

James Baldwin: Art, Sexuality and Civil Rights

Reading Comprehension Questions

PRE-READING THOUGHTS ABOUT JAMES BALDWIN, BASED ON NPR STORY

After discussing the NPR story, record your initial impressions about James Baldwin, his writings, political activism and historical significance.

READING COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

Use *The New York Times* obituary about James Baldwin to answer the following questions. Write your answers using complete sentences.

1. Why do you think that Baldwin believed that “only white Americans can consider themselves to be expatriates”? What larger statement was Baldwin making about race?

2. How did James Baldwin self-identify? How did he describe himself?

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UPPER GRADES ACTIVITY

3. In addition to civil rights, for what other causes was Baldwin an advocate? (You may answer this question by compiling a list, using bullet points or numbering.)

4. In what year was Baldwin's first novel published?

5. What was the title of Baldwin's first book?

6. Describe the plot behind Baldwin's first book.

7. What did Baldwin identify as the inspiration behind *Go Tell It on the Mountain*?

8. What are the names of the two books written by Baldwin that were criticized by some activists in the civil rights movement? Why were these activists critical of these particular works?

9. Compare and contrast Eldridge Cleaver's and Langston Hughes's thoughts about James Baldwin and his

