

# GROUP READING GUIDE

## QUESTIONS *for* DISCUSSION

### William Henry is a Fine Name

by Cathy Gohlke

1. Robert felt trapped between the adamant things his mother said in support of slavery and his father's strong opposition to it, and especially between his love for them both. Have you ever felt trapped between authority figures in your life, or between opposing parties you loved? How did you cope with that conflict?

2. Robert resisted going to North Carolina with his mother when he felt she was trying to keep him from becoming involved with his father's secret work. Yet his travels led him to knowledge and adventures he might never have experienced at home. How did the experiences of Robert's first trip to NC change him? Have you ever found yourself in a similar situation—reluctant to go but changed by the experience gained from your travels? Explain.

3. In North Carolina Robert learned that not all owners treated their slaves the same. He even began to wonder if his father might not know all there was to know on the subject of slavery. How did Jed Slocum's violent treatment of Jacob and Jeremiah affect Robert's viewpoint of slavery?

4. What was it like for Robert to return to Laurelea after having lived at Ashland all those months? How had life at Laurelea changed? How had Robert changed? Once you matured, what is/was it like for you to return to the home of your parents after having lived away?

5. How did William Henry's death affect Robert's decisions? Do you think Robert perceived William Henry's death as murder, suicide, sacrifice, or something else? How do you see it?

6. After William Henry's death Robert was grieving, angry, and full of questions when he met Rev. Goforth for the first time. How did Rev. Goforth react to Robert's anger and demands? Why do you think he did not answer Robert's questions directly?

7. During Robert's struggle he drew strength and direction from the characters and stories he read in the Bible. Have you found strength or direction from characters or stories in the Bible? From other people you've known or read about? Which one/ones? How did those people or stories impact you?

8. When Jeremiah and Robert finally reached Effie Burton in Washington City Robert insisted that he and Jeremiah would not be separated until they reached Canada. After all they'd been through together why do you think Jeremiah chose differently?

9. Rev. Goforth told Robert that our choices determine who we are and decide the path we walk for a very long time. Robert decided that for him, liberty was the freedom to make his own choices and to live with the consequences. Do you feel free to choose what you believe and how you act upon those beliefs? Who is responsible for how you live your life? Does anything deter you from acting on your beliefs? Explain.

10. In the end Jeremiah wrote Robert a letter from Canada. Why did the letter's message mean so much to Robert? Imagine if William Henry had been able to write a letter to Robert at that point. What might William Henry have written to his friend?

11. What do you take from this book that will help you in your own life's journey?