

Discussion Questions for *The Don Flows Home to the Sea*

Part 1: "Red Don or White": The year is 1918, and the Russian Civil War rages on. Why does the Melekhov family decide not to retreat with the White Cossacks, and what is the reason that brothers Grigory ("Gregor") and Piotra end up going their separate ways following the purging of "kulaks" from their village (Tatarsk) by Red forces led by Yakov Fomin?

Part 2: "The Cossacks Rise": Don Cossack rebels fight against the Reds. In what way do the Whites assist the rebels, and what kind of government do the rebels form for themselves? What transpires between former Cossack neighbors Piotra, a rebel, and Mikhail Koshevoi, a Red? What transpires between Mikhail Koshevoi and his Red regiment? What are the fates of Osip Davidovich Stockman and Ivan Alexievich Kotliarov, and what role does Piotra's wife Daria play in Ivan's demise? What appalls Grigory about his Cossack regiment's behavior?

Part 3: "Retreat and Advance": It's May of 1919 and the Red assault on Tatarsk intensifies. Where do the rebels retreat to, and what transpires between Grigory and his father Pantaleimon in the midst of the fight? What motivates Aksinia to camp opposite Vieshenska? What motivates Mikhail Koshevoi to visit Grigory's mother, Ilinicha, and sister Dunia in Tatarsk, and what transpires between Koshevoi and Grishaka, grandfather of Grigory's wife Natalia (Natasha)? What does Koshevoi do to village? What's his motive?

Part 4: "The Shadows Fall": The Reds retreat under pressure from advancing White forces that link up with the rebel Cossack army commanded by Grigory. Why is Grigory reduced in rank by the White commanding officer? How does Mitka Korshunov (Natasha's brother) negatively impact Mikhail Koshevoi's family? What does White general Sidorin do in an effort to win over support for the war effort from the women of Tatarsk? What tragedies befall Aksinia and Daria, and for what reasons?

Part 5: "Flight to the Sea": It is late summer, 1919, and a change of strategy (attributed to Stalin) turns the tide in favor of the Reds by November. What is the change of strategy and why does it work? Why does Grigory's father opt to separate from his son during the retreat, and under what circumstances does Grigory see his father again? Why does Grigory find it necessary to leave Aksinia behind during the retreat, and how is travel partner Prokhor Zykov of benefit to Grigory? What happens in Novorossisk that endangers Grigory?

Part 6: "Home At Last": Why does Ilinicha grow closer to Aksinia? Whom does Dunia marry and why? Why is Koshevoi so unpopular in Tatarsk? What motivates Grigory to switch sides to the Reds? What does Grigory discover when he returns to his home, why do he and Koshevoi become implacable enemies? How are comrade Yakov Fomin, lover Aksinia, and sister Dunia instrumental in helping Grigory escape arrest by the occupying Red regime?

Part 7: "The Fugitive": It is 1920 and Grigory is on the run. What causes supply shortages in the region? Why does Yakov Fomin decide to revolt? What motivates Grigory to (reluctantly) join sides with Fomin, and what prompts Grigory to eventually extricate himself from Yakov's unit? What occurs that shatters Grigory's idyllic dream of the future? What does Grigory do as he passes by the Don River on his journey home and why? How do you feel about the way Sholokhov ends the novel? In your opinion, to what extent is the novel as a whole an exemplification of Socialist Realism, and to what extent is it not?