*No Telephone to Heaven* by Michelle Cliff

Dialectical Journal Entry Two and Questions

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| “NO TELEPHONE TO HEAVEN…The motto suited them. Their people. The place of their people’s labor. So lickle movement in this place. From this place. Then only back and forth, back and forth, over and again, over and again—for centuries” (16). | The author uses a hopeless tone to present the idea that the Jamaican people have given up on God, because it does not seem that He is “answering the telephone”. The cyclical pattern of distrust and racism between Jamaicans and Americans, as well as Jamaicans and other Jamaicans, makes it seem as though this is the case; however, it is not. The repetition and swaying movement of phrases such as “back and forth” and “over and again” convey the sadness that must come to the author and others who feel and observe Jamaica not moving forward, but in a circle. As children grow up witnessing the events and come to understand what is happening, they may stray from their parents’ beliefs as they lose their hope of change in a world where the same issues that affect them on the island, also may affect them elsewhere.  |

1. What are your thoughts about the short paragraph on page 9 that states, “There was no forgiveness in this disorder. Sasabonsam, fire-eyed forest monster, dangled his legs from the height of a silk-cotton tree”? What is the author’s purpose in writing about Sasabonsam?
2. Based on what we have read so far, what do you think is the identity of the Jamaican people? Has their identity changed in the course of the first section of this book; if so, how?
3. On page 59, Kitty “commented to Boy that she had no idea there was so much poverty in America”. What assumptions or misconceptions have you had about the Caribbean that this book has gone against? Do you think that going to the Caribbean as the Savages came to American would tear down some of these misconceptions? How? (How did going to Costa Rica and experiencing it tear down misconceptions?)
4. How do we find ourselves in conflict with other Americans as Jamaicans in the book have conflict with other Jamaicans? Are there any similarities between conflicts that may arise for us and those that arose in the book between people from the same country?
5. What do you think is the significance of the title “*No Telephone to Heaven*” after reading the first section of the book?