
4. Trevor compares apartheid with Catholic school, both authoritarian and ruthless. In what ways is this true in the book?
5. How does Patricia, Trevor's mom, challenge Trevor to think for himself and stand up for himself?
6. How is Trevor like a chameleon? Why does he do this?
7. Discuss Trevor's relationship with his father. Does Trevor feel good about it?
8. How is Trevor's step-father abusive? Why won't the police take a report about it?
9. Discuss the role of the police in South Africa and this book.
10. What lessons in love does Trevor learn in this book?
11. This book speaks a lot about Trevor's relationship with his mother. How would you express the way Trevor feels about her?
12. How does Trevor Noah's background make his commentary on America so meaningful?
13. Why do you think Trevor Noah has been so successful as a comedian, writer and on the Daily Show?

Discussion Questions from <http://www.book-chatter.com/>