History & Heritage

Name: _____

Heritage: valued objects and qualities such as cultural traditions, unspoiled countryside, and historic buildings that have been passed down from previous generations.

History: the past considered as a whole.

Directions:

The following three stories explore culture, race, history, and heritage in unique ways. Read, annotate, answer the questions, and create your own questions about the three writings in preparation for a Socratic discussion on "How do Heritage and History shape humans?"

Writing Questions for Discussion:

After reading each piece, stop and reflect what it is telling the reader about the author's history or heritage. Then, try and prepare an **Interpretive** or **Evaluative** question for each story to pose to the group to help explore this theme.

Interpretive Questions: *answers to these questions may be implied rather than stated directly in the reading*

- *address motive of author or a character*
- *reader must make inferences based on specific information they can cite to back up their conclusions*
- *call for longer answers and more thinking*
- *require reading of the work AND consideration of what has been read*
  - Example: What is Romeo's concept of love at the start of the play?
  - Example: Is Friar Lawrence or the Nurse more to blame for the tragedy?

Evaluative Questions: *answers to these questions emphasize the "So what?" of the text*

- *link text to prior knowledge, other texts, or human experiences in life*
- *found by testing the ideas of a text against reader's ideas*
- *require the reader to think more abstractly and relate the text to real life*
- *good answers lead to an appreciation of the text and further discussion*
  - Example: Is "love at first sight" really love?
  - Example: Should parents arrange marriages for their children?

Questions for group

"Ain't I A Woman" -

"Snow" -

"Where are you from?" -

Speech: "Ain't I A Woman?"

Sojourner Truth (1797-1883): Delivered 1851

Women's Convention, Akron, Ohio

Well, children, where there is so much racket there must be something out of kilter. I think that 'twixt the negroes of the South and the women at the North, all talking about rights, the white men will be in a fix pretty soon. But what's all this here talking about?

That man over there says that women need to be helped into carriages, and lifted over ditches, and to have the best place everywhere. Nobody ever helps me into carriages, or over mudpuddles, or gives me any best place! And ain't I a woman? Look at me! Look at my arm! I have ploughed and planted, and gathered into barns, and no man could head me! And ain't I a woman? I could work as much and eat as much as a man - when I could get it - and bear the lash as well! And ain't I a woman? I have borne thirteen children, and seen most all sold off to slavery, and when I cried out with my mother's grief, none but Jesus heard me! And ain't I a woman?

Then they talk about this thing in the head; what's this they call it? [member of audience whispers, "intellect"] That's it, honey. What's that got to do with women's rights or negroes' rights? If my cup won't hold but a pint, and yours holds a quart, wouldn't you be mean not to let me have my little half measure full? Then that little man in black there, he says women can't have as much rights as men, 'cause Christ wasn't a woman! Where did your Christ come from? Where did your Christ come from? From God and a woman! Man had nothing to do with Him.

If the first woman God ever made was strong enough to turn the world upside down all alone, these women together ought to be able to turn it back , and get it right side up again! And now they is asking to do it, the men better let them.

Obliged to you for hearing me, and now old Sojourner ain't got nothing more to say.

Short Story: "Snow"

by Julia Álvarez

from *How the Garcia Girls Lost Their Accents*

Our first year in New York we rented a small apartment with a Catholic school nearby, taught by the Sisters of Charity, hefty women in long black gowns and bonnets that made them look peculiar, like dolls in mourning. I liked them a lot, especially my grandmotherly fourth grade teacher, Sister Zoe. I had a lovely name, she said, and she had me teach the whole class how to pronounce it. Yo-lan-da. As the only immigrant in my class, I was put in a special seat in the first row by the window, apart from the other children so that Sister Zoe could tutor me without disturbing them. Slowly, she enunciated the new words I was to repeat: laundromat, cornflakes, subway, snow.

Soon I picked up enough English to understand holocaust was in the air. Sister Zoe explained to a wide-eyed classroom what was happening in Cuba. Russian missiles were being assembled, trained supposedly on New York City. President Kennedy, looking worried too, was on the television at home, explaining we might have to go to war against the Communists. At school, we had air-raid drills: an ominous bell would go off and we'd file into the hall, fall to the floor, cover our heads with our coats, and imagine our hair falling out, the bones in our arms going soft. At home, Mami and my sisters and I said a rosary for world peace. I heard new vocabulary: nuclear bomb, radioactive fallout, bomb shelter. Sister Zoe explained how it would happen. She

drew a picture of a mushroom on the blackboard and dotted a flurry of chalkmarks for the dusty fallout that would kill us all.

The months grew cold, November, December. It was dark when I got up in the morning, frosty when I followed my breath to school. One morning as I sat at my desk daydreaming out the window, I saw dots in the air like the ones Sister Zoe had drawn—random at first, then lots and lots. I shrieked, "Bomb! Bomb!" Sister Zoe jerked around, her full black skirt ballooning as she hurried to my side. A few girls began to cry.

But then Sister Zoe's shocked look faded. "Why, Yolanda dear, that's snow!" She laughed "Snow."

"Snow," I repeated. I looked out the window warily. All my life I had heard about the white crystals that fell out of American skies in the winter. From my desk I watched the fine powder dust the sidewalk and parked cars below. Each flake was different, Sister Zoe said, like a person, irreplaceable and beautiful.

Essay: "My least favorite question: where are you from?"

By Patricia Park

The Guardian (2013)

As a non-white American, I'm often asked where I'm from and whether I've been "back home". And people don't mean New York City, where I was born and raised. They look at me, and my ethnic face, and they mean South Korea.

That was how I used to answer, too. Even though I had never lived in South Korea until I was almost 30. Even though my parents were born in what is now North Korea, fled to the South as wartime refugees, then took the slow boat to Argentina, before becoming naturalized Americans. Despite the fact that I recited the pledge of allegiance at school each morning, despite my blue US passport, I never self-identified as American while growing up; it had never occurred to me that I was.

What I describe is hardly a new phenomenon: scores of fellow ethnic "others" have long felt similarly un-American growing up in the US, facing subtle rhetorical reminders of our out-group status. It's well-trodden territory, treated in My Big Fat Greek Wedding, The Joy Luck Club, and the works of Chang-Rae Lee. As "hyphenated Americans," our identities are qualified – our Americanness is made subordinate, and secondary, to all the ethnic matter that precedes it. We are constantly told to look to that other home, our "real" home, as the place where we truly belong.

But what we have failed to address is the reverse phenomenon: what exactly awaits us when we "return" to the quote-unquote motherland. As a society we carry romantic notions of stepping off the plane – or boat – and being met with open arms, perpetuated by the likes of Olive Garden commercials ("When you're here, you're family!") and even Jersey Shore, where Snooki et al set off for Italy to search for their roots under every pizza

box and carafe of Chianti. Conan O'Brien famously parodied this romanticized attachment to the "old country" when he traveled to Ireland and pressed his giant orange head into the bosom of each and every startled passerby, claiming kinship.

It is wrong to assume that hyphenated-Americans can simply "return" to the "motherland" and automatically fit in. I, too, was once guilty of the same misguided notion, when I traveled to Seoul as a Fulbright scholar to reconnect with my ethnic identity. My parents left the Korean peninsula shortly after electricity came into vogue; as such, my cultural knowledge was at least 40 years out-of-date. Weaned on stories of my parents' war-torn childhood, I pictured straw-thatched houses dotting the fields of rice paddies, and villagers gathering in the town square to kick around the old pigskin (a pig's bladder blown up like a soccer ball). I clung fiercely to this quaint, rustic (read: naïve) image of the old country.

When I touched down in Korea, I was shocked to find the place that I thought I knew so intimately – the place I was supposed to hail from – was so foreign. Gray skyscrapers towered over the paved streets. Neon storefronts blinked advertisements for cell phones and fried chicken. My "kinsmen" – bedecked in suits and heels – jostled past me without a word, let alone greeting.

Whenever I communicated in our "native" tongue, the South Koreans laughed at my antiquated vocabulary (I peddled words like apothecary, outhouse) and my distinctly American cadence (I spoke in iambic pentameter). They said I was a "foreigner"; not one of "our country's people," the term they used to refer to themselves. Never did they call me Korean. Once again I felt like the other – except this time, I was otherized by the ethnic group I was told my whole life I was a part of.

There is a real danger in spending your whole life thinking you belong to some other place that's anywhere but here. My time abroad might have been less culturally wrought if I had never tried to assume an automatic entitlement to Korea. What my experience in South Korea affirmed for me was that you can't go (back) home again – that home was never yours to lay claim to in the first place. I have since returned home, to New York City, with a newfound sense of orientation, and belonging.

But it's an uphill battle. I don't always feel American, especially on days when people insist on asking, "No, where are you from from?" or compliment my accent-free English. But we must challenge our views on hyphenated-Americans and their place of belonging. You might even say it's time we collectively weaned ourselves off the proverbial teat of the motherland.

Change is slow, and hard. But if we take even the smallest, simplest steps – like revising the rhetoric we use to talk about where we come from – the sooner Americans like myself might stop looking for acceptance over there, and start to feel we, too, have a claim to our real homeland here in the United States.