1. Why do none of the characters in the story have names except for Luo? What does this mean for the narrative?

2. Why does the author change the character’s perspective at one point in the novel from the narrator to (p. 145 “the old miller’s story”, p. 149 “Luo’s Story”, p. 153 “The little seamstress’s story”)? What does it do for the narrative?
   - Section immediately following those sections, narrator takes the role of the secret agent. (p. 158)

3. What does the love of literature, stories and violin music mean?
   - Release from daily misery

4. The narrator of the story continually comments that Luo is a superior storyteller. At the end of the novel while the narrator is telling the story of the Count of Monte Cristo, Luo comments that the narrator has become a far better storyteller. What does it mean that the narrator of the novel’s skill as a storyteller is being judged from within the text? What does the narrator’s fascination with storytelling imply about the author’s own skill as a storyteller?

5. Is the Little Seamstress really in love with Luo or the narrator? How is she able to leave at the end seemingly so easily? Why don’t Luo or the narrator put up a greater fight at her departure?
   - Luo’s goal throughout the novel is to give the Little Seamstress culture. Is her departure the achievement of that culture? P. 192, the Little Seamstress is transformed into a city girl.

6. How does the Balzacian re-education contrast with the Mao Cultural Revolution and the re-education of so many middle class youngsters? What will happen to Luo, the narrator, and the Little Seamstress? How does re-education shape their futures? What does the three in one thousand chance of leaving the mountain mean? What does Four-Eye’s seemingly easily release from re-education mean?

7. In Luo’s section (p.150), he mentions that there are things that just cannot be taught such as dancing, diving and writing poetry. What does this imply about re-education and education in general?

8. What does the final line of the book “a woman’s beauty is a treasure beyond price” mean? (p. 197)