In his classic work, The Strange Career of Jim Crow, C. Vann Woodward discussed the evolution of racial segregation in the South. One of his primary objectives was, in fact, to expose the great lie of segregationists -- that separation of the races had always existed in the South, and that segregation was the "Southern way of life."

Woodward's argument proceeds along chronological and thematic lines. Chapter one discusses the ante-bellum era (1789-1860) and Reconstruction (1865-1877). Chapter two examines the era of "forgotten alternatives" in Southern race relations between 1870 and 1900. Chapter three examines what Woodward calls the "capitulation to racism" around the turn of the century. And, finally, chapter four examines the "turning point" in race relations that occurred between the 1920s and 1940s in the South.

Using your book, briefly sketch Woodward's argument using the following questions.

1) Does Woodward argue that there was a system of racial segregation in the rural ante-bellum South? If yes, how did it work? If no, why not?

2) Why does Woodward argue that "it would be a mistaken effort to equate [the Reconstruction] period in racial relations with either the old regime of slavery or with the future rule of Jim Crow?" How was the Reconstruction era "exceptional?" (29)

3) On page 44, Woodward argues that "Before the South capitulated completely to the doctrines of the extreme racists, three alternative philosophies of race relations were put forward for the region’s adherence and support." What were these alternative philosophies of the late nineteenth century, and what did each offer?
4) On page 69, Woodward argues that the “South’s adoption of extreme racism was due not so much to a conversion as it was to a relaxation of the opposition.” Which three critical forces of opposition relaxed and how did this set the stage for the creation of a segregationist system in the South?

5) On page 122, Woodward begins his examination of the “turning point” in race relations in the South. What reasons does he give for the “momentous change of course” in the South?

6) Finally, in your view, what was the main point of Vann Woodward’s book? And, were you convinced by the arguments he presented in defense of his point?