

“I am Omar” by Jennifer Berry Hawes and Gavin McIntyre

Comprehension & Discussion Questions

A. Key vocabulary words:

- [Quran](#)
- [Imam](#)
- [Transatlantic slave trade](#)
- [Allah](#)
- [Antebellum](#)
- [Middle Passage](#)
- [Underground Railroad](#)
- [Ramadan](#)
- [Emancipated](#)
- [Evangelize](#)
- [\(African\) Diaspora](#)

B. As you read, use details from the text to respond to the following questions:

- **Introductory Text**
 1. Who was Omar Ibn Said?
 2. What makes Omar’s autobiography historic?
 3. How many surviving texts in Arabic did Omar write?
 4. What country in Africa was Omar from?

- **The closing door**
 1. What event in 1807 launched a frenzied race to increase the number of people who were enslaved and brought to the United States?
 2. What three key events took place when Omar was 31?

- **The din of Babel**
 1. According to Omar, how long did he spend at sea before arriving in Charleston?

- **Flight for freedom**
 1. According to Omar, why did he flee?
 2. How did Omar’s flight for freedom end?

- **No more hiding**
 1. What did Omar write across his jail cell walls?
 2. Who was able to read Omar’s writing?

- Becoming Moro
 1. Who retrieved Omar from jail and where did they take him?
- Becoming Uncle Moro
 1. What common practice from back home did Omar continue to practice?
 2. What was unique about the way in which Omar was treated?
- The hidden plea
 1. What did American Colonization Society members seek to do with emancipated and freeborn Black residents?
 2. What bold plea did Omar make in his letter? Why was it considered bold?
- Breaking the code
 1. What conclusion did John Louis Taylor come to after examining Omar's letter? Was it an accurate one?
- Allah in the Bible?
 1. What religious ceremony did Omar undergo?
- Becoming 'Prince Moro'
 1. What role did folks assume Omar held in his own country, and why? Was this true?
 2. What country did folks believe Omar was from? Was this true?
- Tale of Resistance
 1. What document did Omar begin to write when the Owens' handed him a blank tablet of paper?
- 'The leaning tree'
 1. How long did it take for Omar's autobiography to be translated?
- Twilight of Life
 1. What common Muslim phrase did Omar write at both the beginning and end of the Bible?
 2. How old was Omar when he died?
- Omar as criminal
 1. According to Thomas Paramore and Rev. John Leighton Wilson, how did Omar become enslaved?
- The authentic story
 1. What efforts are African museums undertaking and why?
- The 'wrong' places

1. According to Omar, he was born in a place between two what? Why does he make this statement?

- ‘A true Muslim’

1. According to Imam Amadou Baïdy Sy, did Omar convert to Christianity?

- Close encounter

1. Before they leave Coppe what does the reporting team do with Omar’s text? Why?

B. Discuss your responses to the following questions:

1. What parts of the story most interested and/or surprised you, and why?
2. How does Omar’s story compare to other stories you have heard about Africans who were enslaved in the U.S.? Why is Omar’s story important?
3. Reflect on some of the ways in which Omar’s identity was misrepresented and distorted. How did Omar deal with this, and why do you think he made those choices?
4. Have you faced any similar challenges relating to an aspect of your identity?
5. Do you identify with Omar’s story? Why or why not?
6. How do you feel about how this story ended?