

- Listen to a few minutes of [Morrison reading from the novel](#). What are some things that you notice? What happens when we listening to this story aloud as opposed to reading it?
- Where does this novel take place—and how do you know?
- What kind of narrators do we find in this novel? Compare the narrative voices of the first two chapters and then the subsequent chapters. How would you characterize the respective narrative voices of each chapter?
- How does the vision of early America—the North American colonies of the 1680s—surprise or unsettle you as a reader (or does it)? How might the novel’s view of early American history be said to revise or complicate the received story of “early America”?
- How does each character offer a dimension of early America that is not necessarily brought to the foreground in more mainstream versions of early American history?
- What are some of the ways that *A Mercy* asks us to think about the development and consolidation of race in colonial North America? Can you point to specific passages in the novel that illuminate the role of race?
- *A Mercy* is an example of “historical fiction.” How, based on this novel alone, would you define that genre? How does *A Mercy* change the way we think about or define history? What can fiction teach us that reading history cannot, and vice versa?
- If all historical novels are also about their own moment—the moment in which they are written and published—what part of the contemporary U.S. or world does this novel speak to in its representation of seventeenth-century colonial American life? (The book came out in 2008.)