

Suggested Seminar Discussion Questions

"Passing" by Langston Hughes

1. Make a prediction about what the story is about based on the title. Review what things were going on during that time period (the same time period as "Guests in the Promised Land").

2. What do you think the word "passing" means?

3. The first five lines of the story state:

"I felt like a dog, passing you downtown last night and not speaking to you. You were great, though. Didn't give a sign that you even knew me, let alone I was your son. If I hadn't had the girl with me, Ma, we might have talked."

What is your prediction of what the story is about after reading these first few lines of the text? Why do you think the story is called "Passing"?

4. Why does Jack "pass" his mother?

5. How does Jack feel about his appearance? How do you think his siblings feel?

6. What happened to Jack's father?

7. After his mother reads Jack's letter, how do you think she feels?

8. How do you think Jack will raise his family? Do you think he and his new family will have contact with his mother and siblings?

9. How do you feel about Jack's actions and choices? Explain. What would you have done in his situation?