

Honors World Literature (typically 10th Grade)

Teacher: Mrs. Carol Anne Elwell

Email: celwell@springwoodschool.com

- **Read** *Born a Crime* by Trevor Noah (not young readers or YA version)
- **Answer** the questions below using complete sentences. You may either copy and paste the questions into a new document and type your responses or print the packet and write your answers directly on it.
- **Share** the completed document with me via email (celwell@springwoodschool.com) or bring it to class on the first day of school.
- **Bring** the book with you to school in August.
- **Be ready** for a comprehension test on the book within the first couple of weeks of school.

Questions for Honors World Literature: *Born a Crime*

Trevor Noah is a South African-born Emmy and Grammy-nominated comedian, writer, producer, actor, and political commentator. He hosted Comedy Central's *The Daily Show* from 2015–2022 and the Grammy Awards for six years in a row. Noah is known for his stand-up comedy, which often includes observations about his South African upbringing.

These comprehension and discussion questions for *Born a Crime* by Trevor Noah are designed to encourage critical thinking, literary analysis, and personal connection. They cover key themes such as apartheid, identity, family dynamics, and the power of language.

I. Comprehension & Context Questions (Understanding the Narrative)

- *These questions ensure you understand the plot, setting, and historical context.*
- *Answer them in one or more complete sentences and note the page number for quick reference.*

1. Apartheid Definition:

a. How does Noah explain apartheid as "institutional racism" in the introduction?

b. What was the intended purpose of the apartheid government in creating the "colored" classification?

2. The Title:

a. In the literal sense, what does "Born a Crime" mean?

b. How does Noah's birth violate South African law?

3. Setting the Scene:
 - a. Why does Noah begin the book with an anecdote about being thrown from a moving car?

 - b. What does this immediately tell the reader about his childhood?

4. Cultural Geography:

How does the author describe the difference between his life in Soweto versus his life in the white suburbs of Johannesburg?

5. The "Black Tax":
 - a. What does Noah mean when he refers to the "black tax"?

 - b. How does this concept impact his mother's life and her relationship with her family?

II. Analytical & Literary Questions (Themes and Structure)

- *These questions encourage you to analyze how Noah tells his story.*
 - *Answer them in one or more complete sentences and note the page number for quick reference.*
6. Humor as a Tool-Noah uses humor to discuss serious, often violent topics.
 - a. Why do you think he uses this approach?

 - b. What effect do his jokes have on the reader's understanding of trauma?

 7. Language and Power:

How does Trevor's ability to speak multiple languages serve as a tool for him to navigate different cultural spaces and evade danger?

 8. The Role of Women: Noah writes, "I grew up in a world run by women."

How do his mother and grandmother influence his perspective on gender and personal strength?

 9. Religion vs. Reality:

How does his mother's deep faith contrast with Trevor's own skepticism, and how does this dynamic influence their relationship?

10. Structure:

Why might Noah alternate between telling personal childhood stories and providing historical context about apartheid? How do the two types of chapters work together?

III. Character Study (Patricia Nombuyiselo Noah)

- *These questions focus on the central figure in Trevor's life.*
- *Answer them in one or more complete sentences. Note the p. # as well for quick reference.*

11. Rebellious Spirit:

How would you describe Patricia? What examples does Trevor give to show her "rebellious" nature?

12. Discipline Style:

a. What did you think about Patricia's discipline techniques?

b. How does she raise Trevor differently than she was raised?

13. The Cycle of Violence:

Despite her strength, Patricia stays with an abusive husband (Abel). How does Trevor explain this paradox, and what does it reveal about her vulnerability?

14. The Turning Point:

As a teenager, Trevor commits petty crimes. What is his turning point regarding this behavior, and what does his epiphany say about crime and injustice?

15. Reflection on Justice:

Compare how Trevor describes learning about history in South Africa to how you have learned history in school. What are the dangers of not learning the full, uncomfortable truth about the past?