

### **Questions on Pilgrimage by Natasha Trethewey:**

1. What are the various references to the Mississippi in this poem? How is the river important, on the literal level, but also symbolically?
2. Does one need to know about the American Civil War and the fall of Vicksburg to appreciate this poem? How much does historical context govern one's reading of the poem?
3. What sort of person is the speaker? A tourist? An intellectual? A historian? A poet? What sort of things does the speaker emphasize?
4. Is this poem trying to make a specific point? Is it being didactic? How are readers to understand the final lines of the poem?
5. Is "Pilgrimage" a heavy-handed way of saying that humans are influenced by that which precedes them? If not, how does this poem reflect a more sophisticated vision of human nature and history?