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## Day 2: *Born on the Water* book discussion and oral history

### **Born on the Water Comprehension Questions: Student Samples**

#### **Student Sample #1:**

1. When the author says, "our people were born on the water," I think she means that her history only begins when her ancestors "were taken and brought here on a ship." The story actually begins "before they were enslaved, they were free."
2. Life in the Kingdom Ndongo was "nestled on the Lukala and the Kwanza Rivers on a high, high plateau in West Central Africa."
  - a. They were happy, they created music, they took care of each other. They knew how to hold a baby close, Mix herbs, how to make gardening tools, armor, and weapons, knew how to make work joyful, how to make music keep them company as they worked, they danced to the melody of horns and stringed instruments.
3. When the author says "ours is no immigration story," I think she means they didn't choose to leave, they just got taken. They didn't "get to pack bags...hug their fathers and mothers, daughters and sons...no promises...of seeing each other soon."
4. The Illustrations in the beginning of the book were bright and happy, and then they turned dark and bleak. The illustrations weren't as clear as before, they became messy. The Colors went from red and Orange (bright) to Blue (cool tone). The people were happy and smiling and it went more of a look of desperation.
5. The mood on page 16 can be described as scary; frightening, violent, very scary. It looks like people are hiding or running away. They were shackled together, one is struggling to break free.
6. What I think the line, "we were born on the water. We come from the people who refused to die" means it shows a transformation where those who survived "became one people, a new people" even though they were brought on the ship as strangers from many different villages.
7. What I think kept the enslaved people going was they remembered their yesterdays, their recipes, and their music. They hoped for better days and freedom. The seeds that they planted would grow their hopes and dreams. " For 250 years, the biggest resistance of all was that the people kept living"
8. Frederick Douglas, and Rosa Parks.
9. The theme that represents the book is being proud of where you come from, understanding your lineage, perseverance and resistance, family history, hope, strength, and unity.

#### **Student Sample #2:**

1. I think she means that her history only began when her ancestors "were taken and brought here on a ship." The story begins "before they were enslaved, [when] they were free."
2. They were happy, they created music, they took care of each other. They knew how to keep a baby close, mix herbs, to make garden tools, armor, and weapons. They knew how to make work joyful, how to make music to keep them company, they danced to the melody of horns and stringed instruments.
3. When the author says, "ours is no immigration story," I think she means they didn't choose to leave, they just got taken. They "didn't get to pack their bags, hug their father and mothers, daughters and sons...no promises...to see each other soon."
4. The illustrations at the beginning of the book were bright and happy, and then they turned dark and bleak. The colors went from warm to cool tones.
5. The mood on page 16 is terror, violent, and frightening. The people are in shackles.
6. I think the line "We were born on the water. We come from the people who refused to die" means it shows a transformation where those who survived became one people, a new people.
7. They hoped for better days and freedom. They will survive because they have each other. For 250 years the biggest resistance of all was that the people kept living.
8. Fredrick Douglas, Rosa Parks
9. The book represents being proud of where you come from, understanding your lineage, and perservance.

**Student Sample #3:**

1. That her history only begins when her ancestors were taken and brought here on a ship, but the story actually begins before they were enslaved when they were free.
2. They made music, took care of each other, made homes, used shells as currency, could work metal into weapons, armor, and tools, could grow crops, could build something from nothing, and they knew how to mix herbs. They had a language, a culture, a home.
3. They were kidnapped and taken as slaves. They weren't allowed to pack bags, or hug loved ones, they couldn't promise each other they would soon see each other again.
4. They are darker and more hazy, not as clear as before or bright. They went from warm tones to cool tones, from red orange and yellow to blue grey and black. The people went from happy to heart broken and depressed.
5. Scary and violent, the people look very broken and very tired. But there's still Resistance and there is still hope.
6. It is a transformation where those who survived became one people a new people because of their situation. Many died but the ones who survived swore to live together.
7. they remembered their recipes, their music, they hoped for better days, for freedom, for their seeds to grow their dreams. "For 250 years the biggest resistance of all was that the people kept living."
8. Fredrick Douglas, Rosa Parks.
9. It represents being proud of where you come from and understanding your past. Perseverance and resistance, family history, hope, community.

**Student Sample #4:**

1. The author says, "our people were born on the water." What does she mean by that? 1619 the white lion before the mayflower mabey born on the boats her history stars when her ancestor were taken and put on to the ship before they were enslaved
2. Describe life in the Kingdom of Ndongo. They were happy the had kids in held them the made music made armer and wepends made instruments
3. What do you think the author means in this sentence, "ours is no immigration story"? They got take from their home not keeping any of their belongings and not being able to know if the were going to see they family ever agin
4. How have the illustrations changed? It went for bright to dark the people look noe sad and no smiles
5. How would you describe the mood of page 16? Why? Very scary and hiding nervs lookes like fier mabey they tired they changed up
6. Here's that line again: "We were born on the water. We come from the people who refused to die." What do you think it means now? They come for pepol who do not want to die some of the killed the selfs
7. What do you think kept the enslaved people going? They had pepol together and the did not want to die the came to gether they were not alone better days and freedom
8. Do you recognize any people on page 34? Who? Pepole that make an impact
9. What theme represents this book? Any final thoughts the people and are ancestry and the way we interpret the things we hear and see and that some times all you need is to be here and liten and do some research

**Student Sample #5:**

1. The author says, "our people were born on the water." What does she mean by that? (pgs. 2-3)She means that her people were born in the ships that made up the trans-Atlantic slave trade.
2. Describe life in the Kingdom of Ndongo. (pgs. 9-10)  
Life in the Kingdom of Ndongo was joyous and rich, knowledge was shared and they had traditions of dance.
3. What do you think the author means in this sentence, "ours is no immigration story"? (pgs. 11-12)  
The author means that the movement from Ndongo to the New World was violent and forced.
4. How have the illustrations changed? (pgs. 13-16)  
They have become darker and taken on harsh and gloomy tones.

5. How would you describe the mood of page 16? Why?  
The mood is hellish and violent.
6. Here's that line again: "We were born on the water. We come from the people who refused to die." What do you think it means now? (pg. 20)  
They are part of a new people, bonded together in survival.
7. What do you think kept the enslaved people going? (pg. 26)  
Family, tradition, and community was what kept enslaved people going.
8. Do you recognize any people on page 34? Who?  
I recognize Frederick Douglass, but not much else.
9. What theme represents this book? Any final thoughts  
The theme is pride, history, and origins.

**Student Sample #6:**

1. The family as they know it was created on the Atlantic slave trade ship.
2. Their lives consisted of learning science and math, using their hands for gardening or making weapons, making music, etc. It was peaceful and filled with creativity and knowledge.
3. This meant that their story wasn't about immigration because they were forcibly taken from their homes and forced to go to America.
4. The illustrations are now scarier and not as peaceful looking as they were before. It's darker, brutal, and much more desperate.
5. The mood is evil, dreary, and like being dragged down.
6. Reborn as a new people through surviving together.
7. The thing that kept the enslaved people going were their families, communities, relationships, and traditions from home.
8. Muhammad Ali, Tuskegee Airmen, Rosa Parks, Fredrick Douglas.
9. The theme is black history, perseverance, and ancestry. This book is good for knowing and informing on history.

**Student Sample #7:**

1. The family as they know it was created on the atlantic ocean ships
2. As peaceful, prosperous, and happy as any other nation, with very well and alive traditions
3. Their people did not willingly come to America
4. Darker, brutal, more desperate
5. Haunting, foreboding, terrifying, evil
6. Their family was born of the people who continued to "resolve to live no matter what." They come from the people who refused to die
7. the memory of the past and the hope for the future, as well as tradition and family
8. Frederick Douglas, Muhammad Ali, Ida B. Wells, Benjamin O. Davis Jr. John Carlos
9. perseverance in the face of tragedy, tradition, family, and fighting for and knowing your rights, ancestry. I think this is a very good and important book for knowing the true extent of history

**Oral History Student Samples****Long Beach Origin Story Interview**

**Student Sample #1:** For this assignment, I interviewed my mother. From her responses, I learned that she grew up in Mexico with a friendly and helpful community which changed as she arrived here, being much bigger but unknown to her with people who did their own thing. She moved from place to place before arriving in Long Beach, Arizona was the last place she lived before settling. She recalled that the metro rides here for the first time were very amusing for her. She stated that the community today has become much worse than when she first arrived with more people living in the streets and an increase in violence. The movement from Mexico

to Long Beach was her biggest challenge as she had to adapt to the new setting and learn another language. She had a few instances where she encountered racism here, having a cup of noodles thrown at her and being hit on the top of the head while riding the bus. Still, she has also experienced how the community fought for similar problems, like the Black Lives Matter march. The story *Born on the Water* correlates to my mom's story, as her experience with the good and bad was important for me to be where I am today helping me learn from her past experiences and take her origin with me as I make my own origin story.

**Student Sample #2:** For this assignment, I interviewed my mom about how she became a part of the Long Beach community. I learned that my uncle Frank moved out here in 1983 and because of this my mom ended up moving out here in 1999, a year after my oldest brother was born. Since first coming to Long Beach, my mom feels that there are much more people here now. To her being a part of Long Beach is really nice because the area she lived in before had people that were rude and not as friendly. She believes she fits into Long Beach really well because she loves being sociable and is always talking and mingling with others. Historic events that my mom has experienced in Long Beach are lots of performances in theatres, musicals, plays, and concerts. Her favorite Long Beach memory was watching the fireworks in the Queen Mary for the Fourth of July. Furthermore, the connection between how I became a part of Long Beach is because of my mom. If it weren't for her moving us out here, I wouldn't be living here. She wanted to stay in her hometown, but it was too expensive to live in that area and all the homes she was looking at weren't what she was looking for. We've been living in the same house that she bought in 1999 and this is my childhood home that I've grown up in. I get to experience living in Long Beach because of her decision.

**Student Sample #3:** Based off what my grandma said, she said that long beach used to be nice and had a very beautifully beach. But ever since oil spilled the beach has changed and became very dirty, and used to be a touristy city where a lot of celebrities used to come and relax. Some historic events that she experienced was when she went to poly high school she experienced the time where many athlete's came out of school and experienced the big poly football games. In the 60's Poly was a predominately white school, so she faced racism but she said she was strong and overcame that. Other than that my Grandma also said she had so many favorite memories that she couldn't even choose a favorite memory. She said that her and her friends used have so much fun, from the nice beaches to even the pike which was like Disneyland back in the day and their was never a dull moment in Long Beach. I feel like this connects to me now because I can kind of relate to this story besides the racism part, but other than that I can relate because me friends like to hangout in Long beach and even find our selves hanging out at the pike even the its not how it used to be back in the day.

**Student Sample #4:** interviewee: my dad,

1. How long have you been living in Long Beach and where were you born? *was born in Orange County in Santa Barbara. I lived in Corona Del Mar during my childhood, and moved to LA to go to college. After 8 years in NYC, I moved to Glendale. I realized I hated living away from the ocean, until my friend set me straight. So I moved to Laguna Beach. I met your mother there, then moved to Long Beach a year after you were born in 2008 because it was more affordable in Long Beach, plus a love of the location and a good theater community. I used to ride my bike from Corona Del Mar to Downtown Long Beach to go to acres of books.*
2. How has Long Beach changed since you moved? *It's gotten more expensive and fancier. It was more rundown--in a nice way. I like the new Long Beach but I miss the old one as well. Fundamentally it hasn't changed that much. Friendly, historical. It's definitely more crowded. It was like a ghost town when I moved.*
3. What historical Long Beach have you been apart of/witnessed? *The flyover of the space shuttle! I was working on a play with my cousin, and the shuttle was being transported to the California science center, strapped to the back of a Boeing 747. I remember thinking, "do they know what they're doing?" It was in the paper! The flew quite low over famous transport historical sites, like the Queen Marry. Your mom made us run up to the roof, and in a few minutes was the 747, and she dipped her wing to the Queen! I also remember*

*when the Navy was still here. We were a navy town. The city was devastated when they pulled out in the 90s. According to my friend, it annihilated the economy.*

4. What is your favorite Long Beach memory? *There are times when our family is basking at the beach and it's clean a beautiful and there are a gazillion things to look at and I think "I love this city." I sound like the chamber of commerce, but it's true. It had cool architecture, its bike friendly and its economically diverse, which is very important to me. Not to dunk on Orange County, but I did not grow up with that. It was a very privileged county. You don't learn as much. Oh! There was the time Robert Garcia saw me in a play! That was quite the performance.*

I feel like this interview helped me understand a lot. Like how people come to be in a community, and the travels the go through to get there. Life can be a long and winding road. But you always settle somewhere. Wether that's on the road or off it is tough to discern.

**Student Sample #5:** Both of my parents are from Mexico City, Mexico. They met in Mexico City one night they were out clubbing and just started talking after that night. My mom already had my brother Tonatiuh. So my dad treated him like his own son. My parents were seeing each other for a bit but then they stopped. During the departure of my parents my dad had left to the U.S he went to Texas first. He lived there for a few months but then went to California cause he had an uncle there. So he landed in Long Beach, California. He was living there a while and went out with his friends one night and it was the night of my moms birthday. So he called her as she was still in Mexico. Her best friend had answered, she gave her the phone and he had said he wished her a happy birthday, and that he had missed her. They started talking again and then they would always call. One day he asked her to come down to California with my brother. He paid for the coyote and she came down to long beach they lived there for a year just the three of them and a year later my mother was pregnant with me and had me in June of 2007. We have been living here ever since. *Born on the Water* helps me understand my origin story because i get to ask the most closest person to me where i come from and i say my real home is Mexico City as my parents love it there so much and wish to go back someday. My parents came here offering me and my brother a much better life here than what it couldve been in Mexico. Long Beach is where i grew up and have always lived I love it. Ive learned that its my community and what happens here affects me.

**Student Sample #6:** Through my grandparents interview, the close-knit beachside community turning into a vibrant, diverse city mirrors the transformative journey detailed in *Born on the Water*. The parallels in our family's migration narrative highlight a shared pursuit of better opportunities, anchoring my origin story in the broader historical context of Long Beach. The interview underscores the challenges faced by the community, resonating with the themes of unity and change explored in *Born on the Water*. This connection deepens my understanding of Long Beach's history, emphasizing how the city's growth and challenges are woven into the fabric of personal narratives. Overall, Aunt Margaret's fictional account serves as a poignant reflection on the dynamic interplay between individual stories and the broader historical tapestry of Long Beach.

**Student Sample #7:** My mom has been in Long Beach since 1988 and this is home to her. It was her first chance at independence and where she experienced a lot of growth in such a diverse city. She was here to witness the Rodney King riots in 1992 and the George Floyd/Black lives matter protests and riots in 2020 here, she witnessed many pride parades and many Cambodian festivals. She was there for the Jewish center's grand opening and went to the Schondlers list exhibit, and she even took me to swim lessons there. She's seen the downtown area become a safer place for me to go to school in, but has also seen the homelessness issue rise to a dangerous level. She graduated college with a masters in social work and started her family here, and this is not only her home but my home. Long Beach is an incredibly diverse place with amazing people seeing positive change everywhere, but also people suffering in our own community. My mom has been in social work as a therapist for 35 years impacting our community through her career at Childnet and I've grown up in that atmosphere. She's taught me ever since I can remember, "Everyone has a story." so never judge someone on the street, or by the color of their skin, or by the way they dress, or look, or talk or who they love. Long Beach is my

home and although my mom only moved here in 1988 and my dad not too long after I consider this place historic to my family for the impact it's had on our values and way of thinking.