

## Questions for *THE SLAVE CATCHER'S WOMAN* by James N. Littlefield

1. Coswell Tims brags about the education he and his brother Jesse received in the antebellum south. How did that education differ from that in the north during the same period?
- 1) How was Sanford's relationship with Coswell and Cynthia different than most relationships between the races?
- 2) Master Billy Boone "liked to freshen up his slaves on a regular basis" with a cobbin paddle and then a bloody whipping. Do you think this was standard treatment for most slaves?
- 3) Jim Bowie is negatively referenced by Coswell as a knife-happy brawler who is also an active slave trader much like Walker. Yet Jim Bowie is an American hero with his Bowie knife and heroic death at the Alamo. How could both be true?
- 4) Coswell describes the plantation slave routine in the cotton fields by alluding to "two course cotton sacks, suspended from their waist or shoulders." What other duties do you think these slaves had in addition to picking 200 pounds of clean cotton daily?
- 5) There is no doubt Coswell Tims loved his hound dogs and understood their abilities and needs. Give examples of this from the story.
- 6) The "Red Man" and the "White Man" did not get along well in this story. Describe their relationship according to Coswell Tims, the storyteller.
- 7) What was the general rule of thumb regarding Negro slaves using public transportation?
- 8) Although it was mentioned that "one -drop" of black blood made a person black in the south, were there other adjustments to this rigid formula to be found there?
- 9) What characteristics did Cynthia have that Coswell admired?
- 10) Coswell once said in the story that "the letter of the law should be obliged," yet he broke the law when it came to Cynthia. Was Coswell Tims a hypocrite?
- 11) Superstition has always played a part in human society and is twice referenced in the story. What two examples were provided?
- 12) An interesting relationship existed at the time of this story between the "Red Man and the "Black Man." Describe that relationship based on the information Coswell gives.
- 13) "Race Science" was popular at this time in an attempt to justify the Negro's inferiority and his enslaved condition. Drapetomania was one mentioned in the book, but a discussion of others might prove quite interesting.
- 14) Explain Coswell's and Cynthia's "predicament."
- 15) One of Coswell's dogs, Daisy Mae, was poisoned by a fugitive in the story. It was referenced that this had happened before and mentioned a minister who tried to save runaway slaves by giving corndodgers laced with strychnine to these gentle but determined animals in an effort to help runaways achieve freedom. How should this behavior be labeled?
- 16) Explain some of the dynamics for the naming of slaves. Why do you think slaves gained two names with the end of the Civil War?
- 17) Coswell Tims considered himself a moral man as most of us do. Do you think that personal assessment was accurate?
- 18) Did Walker deserve to die the way he did and his remains treated so poorly?

- 19) There were many types of whips and whip techniques practiced that Coswell fails to include in his narrative. He does frequently mention the bull whip, but research on the part of the reader might produce some very interesting alternatives.
- 20) Coswell describes himself to Jesse as basically a peaceful person. Do you believe that to be true?
- 21) What were the numerous methods of transportation available to people at the time that are described in the book?
- 22) Did Cynthia have an angry and violent nature because of her many years spent as a slave?
- 23) Decision making is what defines an individual. What did Coswell/Tim rely on when making life's important decisions?
- 24) The phrase "the cost of doing business" is used frequently in the book. That title was seriously considered for the title of this book. Would that have been a good description of the storyline and not just the title of the last chapter?