Selection Review #1

At Her Majesty’s Request: An African Princess in Victorian England

Chapters 1 and 2

1. Who were Commander Forbes and King Gezo? Tell how the two men differed from one another. Commander Forbes was an officer in the British Navy who was sent to Africa on a mission to end the slave trade there. Gezo was the powerful ruler of the Dahomian nation in Africa. The two differed in many ways beyond the obvious differences in race and nationality. Forbes was working to end the slave trade, while Gezo captured fellow Africans to sell as slaves. Gezo was cruel and focused on power, while Forbes was kind and concerned about justice.

2. Tell how and why Commander Forbes rescued the girl he later called Sarah. Gezo had killed the girl’s parents, a village chief and his wife, and took Sarah and many other villagers as captives. During Forbes’ visit to Dahomey, the Dahomans began to kill the captives as part of an ancient ritual to honor the dead. Forbes tried unsuccessfully to stop the killing. He did manage to buy several of the victims. He saved Sarah by telling Gezo that the Queen of England would not respect him if he killed a child. Gezo wanted the powerful Queen’s respect, and agreed to spare Sarah’s life. He gave her to Forbes to take back to England as his gift to the Queen.

3. What did Commander Forbes expect to do with Sarah when they arrived in England? Why was he surprised at Queen Victoria’s response to his letter about Sarah? Forbes planned to make Sarah part of his family. Although he wrote to Queen Victoria and told her that Sarah was a gift from Gezo, he did not expect the Queen to take notice of Sarah. Queen Victoria was among the most powerful rulers in the world. She was almost never seen in public and had very few visitors. This is why Forbes was surprised when the Queen asked to meet Sarah.

4. How did Sarah’s life change when she arrived in England? Sarah was very young and had been through terrible experiences. Now she was living among strangers in a place that was very different from her home. The city of London was much larger and busier than her small village home. People were of a different color. They spoke, dressed, and ate differently from people in Africa. Sarah had to adapt to being a celebrity in England and learn to take her place in the Forbes family.

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5. Why did Sarah return to Africa? Why was the move probably a difficult one? When winter arrived, Sarah was often sick. The Queen was told that the change in climate probably caused Sarah’s poor health. She worried that Sarah’s health could worsen, and she might even die, if she did not return to the familiar climate of Africa. Queen Victoria decided to send Sarah to Sierra Leone to be educated in a British missionary school.

This move was probably very difficult for Sarah. She had lived in England for only a year. She had adjusted to many changes when she came to England. Now she would have to go through great changes again. She would miss the Forbes family that had welcomed her into their home. She would especially miss Commander Forbes, who had recently died from an illness and whom she would never see again.
Selection Review #2

At Her Majesty’s Request: An African Princess in Victorian England

Chapters 3 and 4

1. How did Sarah differ from other students at the school she attended in Freetown, Sierra Leone? Because the Queen of England paid for her living expenses, Sarah had nicer things and better conditions than other students at the school. She had her own room, while most students shared space in a dormitory. She wore fancy dresses made in England, while most students wore simple dresses that they or the staff had sewn. The staff favored Sarah and gave her special attention.

2. Describe problems with the way African girls were taught at the missionary school. There were strong cultural differences between the English teachers and the African students. Most English people at this time considered African culture “primitive” and “savage,” so the teachers looked down on the students’ cultural heritage and did not encourage it. The students were expected to dress and act as young English ladies. They were taught the English culture and learned skills typically taught to English girls. Many of these were of little use to them in Africa.

3. Why might Sarah place little value on her African heritage? Sarah was quite young when she came to England. Her memories of her African childhood were tragic ones, which she probably wanted to forget. Even when she returned to Africa to attend school in Sierra Leone, she lived as an English girl and did not take part in the African culture. Sarah experienced many difficult changes and painful losses in her life, and she did what she needed to do to survive. Because she lived in the English culture, it was important for her to get used to it. Her friends and adoptive family were English, and she had no one with whom to share her African heritage if she had wanted to.

4. Why did Sarah return to England? Describe her life with the Schoen family. No one is certain why the Queen suddenly asked that Sarah be returned to England after living in Sierra Leone for four years. It is possible that Sarah was unhappy in Sierra Leone and asked the Queen to bring her back to England. Sarah lived comfortably with the Schoen family in England. She received an excellent education in their home and developed strong ties to the family. She also maintained relationships with members of the royal family. Sarah traveled, took part in social activities, and dressed fashionably.

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5. **Why was it important for Sarah to get married? What made it especially difficult for her to find a husband?** English ladies of the upper class did not work, so they were not able to support themselves financially. Though Sarah had lived as an upper class lady, she had no title or personal fortune. The Queen had taken care of her financial needs, but Sarah could not depend on the Queen to provide for her for all of her life. It was important for her to marry so that she would have someone to provide for her. However, English women were expected to marry men of similar status and wealth. This was a problem for Sarah. She was black and African, while the young men she knew were white, wealthy, and British. Because Sarah did not fit into any clear social class in England, it would be difficult to find a husband who would be considered an appropriate match for her.
Selection Review #3

At Her Majesty’s Request: An African Princess in Victorian England

Chapters 5 - 7 and Epilogue

1. Why didn’t Sarah want to marry James P. L. Davies? Why did the Queen encourage her to marry him? Sarah did not want to marry Mr. Davies because she did not know him well or love him. The Queen believed that women should marry, and that Davies was a good match for Sarah. Davies was a businessman who would be able to provide for Sarah. He was also an African educated by the English, just as Sarah was, and had a good reputation among the English who knew him. The Queen believed that because of his good character and similar background to Sarah’s, as well as his financial stability, Davies would be a suitable husband for her.

2. What made Sarah change her mind and agree to marry Davies? The Queen felt that Sarah would not be able to make a wise decision about marriage while she enjoyed the comfort and security of the Schoen home. Instead, she sent her to live in an elderly woman’s home in Brighton. Sarah was miserable there. The move reminded her how little control she had over her own life. Soon after, the Queen’s husband’s died, and Sarah probably thought about the fact that she might not always have the Queen to support her. Although she did not love Davies, she probably realized that her marriage to him would at least provide her with a permanent home. She decided that marriage was her best option under the circumstances.

3. What are some ways that Sarah’s life changed after she married James P. L. Davies? In what ways did it remain the same? There were several important changes in Sarah’s life when she got married. After the marriage, Sarah moved to Africa and began working as a teacher in Sierra Leone, at the same school she had attended as a child. She learned to love her husband and became a mother a year later. Sarah’s life was the same in that she continued to live a privileged life as an upper class lady. She still had a special relationship with the Queen and with close friends in England.

4. Explain why some teachers at the Female Institution in Freetown resented Sarah. Some teachers resented Sarah because of her upper class experience and special relationship with the Queen. Sarah was well-educated and as knowledgeable of the English culture as the British teachers at the school. She proved that the English were not better than the Africans. Sarah also had her own ideas about how the African girls should be trained, and these ideas did not always agree with those of the English teachers. These differences in opinion also caused the teachers to resent Sarah.
5. **Describe the circumstances of Sarah’s death. Tell about the family she left behind.** Sarah went to Madeira, an island near Portugal, to be treated for tuberculosis when she became too ill to continue teaching. Madeira’s dry climate was considered helpful for people with lung problems. Sarah did not get well, however, and died four months after arriving in Madeira, at the age of about 38. Sarah left behind her husband, James P.L. Davies, and her three children. Her oldest daughter, Victoria, was seventeen when Sarah died, and was the Queen’s godchild. She remained close to the Queen until her death. Sarah’s other two children, Arthur and Stella, were also educated in Europe after their mother passed away.
Literature Test #1

At Her Majesty’s Request: An African Princess in Victorian England
Chapters 1 and 2

1. Describe Commander Forbes and Gezo. How did each hope to influence the other?

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2. Who was Sarah Forbes Bonetta? Tell how Commander Forbes rescued her.

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continued...
3. Explain why Sarah was probably overwhelmed by her new life in England.

4. Why did Sarah go back to Africa? Tell how she probably felt about returning.
Literature Test #2

At Her Majesty’s Request: An African Princess in Victorian England

Chapters 3 and 4

1. List several ways that Sarah was different from other students at the school she attended in Sierra Leone.

2. What was wrong with the education received by the African students at the missionary school in Sierra Leone?

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3. Describe Sarah’s life in England after she left Sierra Leone.

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4. Why did it seem important for Sarah to find a husband? Why would it be difficult for her to find one that would be suitable?

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Literature Test #3

At Her Majesty’s Request: An African Princess in Victorian England

Chapters 5 - 7 and Epilogue

1. Why did the Queen and Sarah disagree about the marriage proposal that Sarah received?

2. Why did Sarah leave her home with the Schoens? How did her new living situation affect her decision about marriage?

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3. List three ways that Sarah’s life changed after she married Mr. Davies.

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4. Describe the end of Sarah’s life.

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Vocabulary Test #1

At Her Majesty’s Request: An African Princess in Victorian England
Chapters 1 and 2

WRITE SENTENCES FOR THE FOLLOWING WORDS:

- brutally
- aggressive
- occasional
- crucial
- debt
- treacherous
- mocked
- fatally

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Vocabulary Test #2

At Her Majesty’s Request: An African Princess in Victorian England
Chapters 3 and 4

WRITE SENTENCES FOR THE FOLLOWING WORDS:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>dynamic</th>
<th>status</th>
<th>conceited</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>regard</td>
<td>distinct</td>
<td>fret</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>motivation</td>
<td>altered</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Vocabulary Test #3

At Her Majesty’s Request: An African Princess in Victorian England
Chapters 5 - 7 and Epilogue

WRITE SENTENCES FOR THE FOLLOWING WORDS:

tentative
devastated
credentials

indefinite
desolate
controversy

resented
infinitely
primarily