

DESIREE'S BABY

Q/A

Get Going

A) 1) Why was Madame Valmonde amused at the thought of Desiree and her baby?

A- Madame Valmonde vividly remembered the day when she first saw Desiree as a baby. In her mind, Desiree would be always her little girl. So, it was amusing for her to think that Desiree was all grown up and had become a mother herself.

2) Why did Madame Valmonde shudder at the sight of L'Abri?

A- L'abri was the name of the villa where Armand and Desiree lived after getting married. As we know from the story, L'abri was a sad looking place. The house looked gloomy and was shadowed by oak trees. The slaves of the house looked miserable under the strict rule of Armand. However, it was a ~~trier~~ livelier place under Armand's father as he was an easy-going and indulgent ~~man~~ master.

3) Why was Madame Valmonde startled on seeing the baby? How was her reaction different from the way Desiree talked about the ~~body?~~ baby?

A- Madame Valmonde was startled to see the baby because she instantly recognized the difference in the

colour of its skin. She knew that the baby was black. Desiree, however, was ~~not~~ unmindful of this fact. She loved the baby dearly, ~~and was overjoyed that it was~~ healthy.

4) What made Desiree believe that Armand was very happy about the baby?

A- Desiree was certain that Armand was happy about the baby because she knew that he wanted a baby. Moreover, she had observed a great change in his behaviour towards the slaves ever since the time the baby was born. He has stopped punishing them and was lenient even to be the ones who made up excuses to skip work.

5) What were the incidents that made Desiree realise that things were beginning to change?

A- Certain incidents made Desiree realise that things were changing. There was a mysterious change among the slaves. Distant neighbours started paying visits to the house for no reason. However, Armand's behaviours worried Desiree the most. He spoke to her with averted eyes and there was no love in his eyes. He would avoid Desiree and her baby, and would often stay away from home. Moreover, he became harsh towards the slaves.

Q30. "They would like every all the Aubignys fall in love, as it should by a wicked man." What does this tell us about the Aubigny family?

A. This line tells us that the Aubignys were very impulsive and passionate in nature. At the end of the story, we find out that Armand's father had also fallen in love with a black woman and married her. He went to the extent of never letting his wife meet her own son to avoid social stigma, but that didn't stop him from being with his beloved. Similarly, in the beginning, Armand has also not cared about Desiree's obscure origin and married her.

Q) Why do you think Monsieur Valmonde gets practical when it comes to getting Desiree married?

A. Monsieur Valmonde loved Desiree and wanted the best for her. Due to Desiree's obscure origin, she had to ensure that Armand would take care of his two daughters and respect her just the same. As a father, he didn't want her obscure past affect her marriage with Armand, so he wanted to ensure that allowing Armand to marry her was the right thing to do.

Q) How was Armand's treatment of his slaves different from that of his father?

A- Armand's father was a more indulgent and kind master as compared to Armand. Under him, L'Abri was a happy place. In contrast, under Armand, the slaves hardly smiled and L'Abri turned into a gloomy and sad looking place.

4) Desiree looked at the baby and then at the boy fanning him, and let out a cry of shock. Why?

A- Looking at the boy, the similarity between him and the baby suddenly became apparent to Desiree. Before that moment, her love for the baby had blinded her to the discrepancies that everyone else had noticed. For the first time, Desiree saw the baby in a different light and was well shocked at the realization.

5) Desiree strongly protested the accusation of not being white. However, Madame Valmonde didn't, why?

A- The story did not mention whether Desiree was aware of her origin or not. However, in her letter to Valmonde, she asked her to tell Armand that she was indeed white. This probably indicated that even though she knew that the Valmondes were not her real parents, she was not aware of her uncertain origin. In that case, Desiree's protest was understandably innocent and sincere. On the other hand, if we assume that

Desiree knew about the uncertainty regarding her birth, her protest was still most heartfelt. It was more out of her indignation at being questioned than out of uncertainty about the colour of her skin. She couldn't believe that Armand would doubt her honesty and desperately wanted him to believe her. Madame Valmonde, on the other hand, was more practical and knew that she couldn't truly vouch for her daughter's skin colour. However, that didn't change her love for Desiree and the baby, and she welcomed them with open arms.

6) Why did Armand think that 'Almighty God had dealt cruelly and unjustly with him? Do you agree?

A- During the time the story is set in, white people considered the black people inferior to them and enslaved them. We know that Armand, unlike his father, thought that blacks were beneath him and treated them harshly. Thus, he thought that it was unfair that his own wife and child turned out to be black.

7) Why do you think Armand's mother never left her own country?

A- Armand's mother never left her own country because

she didn't want anyone, ~~espec~~ especially her own son to know that she she was black. She knew that if the secret were to come ~~to~~ out, her son would be a subject of ridicule in the society and ~~she~~ would not be able to lead a normal life.

8) Did Ammand really want Desiree to leave? Support your answer with evidence from the story.

A- Yes, Ammand wanted Desiree to leave him and go. There are many lines in the story that supports this. Firstly, when Desiree asked him, he clearly said that he wanted her to leave. It is also mentioned that he didn't love her anymore. A close reading of the story reveals that Ammand was aware of the pain he was causing her, but he still did not change his decision.