

**Potential Discussion Questions for *Tobe* Event**  
**Charlotte Teachers Institute/Center for the Study of the New South**

**Between the Pages:**

**One way to explore a book is to look closely and ask questions about the messages conveyed by its words and images.**

- What was your first response to this book? Why?
- Who is speaking in this book? Whose “voice” do you hear?
- Whose voices would you *want* to hear if you could invite other characters to speak, as alternative narrators?
- What do the words and photographs suggest about the power of work? of family? of learning?
- Do you feel the people in the book are portrayed with dignity or in a romanticized or exploitive way?
- How do you feel the book might have been read differently in 1939 than today? (by whom?)
- What about the book suggests that it is fiction or nonfiction? What is the connection(s) that can be made to fiction or nonfiction?
- What scenes depicted in this book ring true to you as “real life”? Which seem false or inauthentic?
- Do you relate to the location of the rural “place” of the story?
- What would you like to know more about relating to this book?

**Beyond the Pages:**

**Another approach is to use a book as a point of departure that leads us to broader questions about our own lives and our times.**

- What would you want your grandchildren to know about where *you* live or grew up?
- What was your favorite children’s book when you were growing up? Why?
- Why does it matter who appears in our media and who tells their stories?
- What might you notice about how African Americans are generally portrayed in books?
- What do you notice about how African Americans and other races/nationalities/ethnicities are generally portrayed in popular media more broadly?
- Why do these representations matter for children? For society? How do they persist?
- What would you like to know more about relating to race and representation in media?