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STUDY GUIDE QUESTIONS The Color Purple

Assignment 1
Entries 1-21
1. To whom does Celie address her letters?
2. What does Celie's father mean when he says, "You gonna do what your mammy wouldn't"?
3. What does Celie mean when she says she's "big"?
4. How many times has Celie given birth? Who is the father?
5. What does Celie believe has happened to her babies?
6. Who is Mr. ___?
7. Celie's father refuses to let Nettie marry Mr. ___ but says he can marry Celie. How does Celie's father describe her to Mr. _______?
8. Why do both Nettie and Celie work so hard to become educated?
9. What does Celie discover about her daughter? How does she make this discovery?
10. When Mr. ___ tells Celie that Nettie must leave their house, what does Celie give to Nettie? What does Nettie promise Celie she will do?
11. Who is Shug Avery?
12. Who is Sofia, and for what reason does she get pregnant?
13. Harpo's father and Celie advise Harpo to beat his wife. What happens when he does this?
14. Why is Celie jealous of Sofia?

Assignment 2
Entries 22-35
1. How does Shug end up staying with Mr. _______ and Sofia?
2. When does Celie realize her husband's first name is Albert?
3. How many children do Shug and Albert have together? Where are their children?
4. What causes Mr. _______ and Celie to feel close to each other when Mr. _______’s father comes to visit?
5. Why does Celie cherish the quilt she and Sofia are making?
6. What strange habit does Harpo suddenly develop?
7. Why does Sofia leave Harpo? Where does she go?
8. What kind of a business does Harpo start, and where does he open it?
9. Shug sings a song for Celie. What is the song about?
10. Celie tells Shug that Mr. ___ will beat her when she is gone. When Shug asks why, what is Celie's response?
11. Shug asks Celie if it bothers her when Albert and Shug sleep together. Celie tells her she doesn't mind. What are Celie's true feelings toward Shug?
Assignment 1
Entries 1-21

1. To whom does Celie address her letters?
   She addresses her letters to God.

2. What does Celie's father mean when he says, "You gonna do what your mammy wouldn't"?
   Her father says this before he rapes his daughter since his wife is too sick to have sex.
   Celie's father means he will have sex with Celie.

3. What does Celie mean when she says she's "big"?
   She means that her stomach has grown large due to pregnancy.

4. How many times has Celie given birth? Who is the father?
   Celie has given birth twice, and Celie's father is the father of both children.

5. What does Celie believe has happened to her babies?
   She believes her father killed the first baby and sold the second to a man and his wife in Monticello.

6. Who is Mr. ___?
   Mr. ___ is a man from church who is interested in marrying Nettie. His wife was killed, and he has three children in need of a mother.

7. Celie's father refuses to let Nettie marry Mr. ___ but says he can marry Celie. How does Celie's father describe her to Mr. _______?
   Celie's father says she is ugly, dumb, and unable to have any more children, but she is a hard worker and is good with children.

8. Why do both Nettie and Celie work so hard to become educated?
   Nettie and Celie understand they will have to be smart to get away from the life they are living.

9. What does Celie discover about her daughter? How does she make this discovery?
   Celie discovers that her daughter is still alive. While in town, Celie sees a little girl that looks just like Celie and her daddy. When Celie asks the child's name, the little girl's mother tells Celie that the child's name is Pauline, but she calls her Olivia. Olivia is the name Celie had embroidered on her daughter's diapers.

10. When Mr. ___ tells Celie that Nettie must leave their house, what does Celie give to Nettie? What does Nettie promise Celie she will do?
    Celie gives her sister the name of the Reverend who has her daughter, in the hope that the Reverend's wife will help Nettie. Nettie promises to write letters to Celie.

11. Who is Shug Avery?
    She is a singer who performs in the area. Mr. ___'s sisters allude to a romantic relationship between Mr. ___ and Shug.

12. Who is Sofia, and for what reason does she get pregnant?
    Sofia is the girl Harpo loves. She gets pregnant because that is the only way her father will allow her to marry Harpo.

13. Harpo's father and Celie advise Harpo to beat his wife. What happens when he does this?
    Sofia fights back. Harpo's face is covered in bruises, he has a cut lip, and his eye is swollen shut.

14. Why is Celie jealous of Sofia?
    Celie tells Sofia that she is jealous of her strength and will to fight back.
Assignment 2
Entries 22-35

1. How does Shug end up staying with Mr. _______ and Sofia?
   Mr. _______ brings Shug home because she is sick and needs someone to care for her.

2. When does Celie realize her husband's first name is Albert?
   Celie has never called her husband by his first name and is only vaguely aware that Albert is his name until Shug calls him that.

3. How many children do Shug and Albert have together? Where are their children?
   They have three children who are living with Shug's mother.

4. What causes Mr. _______ and Celie to feel close to each other when Mr. _______’s father comes to visit?
   When Mr. _______’s father says mean things about Shug, both Celie and her husband get very defensive. Celie enjoys having Shug around, and so does Mr. _______. Their shared love and adoration for Shug helps them to feel close to each other for the first time.

5. Why does Celie cherish the quilt she and Sofia are making?
   Shug donated her yellow dress for pieces of the quilt. Celie wants the quilt so she has a piece of Shug near her always.

6. What strange habit does Harpo suddenly develop?
   He eats all the time, stuffing himself as often as possible.

7. Why does Sofia leave Harpo? Where does she go?
   She leaves Harpo because he is always trying to control her. She takes their children and goes to live with her sisters.

8. What kind of a business does Harpo start, and where does he open it?
   Harpo opens a jukejoint in his and Sofia's home.

9. Shug sings a song for Celie. What is the song about?
   The song is about a woman who has a no-good man doing her wrong again.

10. Celie tells Shug that Mr. ___ will beat her when she is gone. When Shug asks why, what is Celie’s response?
    Celie says it is because she is Celie, not Shug.

11. Shug asks Celie if it bothers her when Albert and Shug sleep together. Celie tells her she doesn't mind. What are Celie's true feelings toward Shug?
    Celie loves Shug and has developed an attraction to her. Celie is also jealous of Albert’s relationship with Shug.

Assignment 3
Entries 36-48

1. What does Mr. ___ tell Sofia about his children?
   Mr. ___ tells Sofia that his two girls are pregnant and gone, and his son Bud is in and out of jail.

2. Who is Squeak, and how did she lose two of her teeth?
   Squeak is Harpo's girlfriend. She called Sofia a bitch and told her to stop dancing with her man. She then slapped Sofia, and Sofia punched back, knocking out two of her teeth.