

Discussion Questions: *Sing, Unburied, Sing*

1. The novel begins with Jojo's thoughts: "I like to think I know what death is" and "I want Pop to know I can get bloody." How do these thoughts set the stage for Jojo's birthday and what follows?
2. Mam and Pop, Leonie and Michael, and Jojo and Kayla represent three generations of a family. Which characters do you find yourself understanding and empathizing with the most?
3. How does Given's death impact Leonie, Pop, and Mam in different ways? When is Leonie visited by him, and why doesn't she tell anyone that she sees him?
4. Discuss the *gris-gris* bag from Pop that Jojo finds hidden in his clothes. What do you think each item in the bag could mean?
5. What is Jojo learning from Pop and Michael about what it means to be a man?
6. Leonie says that from the first moment she saw Michael, he "*saw me ... saw the walking wound I was and came to be my balm.*" How is grief a part of Michael and Leonie's connection to each other?
7. "Memory is a living thing / all that is remembered joins, and lives / the old and the young, the past and the present, the living and the dead." Why does Ward include these lines by Eudora Welty in an epigraph?
8. Richie describes the "new" Parchman Farm as a place where men sit "for hours in small, windowless rooms staring at big black boxes that streamed dreams." Does he think that Parchman Farm has changed for the better over time, and why or why not?
9. How did Richie and Given become ghosts? What are they each seeking?
10. Why is Jojo convinced that "Leonie kill things"? Why are Leonie and Jojo always in conflict, especially concerning how to take care of Kayla?
11. Water plays an important role throughout the novel. Thinking about the name of the town and prison where Pop and Michael are incarcerated, Jojo wonders who the parched man is, and if he looks like Pop, Jojo, or Michael. Which characters seem to need water? Which are of the water?
12. What do you make of the title of the novel? What does song mean to you?

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