



Wait for God to Notice

By Sari Fordham

A Study Guide

Synopsis

In the midst of Idi Amin's dictatorship, Fordham and her family moved to Uganda as Seventh-day Adventist missionaries. In lush and observant prose, Fordham describes the country she loves, the dangers her family faces, her parents' conflict, and the insular, peculiar faith that shaped her.

Author Bio

Sari Fordham has lived in Uganda, Kenya, Thailand, South Korea, and Austria. She received an M.F.A. from the University of Minnesota, and now teaches at La Sierra University. She lives in California with her husband and daughter. This is her first book.

Reasons to Include This Book in the Classroom

In 1975, Uganda's Finance Minister escaped to England saying, "To live in Uganda today is hell." Idi Amin had declared himself president for life, the economy had crashed, and Ugandans were disappearing. One year later, Sari Fordham's family arrived as Seventh-day Adventist missionaries. *Wait for God to Notice* is an account of her family's time in Uganda during Idi Amin's dictatorship. Students will be introduced to a unique time in world history and learn how the repercussions of colonialism reverberated long after it had ended. The family narrative highlights how even loving families can disagree with one another. The book showcases empathy, humor, and resilience.

Study Questions and Writing Prompts

Prologue and Part I

1. After reading the prologue, what themes and conflicts would you expect to see in the memoir?
 2. What are some characteristics of the Adventist faith? How is it different from other Christian faiths? How is it similar?
 3. What reasons does the author give for writing the memoir?
 4. What dangers of living in Uganda are mentioned? Which are presented, or made to seem, worse than the others?
- Writing Prompt:** Write a 500-word essay detailing the changes that were taking place in Uganda as the Fordham family arrived, and the reasons for them.
5. What event marked the family's first sabbath detailed in the book? How did it transpire? How did it end?
 6. Does Mrs. Fordham ever question her faith? If so, what event causes her to do so?
 7. The Fordham family visits a national park in Uganda and is astounded by the number and beauty of the hippos. Later, the government slaughters the entire hippo population. How is this done? To what ends? Does Mr. Fordham ever regret buying the hippo teeth?
 8. Fordham discusses more of the political climate in Chapter 7. How would you describe what is happening in Uganda? What aspects reverberated most with you? Why?

Prologue and Part I (cont'd)

Writing Prompt: Write a 750-word essay detailing how politics at the time of the Fordham family's stay in Uganda played a role in the day to day life of ordinary citizens, comparing it to a similar time in American history.

10. What event occurs in Chapter 9 that changes America's relationship with Uganda? How does it affect the Fordham family? How does it affect Uganda as a whole?

11. How did the crisis caused by the events discussed in question 10 end? What contributed to it ending? Why do the Fordhams decide to stay?

12. Even after six months the Fordham girls are still considered an oddity among some local children. What word do the children use to refer to the sisters? What does the word mean?

13. Eventually, Seventh-day Adventism, along with the other forms of Protestantism, was banned in Uganda. What was the reason given? How did the family react?

14. If the Fordham family were to leave Uganda, where would they go? How would they get there? What, if anything, would they be able to take with them?

Writing Prompt: Write a 500-word essay on this missionary family's idea of death. Do you agree? Disagree? What does "faith" mean to you?

Part II

1. What action forced Idi Amin out of Uganda? How did it come about? Where did he go? What did his overthrow look like for the rest of the country? The surrounding area?

2. Where was the Fordham family living when Amin was overthrown? What were they doing there?

3. What did the Fordham family fear was next for Uganda? How did each one of them feel about it/prepare for it?

4. What changed for the Adventist Church in Uganda? How did the church react? What was looming in the background of it all? How did it affect the Church and the Fordham family?

Part II (cont'd)

5. What does the title of the memoir, *Wait for God to Notice*, refer to? Where does the phrase come from? How does it relate to the book's larger themes?

6. How does the section title Civil War extend beyond the country and into the Fordham household? How is it divided? What are the arguments each side presents? How does it end?

7. How does the author feel about leaving Uganda for what seems like the last time? What else is going on as they leave? What indication does she give of the future?

Writing Prompt: Write a 500-word essay about a time you said goodbye. How did you feel? Were you excited about the future or were you sad to leave the past behind?

Part III and Epilogue

1. Where does the Fordham family go after leaving Uganda? What is Texas like in 1984? What could the author and her sister have done differently in order to fit in better? Do you think they should have punched someone? Why or why not?

2. How does life for the author change when she's fifteen? What firsts does she encounter? What happens to her attitude toward God and prayer? How does she reconcile this with her faith?

3. What happens to Mrs. Fordham? How old is the author when it happens? What is Mrs. Fordham's reaction? What is the author's? How does it change the author?

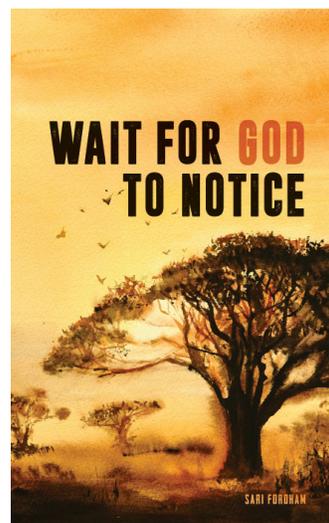
4. Why does the author return to Uganda? What does she feel is the same? What does she think has changed? What realizations does she have about her mother? How does she feel upon returning to the house on the hill?

5. What previously untold story does the author tell in the Epilogue? How does it come about? What feelings does the author have toward it? Do they conflict?

Writing Prompt: Write a 750-word essay on the author's experiences in Uganda as a child and as an adult, comparing and contrasting the two experiences. How much do you think age has contributed to the differences? How do you think she would feel returning at the end of her life?

Standards for the English Language Arts (as compiled by NCTE and IRA)

1. Students read a wide range of print and non-print texts to build an understanding of texts, of themselves, and of the cultures of the United States and the world; to acquire new information; to respond to the needs and demands of society and the workplace; and for personal fulfillment. Among these texts are fiction and nonfiction, classic and contemporary works.
2. Students read a wide range of literature from many periods in many genres to build an understanding of the many dimensions (e.g., philosophical, ethical, aesthetic) of human experience.
3. Students apply a wide range of strategies to comprehend, interpret, evaluate, and appreciate texts. They draw on their prior experience, their interactions with other readers and writers, their knowledge of word meaning and of other texts, their word identification strategies, and their understanding of textual features (e.g., sound-letter correspondence, sentence structure, context, graphics).
4. Students employ a wide range of strategies as they write and use different writing process elements appropriately to communicate with different audiences for a variety of purposes.
5. Students apply knowledge of language structure, language conventions (e.g., spelling and punctuation), media techniques, figurative language, and genre to create, critique, and discuss print and non-print texts.
6. Students develop an understanding of and respect for diversity in language use, patterns, and dialects across cultures, ethnic groups, geographic regions, and social roles.
7. Students participate as knowledgeable, reflective, creative, and critical members of a variety of literacy communities.



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