

SO WHAT ARE YOU ANYWAY?

MQA

Q1. What do you think is problematic with the question "what are you, anyway"?

Ans The pronoun 'what' is generally used for inanimate objects. When we address a human being, we definitely don't use "what". The pronoun attributed to living objects is 'who'. When the Nortons ask Carole, 'what' she is, it makes her seem less of a human.

Q2 Is there any other word in the text that does the same thing?

Ans "They're neither one thing, nor the other." This phrase dehumanises Carole by making her merely a "thing".

Q3 Does Carole understand the terms race and mulatto?

Ans Carole does not understand the term 'race'. But from the tone of the Nortons she can deduce that it is something bad. She has not heard of the word 'mulatto', either. She is so taken aback when she is asked whether she is a mulatto or not, she fumbles and asks what the word meant.

Q4 When Carole first sees the Nortons, does she identify them as white-skinned? Ans When Carole first sees the Nortons, she does notice Mr Norton's sunburnt face. But the skin colour does not strike her as different from her own skin tone.

Q5 What is the word she uses to describe Mrs Norton?

The word Carole uses to describe Mr Norton is big. She also notices that his face is sunburned.

Q6. Do you think Carole understands colour of skin or race as a major difference between people?

Ans6 Carole is too young and too innocent to be able to comprehend the differences that divide the world. Even though she thinks that Mr Norton's face is a bit sunburnt, it does not bother her that he is of a different skin tone. In sharp contrast are the Nortons whose sole concern is to find out Carole's ethnic identity.

Q7 What is the first thing Mrs Norton notices about Carole?

Ans The first thing that Mr Norton notices about Carole was her black doll. He was baffled to see it and exclaimed that he had never seen anything like that in his entire life.

Q8. In para 32 Mrs Norton says that the world is not ready for mix people though she does not mind them. Do you think she is being honest about her feelings? How do we know?

Ans. Mrs Norton is honest about her feelings for mixed people because she does not mind Carole as much as Mr Norton does. In fact, she keeps reminding Mr Norton that she is just a child. She makes little gestures, asks Mr Norton to wake the girl up for the meal. She also urges Mr Norton to make way for Carole when she gets up to go to the bathroom.

Q9 What do you think is the difference between Carole and the Nortons the way they approach people ?Do they treat everyone equally?

ANS Carole is still too young to be conscious of differences of race and ethnicity that divide the world. Hence her approach to most people is non-judgemental. In stark contrast, the Nortons were from the very beginning disapproving of Carole. They kept Carol's mother is a white woman. But Carol says she would colour her using many different colours. Why do you think that is? What is happening prodding her about her ethnic identity and wondered if she is of mixed race.

10. What is Carole talking about?

Ans Mr Norton, curious about Carole's ethnic roots asks her what colour she would make her father's face, if she were to draw him. Carole is puzzled by this question and obviously does not know what colour to use. So she says that she would never use one colour.

Q11. Why does Carol want to colour her mother using different colours?

Ans Carole wants to colour her mother in different shades, in spite of the fact that she is a white woman. This is because there is no one colour to depict the whiteness of the skin. She falters and says that she could be yellow. But when the Nortons ask if her mother is Chinese, she disagrees. She then mentions that her mother's face could be red. Moreover, at such a young age, Carole is not aware how differences in skin tone denote one's ethnic identity.

12.. What does this tell us about the labels black and white that are used for people? Are they accurate? Do children think in terms of these labels?

ANS The labels 'black' and 'white' are nothing but social constructs. Children like Carole are easily the least discriminate. This is obviously proved by the fact that the protagonist, Carole, knew that people come in different skin tones but she never passed discriminatory comments while dealing with white people.

Children do not recognise these labels unless they are consciously made aware of their ethnic origins and racial standing in the society.

13. What do you think Carol has learnt about people and their attitude towards race? Do you think her innocent outlook on life will remain the same after the flight ?

ANS Young Carole, who was so far not affected by racial discrimination, was made conscious of her own racial identity by the Nortons. She understood that she was 'mulatto, a child of parents who were not of the same ethnic identity. This realisation was bound to change her innocent and naive outlook on life. One flight to her grandparents' changed her entire life.

14. Do you think it was thoughtless of the Nortons to ask a child such questions? Would they have asked an adult the same questions?

Ans. It was thoughtless of the Nortons to ask Carole questions about her racial identity. They knew that she was a child, travelling without her parents. They took advantage of her vulnerability and innocence, asking her insensitive questions.

They probably would not have dared to ask an adult the same questions.