Mende Nazer (“men-dee naz-ur”) was born in the remote Nuba Mountains in Sudan, but at the age of 12 in 1993 she was abducted during an Arab raid on her village. Mende was raped and held prisoner by her captors, and then was sold to a wealthy Arab family who lived in Sudan's capital city, Khartoum. So began her dark years of enslavement. She was subjected to appalling physical and mental abuse and neglect.

Seven years after she was seized and sold into slavery, she was sent to work for another master -- a diplomat working in London.

After reading each chapter of the book, please answer the corresponding questions in complete sentences on a separate sheet of paper.
Prologue:

1. Draw a map of the continent of Africa. On that map, draw in the country of Sudan. Inside Sudan, label the capital city, Khatroum, the Nuba Mountains, and the Darfur plateau.

2. Mende is from which tribe in Sudan? What religion is she?

3. Define “mujahedin.”

4. How did the Arab raiders treat the Nuba people during the raid?

Chapter 1: My Home

5. Describe the Nuba way of life. What was Mende’s job on a daily basis?

6. Why did the Nuba like Americans so much?

7. What role do cattle play in the Nuba culture?

8. Why did Mende’s mother have scars all over her body?

9. When and why were boys circumcised in the Nuba culture?

10. Describe the Nuba and their clothing and hairstyles?

11. Men in the Nuba culture are polygamous. Define “polygamous.”

Chapter 3: A Family Wedding

12. Explain how marriage in the Nuba culture is different than marriage in our culture.

13. Define “dowry” and explain the role it played in the marriage of Mende’s sister, Kunyant.

14. Why do you think so many newborn children die in the Nuba culture, like Kunyant’s baby did?

Chapter 4: The Arab School

15. What was school like for Mende? How was it different than elementary school in the US?

16. Why would her teacher tell her, “You must stop speaking Nuba. You must learn Arabic instead,” and tell her she couldn’t use her Nuba name anymore? What did this imply about the relation between Arabs and Nuba in Sudan?

Chapter 6: The Wrestling Time

17. Explain the significance of the wrestling matches. What is it most like in either our culture or another culture?
18. Mende’s father told her, “We were the first people in Sudan. The Arabs came from far away and took our lands and ruled over us and they became rich men. Now, they come to kill us, because they want to exterminate all the black people.” What does this sound similar to in our nation’s history?

Chapter 7: The Cutting Time

19. Mende is told at the age of 11 that she is to be circumcised. What does circumcision mean in the Nuba culture?

20. Why did Mende’s mother tell her that if she didn’t get circumcised she couldn’t be married? Explain.

21. After reading Mende’s experience being circumcised and the possible health effects of some other girls, do you feel it is okay for a culture to circumcise their young girls or not? Explain.

Chapter 9: Allahu Akhbar!

22. Why would the Mujahedin raid Mende’s village?

Chapter 10: The Dark Forest

23. Mende is raped by the Mujahedin at the age of 12. How does she describe this horrific act?

Chapter 11: To Khartoum

24. Why didn’t Mende and the other girls simply escape?

25. How was the capital city of Khartoum different than Mende’s Nuba village?

Chapter 12: The Slave Traders

26. Why would Abdul Azzim, the slave trader, take part in the sale of human beings? What drives someone to do this?

27. How did Mende probably feel after hearing that Asha had been working at that home for over 20 years and didn’t even know if her parents were still alive?

28. How does Joahir treat Mende and Asha? Give examples from how she speaks to them or how she describes them to Arab families who are interested in buying them.

29. What type of slave will Mende be?

Chapter 14: Master Rahab

30. Who were Mende’s new “masters”?

31. What were Mende’s duties around the house?
32. Why was Mende locked in the shed at night?

33. Why did Rahab make sure Mende washed her clothes separately, ate from her own bowl, not those of the family, and not touch the children?

34. Explain what Mende means when she says, “…even the children were treating me like an animal. Worse than an animal: even dogs were patted and stroked.”

35. What seemed to be the most difficult part of being Rahab’s slave?

**Chapter 15: No Escape**

36. Why didn’t Mende simply just escape?

37. Rahab says about Mende, “No days off, no holidays, no wages. She’s always here. She belongs to me.” How does she feel about Mende?

**Chapter 17: Death Threats**

38. “You don’t know how to behave unless you’re whipped.” In your opinion, why did Rahab frequently beat Mende?

39. Mende asks herself, “Why did these Arabs hate us so much?” Why do you think they did?

**Chapter 18: Identity Crisis**

40. How do Mende and Rahab differ in their views and practices of Islam?

**Chapter 19: Hospital Horrors**

41. What ended Mende up in a hospital?

42. Why did Rahab make sure that Mende didn’t tell the hospital staff that she was a slave? What did this show about the legality of slavery?

**Chapter 20: Revenge**

43. Why would American missiles be shot into the city of Khartoum? Explain.

**Chapter 21: Rescue Me**

44. What had years of slavery done to Mende that escaping had become “unthinkable” and that she believed she was “no longer valuable as a human being”?

**Chapter 23: London Bound?**

45. Why does Rahab want to send Mende to London?
46. How does this affect her emotionally and psychologically, especially when she refers to herself as “a useful gift” and “a household appliance”?

Chapter 26: Telling Lies

47. Why did Rahab make sure that Mende lied to the British Embassy officials in Khartoum?

48. What does Rahab promise Mende if she works well for her sister, Hanan, in London?

Chapter 27: Nanu’s Story

49. Who was Mende’s “replacement slave”? Where was she from?

50. Why did seeing and talking with Nanu have such a deep impact on Mende?

Chapter 29: False Hope

51. How was Hanan different from Rahab in terms of how they treated Mende? Explain.

52. Why didn’t Hanan want Mende contacting anyone in London? What was she scared of?

53. Being in a Western city like London, and being treated better by Hanan could have made Mende feel better about her situation, but why did she feel worse?

Chapter 30: Death Wish

54. Why did Mende start to think about killing herself at the age of 19 after over 7 years in slavery? Why didn’t she think about it earlier? What stopped her from doing it?

Chapter 31: Salvation

55. Why was Omer worried about what Mende said about the hours she worked and her lack of pay?

56. Why did Mende, after speaking with Omer, say, “After talking with him, I decided that I had to try to escape”? What changed?

57. How did Aloun and Babo help Mende escape?

Chapter 32: Fear of Freedom

58. Now that Mende was out of slavery, why was she more scared than ever? Why is freedom “a terrifying thing” for her?

59. Mende says that “those who live in the West often take their freedom for granted.” How does she explain this?

60. Do you agree with her about us taking freedom for granted? Explain.
61. Why does she call herself up to this point in her life as a “non-person” who “didn’t really exist”?

62. How did Mende get money now that she was free?

63. Mende was applying for asylum to stay in Britain. What is asylum?

64. Why didn’t she want to return to Sudan now that she was free?

Chapter 33: Desperately Seeking Asylum

65. If Mende’s asylum was denied, what would happen to her?

66. Why was Mende’s first asylum application denied?

67. In your opinion, should the British government have granted her asylum in Britain or sent her back to Sudan?

Chapter 34: Sanctuary

68. How and why did Lady Cox, the Deputy Speaker of the House of Lords, get involved with Mende’s asylum application?

69. What was the final ruling of the British Home Office about her asylum?

70. Most people around the world “can hardly believe that slavery truly exists today, in the 21st century.” Did you know it still exists before reading Mende’s story? Explain. Why don’t more people know about it?

A Note From Damien Lewis

71. What does Art. 4 of the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights say?

72. What did Damien find out about slavery in Sudan? Why was it mainly done? Explain.

Misc.

73. Mende said earlier when she had been taken from her village that “if the guards had just raped me that night and left me behind in the forest, that would have been a good thing compared to what really happened to me.” Explain what she meant by this.