Reading & Study Questions

"Ethnic Notions"

1. List the stereotypes of African Americans presented in "Ethnic Notions".

2. What factors contributed to the shaping of American attitudes about African Americans by these images?

3. What influence did Uncle Tom’s Cabin, in both is novel and film versions, have on these images?

4. Define the Sambo image and give one example from the film where the image appeared in American popular culture? During which years did this image arise?

5. Who was the originator of the minstrel show? By what name did he refer to himself before adopting the term "minstrel"? Which dance did he make famous?

6. What year did a number of minstrel performers form a single troupe? To which audience did these minstrel performers mostly play?

7. When did the image of "Jim Crow" evolve into Sambo? Which movement arose at the same time as the minstrels? How did the minstrels characterize African Americans?

8. By what stereotype were northern African Americans characterized? What image of African Americans was portrayed by this stereotype?

9. By what date was the "Mammy" stereotype popularized in film? What image of African American women was portrayed by this stereotype? What social function did this stereotype serve? How was the Mammy characterized in relation to whites? To her own family?

10. After the Civil War, how were African Americans characterized? By what date were these stereotypes popularized in American popular culture?

11. Name the author and title of the text that was both a defense of the Ku Klux Klan and an indictment against the bestiality of African Americans? What is the name of the movie that was made from this novel?

12. How are the old and new generations characterized during the "Plantation Era" in popular narratives, such as the song, "Carry Me Back To Old Virginny"?
13. During the early 1900’s, how was the brutality against African Americans justified? Which stereotype of African American children became popular during this time? How did this stereotype characterize them?

14. Who was the first African American to play the part of a Black man in a minstrel show? Why did he have to adopt an Irish name?

15. What affect did coon jokes have on African Americans who wished to perform as actors?

16. How were African Americans stereotyped in cartoons? Give specific examples.

17. How did Steppin’ Fetchit’s characterization of African American males promote racial stereotypes? Which stereotype did he popularize?

18. Which African American actor played the first role in which an African American male was characterized in other than a stereotypical role? What is the name of the movie in which he acted? In which year was this movie produced?