

## **Discussion Questions for Harriet Jacobs', Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl**

1. What was/is the purpose of a slave narrative? How are they useful to students of history? What are their limitations?
2. Incidents was the first full-length slave narrative written by a woman; what made it different from men's narratives and what made it so controversial?
3. How could Jacobs' narrative be characterized as a sentimental novel? In what ways did it reinforce traditional gender roles for women?
4. How does Jacobs fit the historical characterization of an eighteenth century southern slave woman? How does her narrative challenge this characterization?
5. Who is the audience Jacobs addresses in her narrative? How do her experiences compare to those of the women who by and large read her book?
6. How does Jacobs' narrative enlighten the reader to religion and women's relationships at this time?
7. How can Jacobs' book be understood as a call for gender equity, as well as racial equality?
8. Why do you think some scholars have questioned the authenticity of Jacobs' narrative? How did Jacobs contribute to this speculation?

## **General Feedback for Paper One**

- Every essay *is* an academic essay
  - Proper references for historical actors and scholars
  - Organization is key to a strong essay
    - Strong, clear, argumentative thesis
    - Directive topic sentences
    - Each main point relates explicitly to the thesis
  - Use of evidence in proving your main points
  - Proper use of citations
- Always remember the purpose of the assignment:
- To prove that you've read and understood the book
  - To demonstrate you can think critically about historical ideas and concepts