Another Country Discussion Prompts Book 1

1. Why did Baldwin choose this title? Is there more to it than the fairly obvious suggestion that characters of different races are worlds apart?
2. How does Rufus echo the personality of previous Baldwin protagonists? How does he differ?
3. Think about the gripping opening scene in CHAPTER 1. Why does Baldwin introduce Rufus this way?
4. Think about the role of music early on, and about Baldwin's very sexualized descriptions of it, e.g. the sax solo. Is the symbolism too obvious?
5. What do you make of Leona and Rufus's sex scenes? More broadly, what role(s) does sex play in this first section of the book?
6. Rufus notices many examples of white privilege. Are they familiar to you? What do you make of the bar-fight scene?
7. Think about Rufus's friends. Why has he chosen these people? Why have they chosen him? Overall, do you find Rufus sympathetic?
8. Why did Baldwin include Vivaldo's memory of his visit to Harlem years earlier? How is it relevant?
9. How does Leona view Rufus? What do you make of her calling him "boy"? How does Rufus view Leona--and himself in their relationship?
10. More generally, what do you make of Baldwin's portrayal of women in this section, specifically Leona, Jane, Ida?
11. What do take away from the line near the end of Chapter 1: "He was black and the water was black*?
12. What does the chapter title Easy Rider suggest?
13. In CHAPTER 2 Rufus's friends fear for him, and we get to know Richard and Cass better. What do you learn about them, and their understanding of Rufus?
14. What do you infer about Cass and Richard's relationship as they come to grips with Rufus's death?
15. Think about Cass's search for a head-covering for the funeral. What does this scene reveal about Baldwin's race perceptions?
16. How do you feel about Reverend Foster's eulogy? How do you feel about Vivaldo's hinted-at pursuit of Ida, as soon as the funeral ends?
17. In CHAPTER 3, we get a better sense of Vivaldo's voice and viewpoint. How would you describe Vivaldo's relationship to Rufus? To Richard?
18. In the cocktail party banter, how does race come into play, between Vivaldo and Ellis and others? What do you think of Ellis?
19. What do you think about Vivaldo and Ida's relationship? Is there more to it than passion?
20. What are your thoughts on Another Country opening with Rufus, and then he dies at the end of Chapter 1? Do you still see him as the main character? If he isn't, who is?