

Bless Me, Ultima Study Questions

Chapters 1-3 (Uno-Tres)

1. How old is Antonio when Ultima comes to live with his family?
2. Why does Ultima live with the Márez family?
3. Describe the setting of the novel.
4. Name and describe the members of the Márez family.
5. What was Ultima's occupation?
6. What was the conflict between Gabriel and María concerning Antonio's future?
7. What pet did Ultima bring with her?
8. Describe the incident with Chávez.
9. What did Ultima and the family call Antonio, and why?
10. How did Antonio become a part of the gang with Abel, Bones, and Horse?



3. In María's opinion, what was the cause of the boys' desires?
4. What did the boys finally do?
5. Antonio asked Andrew if he (Andrew) would become a farmer or a priest. What was Andrew's reply?
6. What happened to Antonio at the end of first grade?
7. Briefly retell Samuel's story of the carp, including the golden carp.
8. What was the supposed cause of Uncle Lucas's illness?
9. Who was Tenorio Trementina?
10. Briefly describe the way Ultima cured Lucas.

Chapters 4-8 (Cuatro-Ocho)

1. How did Ultima feel about plants, the river, and other parts of nature?
2. What did the Márez family always do after supper?
3. How did Ultima describe the Luna and Márez families?
4. Why did Antonio's family go to El Puerto?
5. How did Antonio describe the time spent in El Puerto?
6. How did Antonio feel about going to school?
7. What was Antonio's biggest obstacle in school?
8. What did Antonio discover about his cultural background on the first day of school?
9. What did Gabriel Marez want to do once his sons returned from the war?
10. What did Antonio's brothers talk about doing, and what were their opinions on the subject?

Chapters 9-10 (Nueve-Diez)

1. What was Antonio's dream in Chapter 9 about?
2. What was the conflict between the Márez boys and their parents?

Chapters 11-12 (Once-Doce)

1. What did Antonio discover about Narciso?
2. How did Antonio feel when he saw the golden carp?
3. What feeling did Antonio and Cico share?
4. How did Cico say the golden carp would punish people?
5. Antonio described his mother's definition of learning to sin. What was it?
6. What did Antonio learn from Ultima's stories?
7. Why were Tenorio and the men coming to the Márez home?
8. What did Narciso say to shame the men who came with Tenorio?
9. Of what did Tenorio accuse Ultima?
10. What was the test for being a witch, and did Ultima pass it?
11. What happened to Tenorio?
12. What did Antonio find on the ground after the men had gone?

Chapters 13-14 (Trece-Catorce)

1. About what was Antonio thinking as the family rode to El Puerto?
2. What happened at the church when Tenorio went to have the mass for the dead and a church burial for his daughter?
3. What was the effect of the priest's stand on Tenorio and the townspeople?
4. What did the Luna uncles request of Antonio's parents?
5. Why did Antonio always look back when he walked away from the house?

- How did Antonio stop the others from teasing him about Ultima?
- Briefly describe the Christmas play. What problems arose, and how were they dealt with?
- Whom did Antonio see as he was walking home from school after the play, and what were they doing?
- What was Narciso's final destination after the fight, and why?
- Where did Narciso go on his way to his final destination? Why did he go there, and what was the result of his visit?
- Describe the fight at the juniper tree. Tell who witnessed it, and what the result of the fight was.
- What happened after Antonio reached his home?

Chapters 15-17 (Quince-Diecisiete)

- What illness did Antonio get after he saw the murder?
- What did María tell Antonio would happen when he made his first holy communion?
- What event broke the monotony of the storm?
- What was Gabriel's response to his sons' visit, and why?
- What did Andrew do when León and Eugene left?
- What did Antonio think about much of the time?
- What did Antonio think would help him understand his dreams and questions?
- Whom did Antonio meet on the way home from school, and what happened?
- The people thought a special event was causing the dust storms and harsh winter. What was the event?
- What was the topic of the discussion between Florence and Antonio in Chapter 17?

Chapters 18-20 (Dieciocho-Veinte)

- Who haunted Antonio's nightmares, and why?
- What did Samuel think would make things easier for Florence?
- Describe the events that happened when Antonio was on his way to church for his first confession.
- Florence said he had not sinned, but had

- been sinned against. Who had sinned against him, and how?
- What did Antonio expect to happen after he made his first communion, and what really did happen?
- What did Antonio do every weekend after Easter, and what was the result?
- Describe the curse on the family near Agua Negra.
- What was the cause of the curse, according to Ultima?
- How did Ultima remove the curse?
- What was Antonio's dream about the night they returned from Agua Negra?



Chapters 21-22 (Veintiuno-Veintidós)

- What did Cico tell Antonio about God/gods?
- What did Cico say Antonio's choice was?
- What happened when the boys went to tell Florence about the golden carp?
- What did Antonio dream about that night?
- What did Ultima and Antonio's parents decide he should do for the summer?
- When Antonio and his father were talking on the way to El Puerto, Gabriel made an unusual statement. What was it?
- What did Gabriel say understanding was?
- What trouble occurred in the town later in the summer?
- What did the uncles plan to do?
- What happened to Antonio on his way back to his Grandfather's house, and what was the result?
- What did Antonio realize about Ultima's owl?
- What happened just as Antonio reached his home?
- What did Ultima ask Antonio to do for her?
- What did Antonio think about the upcoming mass of the dead and burial for Ultima?

Bless Me, Ultima Vocabulary

Chapters 1-3

1. The move lowered my father in the esteem of his compadres, the other vaqueros of the llano who clung *tenaciously* to their way of life and freedom.
2. They were an *exuberant*, restless people, wandering across the ocean of the plain.
3. During the day she would *forage* along the highway where the grass was thick and green, then she would return at nightfall.
4. Always on the move, like gypsies, always dragging their families around the country like *vagabonds*.
5. My nostrils quivered as I felt the song of the mockingbirds and the *drone* of the grasshoppers mingle with the pulse of the earth.
6. . . . they had more time to spend in the attic and cut out and *interminable* train of paper dolls which they dressed, gave names to, and, most miraculously, made talk.
7. My father shook Chávez and the man's sobbing *subsided*.
8. They stood *transfixed*, looking down at the mad man waving the pistol in the air.
9. The cry of a *tormented* man had come to the peaceful green mystery of my river
10. Again the owl sang; Ultima's spirit bathed me with its strong *resolution*.
11. I lay back and watched the silent beams of light radiate in the colorful dust *notes* I had stirred up.
12. Also, my mother *admonished* us to bow our heads when we passed in front of the house.

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| _____ 1. tenaciously | A. became less agitated or active |
| _____ 2. exuberant | B. joyous; full of high spirits |
| _____ 3. forage | C. rendered motionless |
| _____ 4. vagabonds | D. people without permanent homes |
| _____ 5. drone | E. firm determination |
| _____ 6. interminable | F. endless |
| _____ 7. subsided | G. holding persistently to something |
| _____ 8. transfixed | H. caused to undergo great pain or anguish |
| _____ 9. tormented | I. a continuous low dull humming sound |
| _____ 10. resolutions | J. to wander in search of food or provisions |
| _____ 11. notes | K. very small particles; specks |
| _____ 12. admonished | L. reprovved gently but earnestly |

Chapters 4-8

1. Of all the plants we gathered none was *endowed* with so much magic as the yerba del manso.
2. I ran to the cactus and gathered a shovelful of the *succulent*, seedy pears.
3. We all knew the story of how the Virgin had presented herself to the little Indian boy in Mexico and about the miracles she had *wrought*.
4. Her soul was without *blemish*.
5. "¡Vamos! ¡Vamos!" my uncle called and we *clamored* aboard.
6. She was soon lost in the *furrow* of dust the truck raised.
7. I had never felt such fear before, because as the whirlwind blew its *debris* around be the gushing wind seemed to call my name: Antoniooooooooooooooooo
8. I was held hypnotized by the thundering herd, then with a cry of resolution exploding from my throat I rushed into the *melee*.
9. His forwardness and *audacity* often caught them off guard.
10. His voiced *quavered*. His excitement carried to his brothers.

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| _____ 1. endowed | A. made a loud, sustained noise or outcry |
| _____ 2. succulent | B. put together; created |
| _____ 3. wrought | C. rubble or wreckage |

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| _____ 4. blemish | D. trembled |
| _____ 5. clamored | E. fearlessness; boldness |
| _____ 6. furrow | F. a rut, groove, or narrow depression |
| _____ 7. debris | G. an imperfection that mars or impairs |
| _____ 8. melee | H. full of juice or sap; juicy. |
| _____ 9. audacity | I. provided with property or income |
| _____ 10. quavered | J. a violent free-for-all |

Chapters 9-10

1. I opened my eyes and heard the *commotion* downstairs.
2. They knew that it was within the power of the father to curse his sons, and ay! a curse laid on a disobedient son or daughter was *irrevocable*.
3. "You are *forsaking* me," my mother cried afresh.
4. "Ay, Márez men," she said *stoically* and turned to my father.
5. Even the holy priest at El Puerto had been asked to *exorcise* el encanto, the curse, and he had failed.
6. The rancher swore that he had *etched* a cross on his bullet, and that proved that the old woman was a witch, and so he was let free.
7. Then they began to cook it, throwing in many other things while they danced and chanted their *incantations*.
8. "No, I will be proud, Ultima," I said *emphatically*.
9. The eyes were dark and narrow. An evil glint *emanated from* them.
10. Instead of sleep I slipped into a deep *stupor*.
11. I suffered the spasms of pain my uncle suffered, and these alternated with feelings of *elation* and power.
12. The *acrid* smell of the dark yellow pee blended into the fragrance of the cereal.

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| _____ 1. commotion | A. cut into the surface of |
| _____ 2. irrevocable | B. giving up something formerly held dear |
| _____ 3. forsaking | C. mental numbness from shock; a daze |
| _____ 4. stoically | D. positively; definitely |
| _____ 5. exorcise | E. impossible to retract or withdraw |
| _____ 6. etched | F. unpleasantly sharp, pungent, or bitter to smell |
| _____ 7. incantation | G. came or sent forth, as from a source |
| _____ 8. emphatically | H. pride; joy |
| _____ 9. emanated | I. recitation of spells to produce a magic effect |
| _____ 10. stupor | J. an agitated disturbance |
| _____ 11. elation | K. to free from evil spirits or malign influences |
| _____ 12. acrid | L. unaffected by pleasure or pain; impassive |

Chapters 11-12

1. The huge tail swished and *contemptuously* flipped it aside.
2. I felt weak and powerless in the knowledge of the *impending* doom.
3. It is the sweet water of the moon, my mother *crooned* softly, it is the water the Church chose to make holy and place in its font.
4. There were many things in Ultima's room that I *instinctively* knew I should not touch, but I could not understand why she was so blunt about the dolls.
5. "Why are farmers out playing *vigilantes* when they should be home, sitting before a warm fire, playing cards, counting the rich harvest, eh?"

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| _____ 1. contemptuously | A. those who enforce laws themselves |
| _____ 2. impending | B. disdainfully; scornfully |
| _____ 3. crooned | C. done by innate aptitude |

- _____ 4. instinctively
_____ 5. vigilantes

- D. to be about to take place
E. sung softly or in a humming way

Chapters 13-14

1. He would have to bury his daughter in unholy ground, and without the saving grace of the mass her soul was doomed to perdition.
2. "There is if you're a Catholic!" Lloyd countered.
3. "I'll give you an A," Miss Violet said in exasperation.
4. "How nasty," Lloyd scoffed.
5. The door opened and a crack of light illuminated Narciso's face.
6. But how could he stop the intrusion?
7. The townspeople had killed Lupito at the bridge and desecrated the river.
8. A warm, pulsating stream of blood wet his jacket and the snow.
9. And the Trementina sisters led the caravan over the path and onto our hill.

- _____ 1. perdition
_____ 2. countered
_____ 3. exasperation
_____ 4. scoffed
_____ 5. illuminated
_____ 6. intrusion
_____ 7. desecrated
_____ 8. pulsating
_____ 9. caravan

- A. expanding and contracting rhythmically
B. loss of the soul; eternal damnation
C. rude or inappropriate entrance
D. anger or impatience
E. a company of travelers journeying together
F. lit up
G. offered in response
H. violated the sacredness of; profaned
I. mocked, ridiculed, or treated with derision

Chapters 15-17

1. "Just this side of Antón Chico," León said unperturbed, "we hit a slick spot, solid ice, and we went down the ditch--"
2. On the morning my father's disquietude was proven.
3. My mother cried when she kissed her sons good-bye, but she was resigned.
4. I wondered if I would ever really know my brothers, or would they remain but phantoms of my dreams.
5. "You are a murderer!" I shouted with defiance.
6. I had listened to Florence's heresy, but the God of the church had not hurled his thunder at me.

- _____ 1. unperturbed
_____ 2. disquietude
_____ 3. phantoms
_____ 4. resigned
_____ 5. defiance
_____ 6. heresy

- A. ghosts or an apparitions
B. bold resistance
C. worried unease; anxiety
D. dissension from dogma by a believer
E. not disturbed or confused
F. acquiescent; unresistingly accepting

Chapters 18-20

1. It is the soul that must be saved, because the soul endures.
2. The proud and the meek, the arrogant and the humble are all made equal on Ash Wednesday.
3. All of the saints' statues in the church were covered with purple sheaths.
4. Then abruptly my thoughts were scattered.
5. "Aye, Gabriel Márez," the gray, emaciated face smiled weakly, "it does my heart good to see an old compadre, an old vaquero--"
6. "The imagination!" Téllez laughed sardonically.
7. "The three tortured spirits are not to blame, they are manipulated by brujas--"

- _____ 1. endures
- _____ 2. arrogant
- _____ 3. sheaths
- _____ 4. abruptly
- _____ 5. emaciated
- _____ 6. sardonically
- _____ 7. manipulated

- A. suddenly
- B. made extremely thin
- C. influenced shrewdly or deviously
- D. continues in existence; lasts
- E. tubular coverings, as used for knife blades
- F. scornfully or cynically mocking
- G. making claims to unwarranted importance

Chapters 21-22

1. Seeing him made questions and worries evaporate, and I remained *transfixed*, caught and caressed by the essential elements of sky and earth and water.
2. "A religion different from the religion of the Lunas," I was again talking to myself, *intrigued* by the easy flow of thoughts and the openness with which I divulged them to my father.
3. "I came from a people who held the wind as brother, because he is free, and the horse as companion, because he is the living, *fleeting* wind"
4. When I heard that the hair on my back *bristled*.
5. "We *indebted* ourselves to her when she saved our brother, a debt I will gladly pay."
6. The sharp, reverberating hoof beats that moments ago had mixed into the *surging* sound of the river were now a crescendo upon me.
7. That sympathy for people my father said she possessed had overcome all *obstacles*.
8. I was about to shout and answer that I was here and well when I saw the *lurking* shadow under the juniper tree.

- _____ 1. transfixed
- _____ 2. divulged
- _____ 3. fleeting
- _____ 4. bristled
- _____ 5. indebted
- _____ 6. reverberating
- _____ 7. obstacles
- _____ 8. lurking

- A. made known (something private or secret)
- B. caused to stand erect; stiffened
- C. resounding in a succession of echoes
- D. things that oppose, or stand in the way of
- E. lying in wait, as in ambush
- F. rendered motionless with terror or amazement
- G. morally, socially, or legally obligated to another
- H. moving swiftly; rapid or nimble