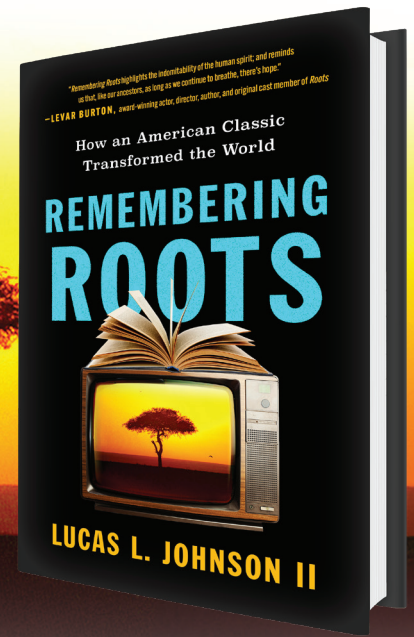


THE LEGACY OF ROOTS

A Reading & Viewing Guide

Explore *Remembering Roots* alongside *Roots* and the historic television miniseries



How to Use This Guide

This guide is intended for book clubs, classrooms, and community groups exploring the lasting impact of *Roots* and its legacy through *Remembering Roots*.

Read, Watch, & Reflect

- Read selections from *Roots*
- Watch corresponding scenes from the miniseries
- Read related passages in *Remembering Roots*
- Use the questions to guide your conversation

Introduction

Remembering Roots and Alex Haley's *Roots* (both the groundbreaking book and the original television miniseries) offer a powerful entry point for exploring history, identity, and the ominous legacy of slavery in America. This discussion guide is designed to help readers and viewers engage thoughtfully with these works, considering not only the story of Kunta Kinte and his descendants, but also the broader cultural and historical contexts they represent. By examining themes such as resilience, memory, family lineage, and the search for belonging, participants can reflect on how *Roots* continues to shape conversations about race, heritage, and storytelling in America.

BOOK CLUB GUIDE

You can move through these in one session or across multiple meetings.

Famous Scenes

The “Behold” Scene

Read the passage in *Roots* or the commentary in *Remembering Roots* (Chapter 1), and watch the scene in the miniseries

- How is the scene empowering, as discussed in *Remembering Roots*?
- Did you ever perform such a ritual with a child, or know someone who did?

The “Whipping Scene”

Read the commentary in *Remembering Roots* (Chapter 2) and watch the scene in the miniseries

- What does this scene reveal about identity and resistance?
- Why has this scene remained so culturally significant?

Exploring Our Personal Histories

Read chapters 5-6 of *Remembering Roots*

- Have you tried tracing your ancestry? If so, how far back and what’s the most interesting thing you discovered?
- Have you spoken with an elder in your family about their experiences? If so, what did you learn?

Core Discussion Questions

Identity & Heritage

- How does Haley explore the tension between remembering one’s heritage and adapting to a new culture?
- What message do you think Haley is sending about the importance of knowing one’s ancestry?
- What cultural values from Kunta Kinte’s Mandinka upbringing persist through the generations?
- How does Alex Haley’s role as both author and descendant change how you read or watch *Roots*?

Family & Survival

- Family is central to *Roots*. How does the idea of family sustain Alex Haley's characters through trauma and change?
- How does *Roots* portray the psychological effects of slavery on both the enslaved and the enslavers?
- How do oral traditions, storytelling, and memory act as survival tools in *Roots*?
- How does *Roots* explore survival beyond just physical endurance?

Power, Oppression & Resistance

- How does *Roots* illustrate both the cruelty and the humanity within systems of oppression?
- In what ways—large or small—do Kunta Kinte and his descendants resist oppression?
- How do you interpret Haley's message about resilience and continuity across generations?
- How do the intersections of race, religion, and power operate throughout the novel?

Cultural Impact

- How does *Roots* (book or miniseries) challenge or reinforce traditional depictions of slavery in American history?
- How does *Roots* humanize the experience of slavery in ways that history books often don't?
- Why do you think *Roots* resonated so deeply when it was first published, and why does it continue to matter today?

Modern Reflection

- In the afterword of *Remembering Roots*, the author talks about a lack of civility in society today. In what ways can we be more civil toward one another? Better yet, how can we “disagree better?”
- Did reading or watching *Roots* change the way you think about American history or your own place in it?

CLASSROOM GUIDE

Exploring Our Personal Connections

Read Chapter 3 in *Remembering Roots*

- In this chapter, a youth talks about his visit to the Alex Haley Museum and Interpretive Center, saying, “I needed to be here. I’m glad I came.” *Remembering Roots*, the original book *Roots*, and miniseries, all talk about knowing and remembering one’s family history. Have you tried to trace your family history? What did you discover?
- Have you ever talked to one of your grandparents (or a family elder) about what it was like when they were growing up?

Storytelling Exercise

Storytelling is a key theme in *Remembering Roots* as well as the original book and miniseries. You don’t have to be a famous author to tell a story. You can do so by simply writing it down, or journaling.

- Write a short story, journal entry, or reflection about a family member, a meaningful memory, or a moment that has shaped your identity.

Thematic Discussions for Class Use

Identity & Culture

- Why is Kunta’s name so important to him? What does it represent about culture and selfhood?
- What does *Roots* teach us about how culture can survive even under extreme oppression?
- Over generations, how do Kunta’s descendants keep pieces of their ancestry alive?
- How do relationships between parents and children change as time and circumstances change?

History & Perspective

- How does Haley show that enslaved people were more than victims—they were creators, survivors, and leaders too?
- Chapter four of *Remembering Roots* talks about the impact *Roots* (the original book and miniseries) had on race relations. How can *Roots* be used to have meaningful conversations about tough topics like slavery and racism?

Legacy & Responsibility

- How are African values and traditions passed down—and what happens when they are lost or transformed?
- What responsibilities do storytellers have when representing collective trauma?

- What role do stories and memories play in keeping the family connected?
- Why do you think *Roots* had such a powerful impact when it was first published or shown on TV, and continues to spark discussion now?

Closing Reflections

- If you had a chance to talk to Alex Haley, what would you ask him?
- At the end of *Roots* (book or miniseries), Haley's descendants finally get their freedom and make Tennessee their home. Think about someone that's of another race than yourself getting their freedom, or independence, for the first time. What is your hope for them?

OPTIONAL ACTIVITY: ROOTS TRIVIA CHALLENGE

Use this as an icebreaker, closing activity, or group competition.

1. In which African country is Kunta Kinte born?
2. What is the name of Kunta Kinte's village?
3. What tribe does Kunta Kinte belong to?
4. What is Kunta Kinte captured while doing?
5. What was the name given to Kunta Kinte by slave owners?
6. What does Kizzy learn to do that gets her in trouble?
7. Why is Kizzy sold away from her parents?
8. What country is Chicken George sent to for several years?
9. What major war occurs during the later generations of *Roots*?
10. Who played the adult Kunta Kinte?
11. Which actor portrayed Kunta Kinte later in life?
12. Who played Kizzy as an adult?
13. Which actor portrayed Chicken George?
14. Which actor played the character known as 'Fiddler' in the original miniseries "*Roots*?"
15. What role did Maya Angelou play in the series?
16. What role did Cicely Tyson play in the series?
17. Which actress played Missy Anne, Kizzy's childhood companion?
18. How many Emmy Awards did "*Roots*" win?
19. What TV network aired "*Roots*" in January 1977?
20. What storytelling method is heavily used in the book and miniseries?
21. Why is *Roots* considered groundbreaking television?
22. How many consecutive nights did the original broadcast span?
23. What state designated *Roots* an "official state book" in 2024?
24. Where in Tennessee is Alex Haley's childhood home?
25. Where is Alex Haley buried?
26. What's the name of Alex Haley's childhood friend who he planned to write a book about, but it ended up being written by an Associated Press reporter?
27. What TV series about an American college football coach hired to manage a struggling English soccer team mentioned the book *Roots* in an episode?
28. What rapper made 'King Kunta' the title of a rap song on one of his albums?
29. What's the name of the book released in 2026 that commemorates the 50th anniversaries of the book *Roots* and the original "*Roots*" miniseries?
30. In introductory remarks during the second inauguration for President Barack Obama on Jan. 21, 2013, former U.S. Senator Lamar Alexander said Alex Haley "lived his life by these six words." What are they?

TRIVIA ANSWERS

1. The Gambia
2. Juffure
3. Mandinka
4. Gathering wood to make a drum
5. Toby
6. Read and write
7. For forging a pass to help a fellow slave escape
8. England
9. The American Civil War
10. LeVar Burton
11. John Amos
12. Leslie Uggams
13. Ben Vereen
14. Louis Gossett Jr.
15. Kunta Kinte's grandmother
16. Kunta's mother
17. Sandy Duncan
18. Nine
19. ABC
20. Oral history passed down through generations
21. It brought widespread attention to the history of slavery and African American heritage
22. Eight
23. Tennessee
24. Henning
25. The front lawn of the Alex Haley Museum and Interpretive Center
26. Fred Montgomery
27. "Ted Lasso"
28. Kendrick Lamar
29. *Remembering Roots*
30. "Find the good and praise it."