

Discussion Questions for *The Cailiffs of Baghdad, Georgia* by Mary Helen Stefaniak

(Some questions taken or adapted from <http://books.wwnorton.com/books/>)

1. Did you like the book cover and title? Did it accurately portray the book inside?
2. Did you find the characters believable? Which of the characters did you like the most? Which did you dislike?
3. Did you find the dialog in the story realistic?
4. What did you think of the plot line development? How credible did the author make the plot? Did the plot take turns you did not expect, or did you find it predictable?
5. Has anyone had any experiences that relate to places or experiences in the book?
6. Gladys is only eleven years old. What effect does having a child narrator have on the novel? How would the story be different through the eyes of an adult?
7. What do you think of Miss Spivey's relationship with Force? May dropped out of high school at age seventeen to marry her husband Ed (who was twenty-nine at the time). What do you think of May's relationship with her considerably older husband?
8. Miss Spivey's stated goal is to "bring democracy and education to the poorest, darkest, most remote and forgotten corner of America." Does she succeed in changing Threestep? Or does Threestep change itself? How does Threestep change her?
9. The white dirt plays a variety of roles in the novel, a source of both creativity and conflict. What are some of the ideas the white dirt symbolizes?
10. What makes Miss Spivey a good teacher? What makes her a bad teacher?
11. Gladys seems especially critical of Miss Spivey for leaving. But other than recounting the connection between the doctor and Miss Spivey, as well as her gift of the book to Theo, the reader never hears about Miss Spivey again. Why do you think Gladys (or the author) chose to withhold this information?
12. In the end, the reader also doesn't receive many details about Force. He's still living in Baghdad, Georgia, and doesn't want the town's name changed. We seem to receive more details about Mavis Davis and other characters in opposition to Miss Spivey, the Cailiffs, and the Boykins. Why do you think we don't hear more about Force?
13. Any comments about the way the book ended?
14. Are there questions you would like to ask?