

# PHILADELPHIA UNIVERSITY

## School of Liberal Arts

### *L354 - Area Studies: Africa*

#### **Discussion Questions for So Long a Letter**

1. To what extent is Islam responsible for the oppression of women in Senegal?
2. What hope does Bâ see for the future?
3. Why doesn't Rama leave her husband?
4. How has western education and a more "modern" economy changed family life in Senegal?
5. What price, if any, does Aissatou have to pay for leaving her husband?
6. What alternative ending would you propose for So Long a Letter? Why?

#### **Discussion Questions for Sundiata**

1. Why is polygamy so significant in the narrative?
2. Why does the epic tell the listener/reader so little of what Sundiata is thinking and feeling?
3. What is Sundiata's attitude towards anger and violence in human relations?
4. Why does the story take so long to get directly to Sundiata's life?
5. How did Sundiata's exile shape his emotional development?
6. What does the character of Sogolon tell us about the place of women in "traditional" Mande society?

#### Discussion Questions for In the Footsteps of Mr. Kurtz

#### **1-60:**

1. Who is Mr. Kurtz and why is he part of the book's title?
2. What do the terms "Kleptocracy" and "Radio Trottoir" mean in The Congo?
3. According to Wrong, what do big, modern International Hotels in African

Capitals symbolize?

4. Analyze the role of Henry Stanley and King Leopold II in the making of the colonial Congolese state.

**62-151:**

1. Who is Larry Devlin and how did he influence events in the post-Independence Congo?
2. Why was the “West” so scared of Patrice Lumumba?
3. Reconstruct how Mobutu seized power in The Congo.
4. Enumerate 3 major flaws in Mobutu’s leadership style.
5. What was the “authenticity” movement and what were Mobutu’s motives in implementing it?
6. What was “Zairensation” and what were Mobutu’s motives in implementing it?
7. Why does Wrong describe mineral resources as a curse on African nations?
8. What was meant by the phrase “Article 15” in Mobutu’s Congo

**151-248:**

1. Who was Simon Kimbangu and what does his life reveal about Congolese culture?
2. What is the “La Sape” and “Sapeur” phenomenon and why is it culturally significant?
3. Why did the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank lend so much money to such a risky creditor as Mobutu Congo?
4. According to Mobutu’s son-in-law Janssen, what was a typical day like for The Congo’s head of State?
5. Why did Mobutu’s regime finally fall?

**Discussion Questions for The Graves Are Not Yet Full**

**1-63:**

1. According to Berkeley, what are “kinship corporations” and how have they

destabilized Africa?

2. What is the “kill the slave through the slave” strategy? Who employs it?
3. What role did the U.S. play in creating the crisis in Liberia? Should we be responsible for helping resolve the crisis there?
4. Identify 3 tactics Charles Taylor used to gain and keep power in Liberia.
5. Who are the Americo-Liberians and what roles have they played in Liberian history?

**195-245:**

1. How and why is the crisis in the Sudan a “big man” conflict?
2. What are the two requirements of power in the Sudan?
3. To what extent is Yoweri Museveni a “new kind of African leader”?
4. Identify at least 4 “conditions” which led to the collapse of Uganda in the 1960s-1970s.
5. Enumerate 3 ways the United States can foster stability and progress in Africa.

**245-285:**

1. What role did France play in the crises in Rwanda and Liberia?
2. What is Rwanda’s “culture of obedience” and how did it contribute to the genocide there?
3. What is “The Hamitic Hypothesis” and how has it been a factor in Rwandan history?
4. How valid is it to compare the Rwandan and European Jewish Holocausts?  
How were they the same? How were they different?
5. Identify at least 3 problems the International Tribunal judging Rwandan war criminals has faced.