

## Eudora Welty, “A Worn Path,” p. 422—Discussion Questions

### Group 1: Setting

1. Here is a quote from a literary anthology: “Authors use setting to create meaning, just as painters use backgrounds and objects to render ideas.” The setting of a story is the environment in which the story is located. This environment can be physical, political, temporal (time of day, time of year, etc.).  
List the characteristics of the setting of “A Worn Path.” How does that setting reveal meaning in the story? What is significant about that setting?
2. In this short story, Phoenix Jackson takes a journey. Discuss what you think might be significant about that journey.
3. Each of you try to relate to this journey. Discuss and be able to tell the class how the journey is significant to YOU, how you can relate the journey that Phoenix Jackson takes to your own life in some way.

### Group 2—Characterization

1. What can we know about Phoenix Jackson? What kind of character does the author want us to see? List characteristics of Phoenix Jackson, as revealed in the short story, and identify the passages that illustrate those characteristics.
2. Write a physical description of Phoenix Jackson, referring to passages in the short story.
3. Contrast Phoenix with the white people in the story. What are the characteristics of the hunter, the nurse? Do the nurse and hunter seem to be more positive or more negative characters than Phoenix Jackson?

### Group 3—Symbol, meaning, theme, idea, irony

1. What is ironic in the nurse’s calling Phoenix Jackson a “charity” case? (Do you know double meanings of the word “charity”?)
2. What is the significance of:
  - a. The scene with the white hunter and Phoenix’s reply to him when the hunter asks Phoenix if she is scared? “. . . I seen plenty go off closer by, in my day, and for less than what I done,’ she said, holding utterly still.”
  - b. Phoenix’s stealing the nickel from the hunter (and the hunter’s claiming that he had no money)?
  - c. Phoenix’s statement that she “never did go to school,” that she “was too old at the Surrender”?
  - d. Phoenix Jackson’s name?
  - e. The title of the story?

**Everyone:** Eudora Welty has said about her writing: “Greater than scene, I came to see, is situation. Greater than situation is implication. Greater than all of these is a single, entire human being who will never be confined in any frame.” How does each character try to “confine” Phoenix Jackson to a “frame,” and how does Phoenix Jackson escape that “frame”?