

Paradise Valley Discussion Questions

What was the state's reason for the new school-attendance law? Why did the Amish object? What was Caleb Bender's answer when the judge asked if he was a citizen of the state? What causes Caleb to respond this way? Can you think of any situations in your own life or workplace where you may be forced to make a similar stand?

The staff of the children's home takes the kids' Amish clothes away from them, dresses them in Englisher clothes and cuts the boys' hair. Why do you think they did this? Why did the Amish children have trouble understanding the state's reasoning that to work children on the farm was cruel?

Caleb wants to get his family out of Ohio for a few different reasons. What are they, and why? Then he finds the advertisement for land in Mexico and instantly knows it will change his life. What makes him so sure? What would you do if you had to face the Bender family's dilemma?

During Emma's wedding, Jake asks Rachel, "What does a woman want?" What is Rachel's answer, and why? Later, Rachel complains that a girl "has no more say in her life than a dandelion seed." Why does she say this? What is Jake's response and how does it make her feel? Reflecting on your own experience, can you relate to how Rachel feels?

Why does Emma insist on Rachel acting as midwife when she has her baby? What is Rachel's reaction? Later, there's a crisis in delivering the baby and Rachel steps up. When Mary asks Rachel how she knew what to do, what is Rachel's reply? How does she feel about her newly discovered gift? What is your special gift, and what were the circumstances when you first learned you had this gift?

After Emma's baby is born, Caleb goes to his wife and expresses his suspicions about why the baby was born so early, hinting that he knows Emma's secret. Martha says he's right, but she doesn't think Emma's sin should be made public. What does the outcome of this conversation tell us about Caleb and Martha?

When El Pantera and his men stop Caleb's wagon outside Arteaga, it's Domingo who saves them from harm. What did he say to El Pantera, and what does it tell you about Domingo?

Caleb writes a letter requesting that government troops be called in to deal with the bandit problem, but what does Miriam say that shames him into destroying

the letter? What biblical imperative does Caleb return to time and time again? How would you apply this same principle to your own life and situation?

After Rachel gets word that Jake isn't coming to Mexico, what does she decide to do? Who talks her out of it, and why? Later, Rachel learns that her father knows more than she thought, and that he's made arrangements on her behalf. Why would he do this?

The harmonica Aaron gives Amos is against Amish rules, but Caleb allows it anyway. What does this tell us about Caleb's priorities? Is he a good Amishman?

When Caleb's wagon is attacked by bandits, Domingo comes close to killing one of them, but then Caleb stops him. What does Caleb say to him, and what is Domingo's reply? What is it that actually stops Domingo from killing the man?

What were a few of the overarching themes you took away from the story, and in what ways can these be applied to your own life even though you may not be Amish or come from a close-knit family?