

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?

What 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.]*

Do you face any disadvantages in life?

Any external challenges?

How can you overcome them?

What advantages do you have?

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?

Everyone faces some kind of adversity. What kinds of adversity have you faced in your life? 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?

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 might you like to run?

What does it take to start a business?

How could a person get what they need to start?

What is a profit?

Why is a profit essential for a business to operate?

What is an asset?

Some assets appreciate or are worth more over time, while others depreciate or lose value over time. 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.]

Biddy Mason saved her money and invested wisely. What is an investment? Can you think 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.]*

Philanthropy and Generosity:

“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

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?

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

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.

What skills would you like to develop in your life? If you could become an 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?

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?