

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS FOR
FORGOTTEN VOICES: EXCERPTS FROM VALENTINA'S JOURNAL

1. The story is historical fiction. While the mining strike and many of the incidents were factual, the Gallaghers and the Bennetts were fictional. They represented many of the families in the Paint Creek area. How do you feel the families and their struggles were portrayed as a whole?
2. On her walk to visit her family, Sylvia compared the lives of the local mining families to the servitude of the peasants from the Middle Ages, a modern-day indentured servant system. Do you feel her comparison was appropriate for the striking mine families on Paint Creek? Should the families on Paint Creek demand a better way of living from their employer, Imperial Colliery?
3. The author stated she was inspired to write this story after reading a roadside marker about the Bull Moose Special. Have you ever read a historical marker or interpretative trail sign and wondered, "What if..." or "What happened when ..."? Tell about it.
4. Both the Gallaghers and the Bennetts valued education, believing it was a way to create change. Yet, the Gallaghers decided to homeschool because they didn't want Valentina and Jimmy bullied in the public schools. Would you have chosen to do the same? What are other options you would have considered?
5. Religion and religious studies were important to the Gallaghers. How do you feel the inclusion of the religious aspects added to or detracted from the story?
6. According to Sylvia's birthday letter to Valentina, she was supposed to be the calmer of her two grandchildren. Yet, in this story, Valentina is the more outspoken and daring of the two children. Why do you think Valentina's and Jimmy's roles were reversed?
7. The character of Quinn Morton (a historical figure) is integral to the story. How did you react to him? Do you feel he was ever a redemptive character?

8. Even as she aged, Valentina never regretted sneaking out and helping the women pull up the train tracks. Although she regretted disappointing her parents, she repeatedly said she would do it again. Yet, her parents also influence her in important ways. How do both her compliance and her defiance of them define her as an adult?
9. Although she wasn't at her home the night the Bull Moose Special fired upon the sleeping community, Valentina was deeply affected by the incident. Why do you think it was a defining moment in her life, especially since she didn't witness it firsthand?
10. The Baldwin Felts detective (and the agency itself) had an established reputation for intimidating people, especially the striking coal miners. Yet they were never held responsible by the authorities for the injustices they inflicted on the populace. How did you react to them, the peace officers, and the state government for ignoring what was happening on both Paint and Cabin Creeks?
11. Pap disappeared to keep his family safe. Yet the Baldwin Felts detectives (or 'thugs' as the miners called them) began threatening Margaret Rose, Sylvia, Valentina, and indirectly Jimmy. Were you surprised? If they found Pap, what do you think would have happened next? If they remained in the area for much longer, what do you think would have happened to Margaret Rose, Sylvia, Valentina, and possibly Jimmy?
12. Valentina was fascinated by Mother Jones but not by Mrs. Fremont Older, the woman reporter from San Francisco. (Both are historical figures.) Why did she have such intense feelings towards both women?
13. Emmett Bennett plays a large role in the lives of the Gallaghers, especially in Valentina's who thinks he's 'old' at 18. How did you feel about his role in the story, especially in their initial relationship?
14. Do you think Ben G. Valentine, aka Valentina, had valid arguments to offer the news essays about the violations of the miners' civil rights and

due process according to the U.S. Constitution's Bill of Rights? Do you feel they made a difference?

15. Should Margaret Rose have allowed the essays to be submitted for publication? Should she and Pap have allowed Valentina, under the name of Ben G. Valentine, to continue writing about the situation on the creek?
16. This story occurred during a contentious time when different labor unions were rising to support the working class of laborers. Nowadays, the general public is either pro-union or anti-union. Yet history has proven repeatedly that the work of the labor unions changes the lives of large populations of people. Still, labor unions are waning, with the laborers choosing higher wages, longer hours, and less safety standards. Why is there such a change in attitudes?
17. The churches in the area tried to remain neutral in the 1912 -1913 mining strike. Father Patrick, a fictional character, did not. He hid Pap in plain sight. Do you feel this disguise was effective? How did you react to what Father Patrick and Pap were doing in assisting the miners?
18. We learn more about the lives of Valentina and Emmett near the end of the story. How did you react to their first marriages to different people? How did you react to their marriage and life as husband and wife?
19. At the end of the story, Valentina is a great-grandmother; should she have told her great-grandson Michael the truth about Ben G. Valentine? Would it have made a difference?
20. How do you feel about how the story ended?
21. If the story were made into a movie or a serialized made-for-TV movie, who would you cast as the characters? Would you include the older Valentina and Emmett to tell their story, even in cameos?

22. Do you wonder what happened to others mentioned in the story? Do you believe that any of Valentina's children, grandchildren, or great-grandchildren have a story to tell?

Holly Grove "Bull Moose Special"



Living in Tent City



National Guard



Prisoners

The town of Holly Grove first came into prominence during the 1912-1913 coal strike and mine war. This was the location of a major tent colony that was established when the Paint Creek miners were evicted from their homes by the coal companies. Fred Mooney, in his autobiography gave the following description of Holly Grove in 1912:

"Holly Grove was a small place with nothing but a post office and two or three stores and only four or five dwellings but it immediately spread out and up and down the creek with long rows of teepees and wall tents nestled along the banks of Paint Creek and even up the ravines. The population of Holly Grove immediately sprung into the hundreds consisting of striking miners and their wives and children."

This area was also the scene of much violence during this time period; several were killed on both sides of the conflict. The most notable incident occurred on the night of Feb. 7, 1913 when the town was sprayed with machine gun bullets fired from the armored plated "Bull Moose Special."

In 1963 in an issue of the Charleston Gazette-Mail, William G. Blizzard had this to say regarding the "Bull Moose Special":

"This was a special train that had been designed by the C&O railroad to transport strike-breakers into Paint Creek and Cabin Creek. It consisted of an engine that had been fitted with sheet iron to protect the engineer, an ordinary passenger car and a baggage car. The baggage car had thick iron plates on the inside across the doors and was equipped with two machine guns and about 15 high powered rifles; this was the standard arsenal for the Bull Moose. But on the night of Feb. 7th there were 30 additional rifles on the train. Quinn Morton who had started the whole strike with his lockout, had just purchased them from Lowenstein's a Charleston hardware store.

Morton called the C&O and had their officials send the "Bull Moose" to Charleston to pick up Bonner Hill (Sheriff of Kanawha County). In all there were about 16-17 men who rode the Bull Moose that night.

The Bull Moose approached the union stronghold of Holly Grove at about 11pm. It is not unlikely that union miners, warned of the approach of the train fired upon it. In any case the Bull Moose opened fire upon Holly Grove, where women and children as well as armed men were sleeping until awakened by gunfire. In the narrow valley the range from railroad track to town was point blank."



Baldwin Felts with their bear



Tent Colony

