Прикарпатський національний університет
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ДУМЧАК І.М.

MULTICULTURAL AMERICA

Nine American Short Stories

НАВЧАЛЬНО-МЕТОДИЧНИЙ ПОСІБНИК ДЛЯ СТУДЕНТІВ СТАРШИХ КУРСІВ (БАКАЛАВР, МАГІСТР)

Івано-Франківськ

2021

УДК 811.111:82-4
ББК 81.2A (англ)
І-41

Друкується за ухвалою вченої ради факультету іноземних мов Прикарпатського національного університету імені Василя Стефаника

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І-41 **Думчак І.М.**
Multicultural America. *Nine American Short Stories* : навчально-методичний посібник. Івано-Франківськ : 2021. 113 с.

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BERNARD MALAMUD

Bernard Malamud (1914-1986), the convinced humanist who felt that "the purpose of the writer is to keep civilization from destroying itself," was born in Brooklyn as the son of Jewish immigrants from Russia, who eked out a meager living in their little grocery store. Having received his B.A. from New York City College and his MA., in 1942, from Columbia University, Malamud went West and taught for twelve years at Oregon State College in Corvallis. After two years at Harvard, he joined the language and literature division of Bennington College in 1961, where he taught till his death. Malamud's work includes eight accomplished novels from The Natural *(1952) through* The Assistant *(1957),* A New Life *(1961), and* The Fixer *(1966), which won both the National Book Award and the Pulitzer Prize, to the unfinished and posthumously published* The People *(1989), and about fifty outstanding short stories, which are collected in* The Magic Barrel *(1958),* Idiots First *(1963), and* Rembrandt's Hat *(1973), and among which are such gems as "The Magic Barrel" and "The Last Mohican." Together with Saul Bellow and Philip Roth, Malamud was doubtlessly one of the foremost Jewish-Amer- ican writers of the post-war period. Having grown up in multi-ethnic surroundings and having taught for some time at the Harlem Evening High School, he knew from personal experience about the problems and paradoxes which beset Jewish-Black relationships in America.*

He probed into these relationships in "Angel Levine" and in his meta-novel The Tenants *(1971), and he made them the subject of "Black Is My Favorite Color," a moving story about the consequences of 'positive' prejudice. This story appeared first in fitly 1963 in* Reporter, *29, and was then collected in* Idiots First. *That Malamud thought highly of it is confirmed by its inclusion in the collection of his favorite tales,* The Stories of Bernard Malamud *(1983).*

Black Is My Favorite Color

CHARITY QUIETNESS sits in the toilet eating her two hard-boiled eggs while I'm having my ham sandwich and coffee in the kitchen. That's how it goes, only don't get the idea of ghet- toes. If there's a ghetto I'm the one that's in it. She's my cleaning woman from Father Divine and comes in once a week to my small three-room apartment on my day off from the liquor store. "Peace," she says to me, "Father reached on down and took

me right up in Heaven." She's a small person with a flat body, frizzy hair, and a quiet face that the light shines out of, and Mama had such eyes before she died. The first time Charity Quietness came in to clean, a little more than a year and a half, I made the mistake to ask her to sit down at the kitchen table with me and eat her lunch. 1 was still feeling not so hot after Ornita left, but I'm the kind of a man - Nat Lime, forty-four, a bachelor with a daily growing bald spot on the back of my head, and I could lose frankly fifteen pounds - who enjoys company so long as he has it. So she cooked up her two hard-boiled eggs and sat down and took a small bite out of one of them. But after a minute she stopped chewing and she got up and carried the eggs in a cup to the bathroom, and since then she eats there. I said to her more than once, "Okay, Charity Quietness, so have it your way, eat the eggs in the kitchen by yourself and I'll eat when you're done," but she smiles absentminded, and eats in the toilet. It's my fate with colored people.

Although black is still my favorite color you wouldn't know it from my luck except in short quantities, even though I do all right in the liquor store business in Harlem, on Eighth Avenue between 110th and 111th. I speak with respect. A large part of my life I've had dealings with Negro people, most on a business basis but sometimes for friendly reasons with genuine feeling on both sides. I'm drawn to them. At this time of my life I should have one or two good colored friends, but the fault isn't necessarily mine. If they knew what was in my heart toward them, but how can you tell that to anybody nowadays? I've tried more than once but the language of the heart either is a dead language or else nobody understands it the way you speak it. Very few. What I'm saying is, personally for me there's only one human color and that's the color of blood. I like a black person if not because he's black, thenbecause I'm white. It comes to the same thing. If I wasn't white my first choice would be black. I'm satisfied to be white because I have no other choice. Anyway, I got an eye for color. I appreciate. Who wants everybody to be the same? Maybe it's like some kind of a talent. Nat Lime might be a liquor dealer in Harlem, but once in the jungle in New Guinea in the Second World War, I got the idea, when I shot at a running Jap and missed him, that I had some kind of a talent, though maybe it's the kind where you have a good idea now and then, but in the end what do they come to? After all, it's a strange world.

Where Charity Quietness eats her eggs makes me think about Buster Wilson when we were both boys in the Williamsburg section of Brooklyn. There was this long block of run-down dirty frame houses in the middle of a not-so-hot white neighborhood full of pushcarts. The Negro houses

looked to me like they had been bom and died there, dead not long after the beginning of the world. I lived on the next street. My father was a cutter with arthritis in both hands, big red knuckles and fingers so swollen he didn't cut, and my mother was the one who went to work. She sold paper bags from a secondhand pushcart on Ellery Street. We didn't starve but nobody ate chicken unless we were sick, or the chicken was. This was my first acquaintance with a lot of black people and I used to poke around on their poor block. I think I thought, brother, if there can be like this, what can't there be? I mean I caught an early idea what life was about. Anyway, I met Buster Wilson there. He used to play marbles by himself. I sat on the curb across the street, watching him shoot one marble lefty and the other one righty. The hand that won picked up the marbles. It wasn't so much of a game but he didn't ask me to come over. My idea was to be friendly, only he never encouraged, he discouraged. Why did I pick him out for a friend? Maybe because I had no others then, we were new in the neighborhood, from Manhattan. Also I liked his type. Buster did everything alone. He was a skinny kid and his brothers' clothes hung on him like worn-out potato sacks. He was a beanpole boy, about twelve, and I was then ten. His arms and legs were burnt-out matchsticks. He always wore a brown wool sweater, one arm half unraveled, the other went down to the wrist. His long and narrow head had a white part cut straight in the short woolly hair, maybe with a ruler there, by his father, a barber but too drunk to stay a barber.

In those days though I had little myself I was old enough to know who was better off, and the whole block of colored houses made me feel bad in the daylight. But I went there as much as I could because the street was full of life. In the night it looked different, it's hard to tell a cripple in the dark. Sometimes I was afraid to walk by the houses when they were dark and quiet. I was afraid there were people looking at me that I couldn't see. I liked it better when they had parties at night and everybody had a good time. The musicians played their banjos and saxophones and the houses shook with the music and laughing. The young girls, with their pretty dresses and ribbons in their hair, caught me in my throat when I saw them through the windows.

But with the parties came drinking and fights. Sundays were bad days after the Saturday night parties. I remember once that Buster's father, also long and loose, always wearing a dirty gray Homburg hat, chased another black man in the street with a half-inch chisel. The other one, maybe five feet high, lost his shoe and when they wrestled on the ground he was already bleeding through his suit, a thick red blood smearing the

sidewalk. I was frightened by the blood and wanted to pour it back in the man who was bleeding from the chisel. On another time Buster's father was playing in a crap game with two big bouncy red dice, in the back of an alley between two middle houses. Then about six men started fist-fighting there, and they ran out of the alley and hit each other in the street. The neighbors, including children, came out and watched, everybody afraid but nobody moving to do anything. I saw the same thing near my store in Harlem, years later, a big crowd watching two men in the street, their breaths hanging in the air on a winter night, murdering each other with switch knives, but nobody moved to call a cop. I didn't either. Anyway, I was just a young kid but I still remember how the cops drove up in a police paddy wagon and broke up the fight by hit-ting everybody they could hit with big nightsticks. This was in the days before La Guardia. Most of the fighters were knocked out cold, only one or two got away. Buster's father started to run back in his house but a cop ran after him and cracked him on his Homburg hat with a club, right on the front porch. Then the Negro men were lifted up by the cops, one at the arms and the other at the feet, and they heaved them in the paddy wagon. Buster's father hit the back of the wagon and fell, with his nose spoutingvery red blood, on top of three other men. I personally couldn't stand it, I was scared of the human race so I ran home, but I re-member Buster watching without any expression in his eyes. I stole an extra fifteen cents from my mother's pocketbook and I ran back and asked Buster if he wanted to go to the movies, I would pay. He said yes. This was the first time he talked to me.

So we went more than once to the movies. But we never got to be friends. Maybe because it was a one-way proposition - from me to him. Which includes my invitations to go with me, my (poor mother's) movie money, Hershey chocolate bars, watermelon slices, even my best Nick Carter and Merriwell books that I spent hours picking up in the junk shops, and that he never gave me back. Once, he let me go in his house to get a match so we could smoke some butts we found, but it smelled so heavy, so impossible, I died till I got out of there. What I saw in the way of furniture I won't mention - the best was falling apart in pieces. Maybe we went to the movies all together five or six matinees that spring and in the summertime, but when the shows were over he usually walked home by himself.

"Why don't you wait for me, Buster?" I said. "We're both going in the same direction."

But he was walking ahead and didn't hear me. Anyway he didn't answer.

One day when I wasn't expecting it he hit me in the teeth. I felt like crying but not because of the pain. I spit blood and said, "What did you hit me for? What did I do to you?"

"Because you a Jew bastard. Take your Jew movies and your Jew candy and shove them up your Jew ass."

And he ran away.

I thought to myself how was I to know he didn't like the movies. When I was a man I thought, you can't force it.

Years later, in the prime of my life, I met Mrs. Ornita Harris. She was standing by herself under an open umbrella at the bus stop, crosstown 110th, and I picked up her green glove that she had dropped on the wet sidewalk. It was in the end of November. Before I could ask her was it hers, she grabbed the glove out of my hand, closed her umbrella, and stepped in the bus. 1 got on right after her. 1 was annoyed so I said, "If you'll pardon me, Miss, there's no law that you have to say thanks, but at least don't make a criminal out of me."

"Well, I'm sorry," she said, "but I don't like white men trying to do me favors."

I tipped my hat and that was that. In ten minutes I got off the bus but she was already gone.

Who expected to see her again, but I did. She came into my store about a week later for a bottle of Scotch.

"I would offer you a discount," 1 told her, "but I know you don't like a certain kind of a favor and I'm not looking for a slap in the face."

Then she recognized me and got a little embarrassed.

"I'm sorry I misunderstood you that day."

"So mistakes happen."

The result was she took the discount. I gave her a dollar off.

She used to come in every two weeks for a fifth of Haig & Haig. Sometimes I waited on her, sometimes my helpers, Jimmy or Mason, also colored, but I said to give the discount. They both looked at me but I had nothing to be ashamed. In the spring when she came in we used to talk once in a while. She was a slim woman, dark, but not the most dark, about thirty years I wouldsay, also well built, with a combination nice legs and a good-size bosom that I like. Her face was pretty, with big eyes and high cheekbones, but lips a little thick and nose a little broad. Some-times she didn't feel like talking, she paid for the bottle, less dis-count, and walked out. Her eyes were tired and she didn't look to me like a happy woman.

I found out her husband was once a window cleaner on the big buildings, but one day his safety belt broke and he fell fifteen stories. After

the funeral she got a job as a manicurist in a Times Square barber shop. I told her I was a bachelor and lived with my mother in a small three-room apartment on West Eighty-third near Broadway. My mother had cancer, and Ornita said she was very sorry.

One night in July we went out together. How that happened I'm still not so sure. I guess I asked her and she didn't say no. Where do you go out with a Negro woman? We went to the Village. We had a good dinner and walked in Washington Square Park. It was a hot night. Nobody was surprised when they saw us, nobody looked at us like we were against the law. If they looked maybe they saw my new lightweight suit that I bought yesterday and my shiny bald spot when we walked under a lamp, also how pretty she was for a man my type. We went in a movie on West Eighth Street. I didn't want to go in but she said she had heard about the picture. We went in like strangers and we came out like strangers. I wondered what was in her mind and I thought to myself, whatever is in there it's not a certain white man that I know. All night long we went together like we were chained. After the movie she wouldn't let me take her back to Harlem. When I put her in a taxi she asked me, "Why did we bother?"

For the steak, I thought of saying. Instead I said, "You're worth the bother."

"Thanks anyway."

Kiddo, I thought to myself after the taxi left, you just found out what's what, now the best thing is forget her.

It's easy to say. In August we went out the second time. That was the night she wore a purple dress and I thought to myself, my God, what colors. Who paints that picture paints a masterpiece. Everybody looked at us but I had pleasure. That night when she took off her dress it was in a furnished room I had thesense to rent a few days before. With my sick mother, I couldn't ask her to come to my apartment, and she didn't want me to go home with her where she lived with her brother's family on West 115th near Lenox Avenue. Under her purple dress she wore a black slip, and when she took that off she had white underwear. When she took off the white underwear she was black again. But I know where the next white was, if you want to call it white. And that was the night I think I fell in love with her, the first time in my life, though I have liked one or two nice girls I used to go with when I was a boy. It was a serious proposition. I'm the kind of a man when I think of love I'm thinking of marriage. I guess that's why I am a bachelor.

That same week I had a holdup in my place, two big men - both black - with revolvers. One got excited when I rang open the cash register

so he could take the money, and he hit me over the ear with his gun. I stayed in the hospital a couple of weeks. Otherwise I was insured. Ornita came to see me. She sat on a chair without talking much. Finally, 1 saw she was uncomfortable so 1 suggested she ought to go home.

"I'm sorry it happened," she said.

"Don't talk like it's your fault."

When I got out of the hospital my mother was dead. She was a wonderful person. My father died when I was thirteen and all by herself she kept the family alive and together. 1 sat shiva for a week and remembered how she sold paper bags on her pushcart. I remembered her life and what she tried to teach me. Nathan, she said, if you ever forget you are a Jew a goy will remind you. Mama, I said, rest in peace on this subject. But if I do something you don't like, remember, on earth it's harder than where you are. Then when my week of mourning was finished, one night I said, "Ornita, let's get married. We're both honest people and if you love me like I love you it won't be such a bad time. If you don't like New York, I'll sell out here and we'll move someplace else. Maybe to San Francisco where nobody knows us. I was there for a week in the Second War and I saw white and colored living together."

"Nat," she answered me, "I like you but I'd be afraid. My hus-band woulda killed me."

"Your husband is dead."

"Not in my memory."

"In that case I'll wait."

"Do you know what it'd be like -1 mean the life we could expect?"

"Ornita," I said, "I'm the kind of a man, if he picks his own way of life he's satisfied."

"What about children? Were you looking forward to half-Jewish polka dots?"

"I was looking forward to children."

"I can't," she said.

Can't is can't. I saw she was afraid and the best thing was not to push. Sometimes when we met she was so nervous that what-ever we did she couldn't enjoy it. At the same time I still thought I had a chance. We were together more and more. I got rid of my furnished room and she came to my apartment - I gave away Mama's bed and bought a new one. She stayed with me all day on Sundays. When she wasn't so nervous she was affectionate, and if I know what love is, I had it. We went out a couple of times a week, the same way - usually 1 met her in Times Square and sent her home in a taxi, but I talked more about marriage and she talked less

against it. One night she told me she was still trying to convince herself but she was almost convinced. I took an inventory of my liquor stock so I could put the store up for sale.

Ornita knew what I was doing. One day she quit her job, the next she took it back. She also went away a week to visit her sister in Philadelphia for a little rest. She came back tired but said maybe. Maybe is maybe so I'll wait. The way she said it, it was closer to yes. That was the winter two years ago. When she was in Philadelphia I called up a friend of mine from the army, now a CPA, and told him I would appreciate an invitation for an evening. He knew why. His wife said yes right away. When Ornita came back we went there. The wife made a fine dinner. It wasn't a bad time and they told us to come again. Ornita had a few drinks. She looked relaxed, wonderful. Later, because of a twenty- four-hour taxi strike I had to take her home on the subway. When we got to the 116th Street station she told me to go back on the train, and she would walk the couple of blocks to her house. I didn't like a woman walking alone on the streets at that time of the night. She said she never had any trouble but I insisted nothing doing. I said I would walk to her stoop with her and when she went upstairs I would go to the subway.

On the way there, on 115th in the middle of the block before Lenox, we were stopped by three men - maybe they were boys. One had a black hat with a half-inch brim, one a green cloth hat, and the third wore a black leather cap. The green hat was wearing a short coat and the other two had long ones. It was under a streetlight but the leather cap snapped a six-inch switchblade open in the light.

"What you doin' with this white son of a bitch?" he said to Ornita.

"I'm minding my own business," she answered him, "and I wish you would too."

"Boys," I said, "we're all brothers. I'm a reliable merchant in the neighborhood. This young lady is my dear friend. We don't want any trouble. Please let us pass."

"You talk like a Jew landlord," said the green hat. "Fifty a week for a single room."

"No charge fo' the rats," said the half-inch brim.

"Believe me, I'm no landlord. My store is Nathan's Liquors be-tween Hundred Tenth and Eleventh. I also have two colored clerks, Mason and Jimmy, and they will tell you I pay good wages as well as I give discounts to certain customers."

"Shut your mouth, Jewboy," said the leather cap, and he moved the knife back and forth in front of my coat button. "No more black pussy for you."

"Speak with respect about this lady, please."

I got slapped on my mouth.

"That ain't no lady," said the long face in the half-inch brim, "that's black pussy. She deserve to have evvy bit of her hair shave off. How you like to have evvy bit of your hair shave off, black pussy?"

"Please leave me and this gentleman alone or I'm gonna scream long and loud. That's my house three doors down."

They slapped her. I never heard such a scream. Like her husband was falling fifteen stories.

I hit the one that slapped her and the next I knew I was laying in the gutter with a pain in my head. I thought, goodbye, Nat, they'll stab me for sure, but all they did was take my wallet and run in three directions.

Omita walked back with me to the subway and she wouldn't let me go home with her again.

"Just get home safely."

She looked terrible. Her face was gray and I still remembered her scream. It was a terrible winter night, very cold February, and it took me an hour and ten minutes to get home. I felt bad for leaving her but what could I do?

We had a date downtown the next night but she didn't show up, the first time.

In the morning I called her in her place of business.

"For God's sake, Ornita, if we got married and moved away we wouldn't have the kind of trouble that we had. We wouldn't come in that neighborhood any more."

"Yes, we would. I have family there and don't want to move anyplace else. The truth of it is I can't marry you, Nat. I got troubles enough of my own."

"I coulda sworn you love me."

"Maybe I do but I can't marry you."

"For God's sake, why?"

"I got enough trouble of my own."

I went that night in a cab to her brother's house to see her. He was a quiet man with a thin mustache. "She gone," he said, "left for a long visit to some close relatives in the South. She said to tell you she appreciate your intentions but didn't think it will work out."

"Thank you kindly," I said.

Don't ask me how I got home.

Once, on Eighth Avenue, a couple of blocks from my store, I saw a blind man with a white cane tapping on the sidewalk. I figured we were going in the same direction so I took his arm.

"I can tell you're white," he said,

A heavy colored woman with a full shopping bag rushed after us.

"Never mind," she said, "I know where he live."

She pushed me with her shoulder and 1 hurt my leg on the fire hydrant.

That's how it is. I give my heart and they kick me in my teeth.

"Charity Quietness - you hear me? - come out of that goddamn toilet!"

I. Memorize the following words and word-combinations, write out the sentences with them from the text and translate.Use them in the situations from the text.

to eke out a living	beanpole (n.): (infml.)
meager (BE: meagre) (adj.)	matchstick (n.):
accomplished (adj.)	to unravel (v.)
gem (n.)	cripple (n.)
to beset (v.)	ribbon (n.)
to probe into (v.)	to catch one in one's throat
prejudice (n.)	chisel (n.)
ghetto (n.)	to smear (v.)
frizzy (adj.)	crap game (n.)
not so hot:	bouncy (adj.)
bachelor (n.)	dice (n.pl.)
to have it my/his/her, etc. way	switch knife (n.)
dealings (n.pl.)	paddy wagon (n.)
genuine (adj.)	nightstick (n.)
to appreciate (v.)	to knock out cold (v.)
dealer (n.)	to crack (v.)
run-down (adj.)	porch (n.)
a frame house (n.)	to heave (v.)
pushcart (n.)	to spout (v.)
cutter (n.)	junk shop (n.)
arthritis (n.)	butt (n.)

knuckle (n.) swollen (adj.) to starve (v.) to poke around (v.) block (n.) brother (interject.) marbles (n.pl.) curb (BE: kerb) (n.) lefty, right: (infml.) to encourage (v.) to discourage (v.) skinny (adj.)	to tip (v.) to wait on (v.) to chain (v.) to bother (v.) holdup (n.) cash register (n.) polka dots (n., affectionate (adj.) inventory (n.) brim (n.) switchblade (n.) gutter (n.) to show up (v.): (infml.) to tap (v.)

II. Find some information about:

FATHER DIVINE: (1882-1965) HARLEM WILLIAMSBURG BROOKLYN ELLERY STREET LA GUARDIA	NICK CARTER TIMES SQUARE THE VILLAGE WASHINGTON SQUARE PARK SHIVA GOY

III. Prepare a literary translation of the passage on page 10 starting with the words "*Ornita knew what I was doing*." and ending with the words "*... the subway*."

IV. Answer the following questions:

1. Nat says several times that, as a boy, he was afraid of Blacks, but later "black" becomes his "favorite color". Analyze the relationship between his earlier fear of African Americans and his later prejudice in favor of them.

2. Obviously Nat's present predicament is a result of his past experiences. Examine the structural and rhetorical devices which Malamud employs in order to move from present to past action.
3. Investigate the element of anti-Semitism in Nat's confrontations with African Americans.
4. With Brooklyn, Harlem and Greenwich Village, Malamud uses settings which carry particular associations. Discuss in how far these settings contribute to the meaning of the story.
5. Nat is a first-person narrator who is obviously unreliable and whose estimation of events is often glaringly - and humorously - wrong. Give examples of passages in which the reader needs to interpret and 'correct' Nat's estimations, and discuss the relationship between point of view and humor.
6. Nat frequently employs Yinglish, a mixture of Yiddish and English. Comment on the effect of this idiom and list examples of Yiddish expressions and inflections.
7. To which degree can Nat be understood as a variation of the schlemielhgure of Yiddish folklore, a figure which is commonly defined as a consistently unlucky and unfortunate person born under a bad star and therefore finding himself constantly in a schlamassel (German schlimm + Hebrew mazel = star)?
8. Explain the function which the enigmatic character of Charity Quietness has in the story.
9. What figures of speech does the author use in this short story?

ALICE WALKER

Alice Walker was born in 1944 in Eatonton, Georgia, as the youngest of eight children of a poor family of black sharecroppers. Educated at Spelman College in Atlanta and Sarah Lawrence College in Bronxville, New York, where she began her writing career, she worked briefly for the Welfare Department in New York City. In 1967 she married a white civil rights attorney and moved with him to Mississippi, where he worked for school desegregation and she taught at Jackson State College and became committed to the civil rights movement. Later she also taught for a time at Jackson State University and Tougaloo College in Mississippi, lectured at Wellesley College and the University of Massachusetts, worked as distinguished writer in the African American Studies department at Berkeley and was Fannie Hurst Professor of Literature at Brandeis University. By now, Alice Walker has become one of the most celebrated writers of the U.S. So far her work includes six accomplished novels, zohich range from The Third Life of Grange Copeland *(1970) and* Meridian *(1976) through the Pulitzer Prize-winning bestseller* The Color Purple *(1982), which was made into a successful film by Steven Spielberg, and* The Temple of My Familiar *(1989) to* Possessing the Secret of Joy *(1992) and* By the Light of My Father's Smile *(1998), two collections of short stories,* In Love and Trouble; Stories of Black Women *(1973) and* You Can't Keep a Good Woman Down *(1981),four collections of poetry from* Once *(1968) to* Her Blue Body and Everything We Know *(1991), and several collections of essays, among which* In Search of Our Mothers' Gardens: Womanist Prose *(1983), which combines literary criticism with poetry and autobiography with historical analysis, has become a classic of feminist criticism. Walker's complete poetry is now collected in* Her Blue Body Everything We Know: Earthling Poems 1965 -1.990 Complete *(1991), and her complete short stories are available in* Complete Stories *(1994).*

Her accomplished story "Everyday Use," which contrasts, with wry irony, two ways of dealing with a painful past, appeared first in April 1973 in Harper's *and was then collected in*In Love and Trouble: Stories of Black Women *(1973).*

Everyday Use

for your grandmama

I will wait for her in the yard that Maggie and I made so clean and wavy yesterday afternoon. A yard like this is more com-fortable than most people know. It is not just a yard. It is like an extended living room. When the hard clay is swept clean as a floor and the fine sand around the edges lined with tiny, irregular grooves, anyone can come and sit and look up into the elm tree and wait for the breezes that never come inside the house.

Maggie will be nervous until after her sister goes: she will stand hopelessly in corners, homely and ashamed of the burn scars down her arms and legs, eying her sister with a mixture of envy and awe. She thinks her sister has held life always in the palm of one hand, that "no" is a word the world never learned to say to her.

You've no doubt seen those TV shows where the child who has "made it" is confronted, as a surprise, by her own mother and father, tottering in weakly from backstage. (A pleasant surprise, of course: What would they do if parent and child came on the show only to curse out and insult each other?) On TV mother and child embrace and smile into each other's faces. Sometimes the mother and father weep, the child wraps them in her arms and leans across the table to tell how she would not have made it without their help. I have seen these programs.

Sometimes I dream a dream in which Dee and I are suddenly brought together on a TV program of this sort. Out of a dark and soft-seated limousine I am ushered into a bright room filled with many people. There I meet a smiling, gray, sporty man like Johnny Carson who shakes my hand and tells me what a fine girl I have. Then we are on the stage and Dee is embracing me with tears in her eyes. She pins on my dress a large orchid, even though she has told me once that she thinks orchids are tacky flowers.

In real life I am a large, big-boned woman with rough, man-working hands. In the winter I wear flannel nightgowns to bed and overalls during the day. I can kill and clean a hog as mer-cilessly as a man. My fat keeps me hot in zero weather. I can work outside all day, breaking ice to get water for washing; I can eatpork liver cooked over the open fire minutes after it comes steaming from the hog. One winter I knocked a bull calf straight in the brain between the eyes with a sledge hammer and had the meat hung up to chill before nightfall. But of course all this does not show on television. I am the way my daughter would want me to be: a hundred pounds lighter, my skin like an uncooked barley pancake. My hair glistens

in the hot bright lights. Johnny Carson has much to do to keep up with my quick and witty tongue.

But that is a mistake. I know even before I wake up. Who ever knew a Johnson with a quick tongue? Who can even imagine me looking a strange white man in the eye? It seems to me I have talked to them always with one foot raised in flight, with my head turned in whichever way is farthest from them. Dee, though. She would always look anyone in the eye. Hesitation was no part of her nature.

"How do I look, Mama?" Maggie says, showing just enough of her thin body enveloped in pink skirt and red blouse for me to know she's there, almost hidden by the door.

"Come out into the yard," I say.

Have you ever seen a lame animal, perhaps a dog run over by some careless person rich enough to own a car, sidle up to someone who is ignorant enough to be kind to him? That is the way my Maggie walks. She has been like this, chin on chest, eyes on ground, feet in shuffle, ever since the fire that burned the other house to the ground.

Dee is lighter than Maggie, with nicer hair and a fuller figure. She's a woman now, though sometimes I forget. How long ago was it that the other house burned? Ten, twelve years? Sometimes I can still hear the flames and feel Maggie's arms sticking to me, her hair smoking and her dress falling off her in little black papery flakes. Her eyes seemed stretched open, blazed open by the flames reflected in them. And Dee. I see her standing off un¬der the sweet gum tree she used to dig gum out of; a look of con¬centration on her face as she watched the last dingy gray board of the house fall in toward the red-hot brick chimney. Why don't you do a dance around the ashes? I'd wanted to ask her. She had hated the house that much.

I used to think she hated Maggie, too. But that was before we raised the money, the church and me, to send her to Augusta toschool. She used to read to us without pity; forcing words, lies, other folks' habits, whole lives upon us two, sitting trapped and ignorant underneath her voice. She washed us in a river of make- believe, burned us with a lot of knowledge we didn't necessarily need to know. Pressed us to her with the serious way she read, to shove us away at just the moment, like dimwits, we seemed about to understand.

Dee wanted nice things. A yellow organdy dress to wear to her graduation from high school; black pumps to match a green suit she'd made from an old suit somebody gave me. She was de-termined to stare down any disaster in her efforts. Her eyelids would not flicker for minutes

at a time. Often I fought off the temptation to shake her. At sixteen she had a style of her own: and knew what style was.

I never had an education myself. After second grade the school was dosed down. Don't ask me why: in 1927 colored asked fewer questions than they do now. Sometimes Maggie reads to me. She stumbles along good-naturedly but can't see well. She knows she is not bright. Like good looks and money, quickness passed her by. She will marry John Thomas (who has mossy teeth in an earnest face) and then 1'11 be free to sit here and I guess just sing church songs to myself. Although I never was a good singer. Never could carry a tune. I was always better at a man's job. I used to love to milk till I was hooked in the side in '49. Cows are soothing and slow and don't bother you, unless you try to milk them the wrong way.

I have deliberately turned my back on the house. It is three rooms, just like the one that burned, except the roof is tin; they don't make shingle roofs any more. There are no real windows, just some holes cut in the sides, like the portholes in a ship, but not round and not square, with rawhide holding the shutters up on the outside. This house is in a pasture, too, like the other one. No doubt when Dee sees it she will want to tear it down. She wrote me once that no matter where we "choose" to live, she will manage to come see us. But she will never bring her friends. Maggie and I thought about this and Maggie asked me, "Mama, when did Dee ever have any friends?"

She had a few. Furtive boys in pink shirts hanging about on washday after school. Nervous girls who never laughed. Im-pressed with her they worshiped the well-turned phrase, the cuteshape, the scalding humor that erupted like bubbles in lye. She read to them.

When she was courting Jimmy T she didn't have much time to pay to us, but turned all her faultfinding power on him. He flew to marry a cheap city girl from a family of ignorant flashy people. She hardly had time to recompose herself.

When she comes I will meet - but there they are!

Maggie attempts to make a dash for the house, in her shuffling way, but I stay her with my hand. "Come back here," I say. And she stops and tries to dig a well in the sand with her toe.

It is hard to see them clearly through the strong sun. But even the first glimpse of leg out of the car tells me it is Dee. Her feet were always neat-looking, as if God himself had shaped them with a certain style. From the other side of the car comes a short, stocky man. Hair is all over his head a foot long and hanging from his chin like a kinky mule tail. I hear Maggie suck in her breath. "Uhnnnh," is what it sounds like. Like when

you see the wriggling end of a snake just in front of your foot on the road. "Uhnnnh."

Dee next. A dress down to the ground, in this hot weather. A dress so loud it hurts my eyes. There are yellows and oranges enough to throw back the light of the sun. I feel my whole face warming from the heat waves it throws out. Earrings gold, too, and hanging down to her shoulders. Bracelets dangling and mak-ing noises when she moves her arm up to shake the folds of the dress out of her armpits. The dress is loose and flows, and as she walks closer, I like it. I hear Maggie go "Uhnnnh" again. It is her sister's hair. It stands straight up like the wool on a sheep. It is black as night and around the edges are two long pigtails that rope about like small lizards disappearing behind her ears.

"Wa-su-zo-Tean-o!" she says, coming on in that gliding way the dress makes her move. The short stocky fellow with the hair to his navel is all grinning and he follows up with "Asalamalakim, my mother and sister!" He moves to hug Maggie but she falls back, right up against the back of my chair. I feel her trembling there and when I look up I see the perspiration falling off her chin.

"Don't get up," says Dee. Since I am stout it takes something of a push. You can see me trying to move a second or two before I make it. She turns, showing white heels through her sandals, and goes back to the car. Out she peeks next with a Polaroid. Shestoops down quickly and lines up picture after picture of me sitting there in front of the house with Maggie cowering behind me. She never takes a shot without making sure the house in in¬cluded. When a cow comes nibbling around the edge of the yard she snaps it and me and Maggie and the house. Then she puts the Polaroid in the back seat of the car, and comes up and kisses me on the forehead.

Meanwhile Asalamalakim is going through motions with Maggie's hand. Maggie's hand is as limp as a fish, and probably as cold, despite the sweat, and she keeps trying to pull it back. It looks like Asalamalakim wants to shake hands but wants to do it fancy. Or maybe he don't know how people shake hands. Anyhow, he soon gives up on Maggie.

"Well," I say. "Dee."

"No, Mama," she says. "Not 'Dee,' Wangero Leewanika Ke- manjo!"

"What happened to 'Dee'?" I wanted to know.

"She's dead," Wangero said. "I couldn't bear it any longer, being named after the people who oppress me."

"You know as well as me you was named after your aunt Dicie," I said. Dicie is my sister. She named Dee. We called her "Big Dee" after Dee was born.

"But who was she named after?" asked Wangero.

"I guess after Grandma Dee," I said.

"And who was she named after?" asked Wangero.

"Her mother," I said, and saw Wangero was getting tired. "That's about as far back as I can trace it," I said. Though, in fact, I probably could have carried it back beyond the Civil War through the branches.

"Well," said Asalamalakim, "there you are."

"Uhnnnh," I heard Maggie say.

"There I was not," I said, "before 'Dicie' cropped up in our fam-ily, so why should I try to trace it that far back?"

He just stood there grinning, looking down on me like some-body inspecting a Model A car. Every once in a while he and Wangero sent eye signals over my head.

"How do you pronounce this name?" I asked.

"You don't have to call me by it if you don't want to," said Wangero.

"Why shouldn't I?" I asked. "If that's what you want us to call you, we'll call you."

"I know it might sound awkward at first," said Wangero.

"I'll get used to it," I said. "Ream it out again."

Well, soon we got the name out of the way. Asalamalakim had a name twice as long and three times as hard. After I tripped over it two or three times he told me to just call him Hakim-a-barber. I wanted to ask him was he a barber, but I didn't really think he was, so I didn't ask.

"You must belong to those beef-cattle peoples down the road," I said. They said "Asalamalakim" when they met you, too, but they didn't shake hands. Always too busy: feeding the cattle, fixing the fences, putting up salt-lick shelters, throwing down hay. When the white folks poisoned some of the herd the men stayed up all night with rifles in their hands. I walked a mile and a half just to see the sight.

Hakim-a-barber said, "I accept some of their doctrines, but farming and raising cattle is not my style." (They didn't tell me, and I didn't ask, whether Wangero (Dee) had really gone and married him.)

We sat down to eat and right away he said he didn't eat col-lards and pork was unclean. Wangero, though, went on through the chitlins and corn bread, the greens and everything else. She talked a blue streak over the sweet potatoes. Everything delighted her. Even the fact that we still used the benches her daddy made for the table when we couldn't afford to buy chairs.

"Oh, Mama!" she cried. Then turned to Hakim-a-barber. "I never knew how lovely these benches are. You can feel the rump prints," she

said, running her hands underneath her and along the bench. Then she gave a sigh and her hand dosed over Grandma Dee's butter dish. "That's it!" she said. "I knew there was some-thing I wanted to ask you if I could have." She jumped up from the table and went over in the corner where the churn stood, the milk in it clabber by now. She looked at the chum and looked at it.

"This churn top is what I need," she said. "Didn't Uncle Buddy whittle it out of a tree you all used to have?”

"Yes," I said.

"Uh huh," she said happily. "And I want the dasher, too."

"Uncle Buddy whittle that, too?" asked the barber.

Dee (Wangero) looked up at me.

"Aunt Dee's first husband whittled the dash," said Maggie so low you almost couldn't hear her. "His name was Henry, but they called him Stash."

"Maggie's brain is like an elephant's,” Wangero said, laughing. "I can use the churn top as a centerpiece for the alcove table," she said, sliding a plate over the churn, "and I'll think of something artistic to do with the dasher."

When she finished wrapping the dasher the handle stuck out. I took it for a moment in my hands. You didn't even have to look close to see where hands pushing the dasher up and down to make butter had left a kind of sink in the wood. In fact, there were a lot of small sinks; you could see where thumbs and fingers had sunk into the wood. It was beautiful light yellow wood, from a tree that grew in the yard where Big Dee and Stash had lived.

After dinner Dee (Wangero) went to the trunk at the foot of my bed and started rifling through it. Maggie hung back in the kitchen over the dishpan. Out came Wangero with two quilts. They had been pieced by Grandma Dee and then Big Dee and me had hung them on the quilt frames on the front porch and quilted them. One was in the Lone Star pattern. The other was Walk Around the Mountain. In both of them were scraps of dresses Grandma Dee had worn fifty and more years ago. Bits and pieces of Grandpa Jarrell's Paisley shirts. And one teeny faded blue piece, about the size of a penny matchbox, that was from Great Grandpa Ezra's uniform that he wore in the Civil War.

"Mama," Wangero said sweet as a bird. "Can I have these old quilts?"

I heard something fall in the kitchen, and a minute later the kitchen door slammed.

"Why don't you take one or two of the others?" I asked. "These old things was just done by me and Big Dee from some tops your grandma pieced before she died."

"No," said Wangero, "I don't want those. They are stitched around the borders by machine."

"That'll make them last better," I said.

"That's not the point," said Wangero. "These are all pieces of dresses Grandma used to wear. She did all this stitching by hand. Imagine!" She held the quilts securely in her arms, stroking them.

"Some of the pieces, like those lavender ones, come from old clothes her mother handed down to her," I said, moving up to touch the quilts. Dee (Wangero) moved back just enough so that I couldn’t reach the quilts. They already belonged to her.

"Imagine!" she breathed again, clutching them closely to her bosom.

"The truth is," I said, "I promised to give them quilts to Mag¬gie, for when she marries John Thomas.”

She gasped like a bee had stung her.

"Maggie can't appreciate these quilts!" she said. "She'd prob-ably be backward enough to put them to everyday use."

"I reckon she would," I said. "God knows I been saving 'em for long enough with nobody using 'em. I hope she will!” I didn't want to bring up how I had offered Dee (Wangero) a quilt when she went away to college. Then she had told me they were old- fashioned, out of style.

"But they're priceless'." she was saying now, furiously; for she has a temper. "Maggie would put them on the bed and in five years they'd be in rags. Less than that!"

"She can always make some more," I said. "Maggie knows how to quilt."

Dee (Wangero) looked at me with hatred. "You just will not understand. The point is these quilts, these quilts!"

"Well," I said, stumped. "What would you do with them?"

"Hang them," she said. As if that was the only thing you could do with quilts.

Maggie by now was standing in the door. I could almost hear the sound her feet made as they scraped over each other.

"She can have them, Mama," she said, like somebody used to never winning anything, or having anything reserved for her. "I can 'member Grandma Dee without the quilts."

I looked at her hard. She had filled her bottom lip with checkerberry snuff and it gave her face a kind of dopey, hangdog look. It was Grandma

Dee and Big Dee who taught her how to quilt herself. She stood there with her scarred hands hidden in the folds of her skirt. She looked at her sister with something like fear but she wasn't mad at her. This was Maggie's portion. This was the way she knew God to work.

When I looked at her like that something hit me in the top of my head and ran down the soles of my feet. Just like when I'm in church and the spirit of God touches me and I get happy and shout. I did something I never had done before: hugged Maggie to me, then dragged her on into the room, snatched the quilts out of Miss Wangero's hands and dumped them into Maggie's lap. Maggie just sat there on my bed with her mouth open.

"Take one or two of the others," I said to Dee.

But she turned without a word and went out to Hakim-a-bar- ber.

"You just don't understand," she said, as Maggie and I came out to the car.

"What don't I understand?" I wanted to know.

"Your heritage," she said. And then she turned to Maggie, kissed her, and said, "You ought to try to make something of yourself, too, Maggie. It's really a new day for us. But from the way you and Mama still live you'd never know it."

She put on some sunglasses that hid everything above the tip of her nose and her chin.

Maggie smiled; maybe at the sunglasses. But a real smile, not scared. After we watched the car dust settle I asked Maggie to bring me a dip of snuff. And then the two of us sat there just en-joying, until it was time to go in the house and go to bed.

I. Memorize the following words and word-combinations, write out the sentences with them from the text and translate. Use them in the situations from the text.

sharecropper (n.)	to court (v.)
desegregation (n.)	faultfinding (n.)
landmark (n.)	flashy (adj.)
wry (adj.)	to recompose (v.)
wavy (adj.)	dash (n.)
groove (n.)	to stay s.o. (v.)
elm tree (n.)	stocky (adj.)
homely (adj.)	kinky (adj.)
awe (n.)	to wriggle (v.)

to make it (v.) (infml.)	dangle (v.)
to totter (v.)	to glide (v.)
to curse out (v.)	perspiration (n.)
to usher in(to) (v.)	stout (adj)
tacky (adj.)	to peek (v.)
flannel (n.)	to cower (v.)
hog (n.)	to take a shot (v.)
zero weather	to crop up (v.)
sledge hammer (n.)	awkward (adj.)
barley (n.)	to ream out (v.)
to glisten (v.)	to trip over (v.)
to sidle up to s.o. (v.)	salt-lick shelter (n.)
shuffle (n.)	collards (n.pl.)
flake (n.)	chitlins (n.pl.)
sweet gum tree (n.)	a blue streak
dingy (adj.)	churn (n.)
make-believe (n.)	clabber (n.)
to shove (v.)	to whittle (v.)
dimwit (n.): (infml.)	dash(er) (n.)
organdy (n.)	centerpiece (n.): (in AE)
pump (n.)	alcove (n.)
to stare down (v.)	to rifle through (v.)
to stumble (v.)	scrap (n.)
mossy teeth (n.)	paisley (n.)
to carry a tune (n.)	to clutch (v.)
to hook (v.)	to gasp (v.)
to soothe (v.)	to reckon (v.): (infml.)
shingle (n.)	to stump (v.): (infml.)
porthole (n.)	dopey (adj.): (infml.)
rawhide (n.)	hangdog (adj.)
shutter (n.)	portion (n.)
pasture (n.)	to snatch (v.)
furtive (adj.)	to dump (v.)
scalding (adj.)	

II. Find some information about:

CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT
YARD

JOHNNY CARSON
AUGUSTA
LONE STAR and WALK AROUND THE MOUNTAIN

III. Prepare a literary translation of the passage on page 17 starting with the words "*Dee is lighter than Maggie...***" and ending with the words "***... we seemed about to understand***."**

IV. Answer the following questions:

1. Define the narrative perspective of the story and discuss its function.

2: Collect all references to the past and rearrange them in the form of a short family history.

3: The I-narrator imagines what she would be like "on TV" and then contrasts that role with what she is "in real life". Define the two roles and discuss how the dream is made to enhance the reality.

4: Select instances of liberating humor in the story and discuss how this effect is achieved.

5: Enumerate the character traits of Maggie and of Dee, contrast the characters of the two daughters, and discuss their relation-ship.

6: Comment on Dee's new name, her new style of clothing, and her new attitude towards life, and contextualize her and her companion's behavior by taking into account the mother's ref-erence to "those beef-cattle peoples down the road" and by researching some basic facts about the Black Muslims.

7: The story contrasts two ways of coming to terms with the past and of dealing with one's heritage. Define these two ways with reference to relevant passages and discuss the title of the story in the light of your findings.

8: Obviously the quilts are charged with symbolic meaning. What do they stand for?

9: At the end of the story the mother does "something [she] never had done before". Discuss her decision and the nature of the sudden insight behind it.

10. What figures of speech does the author use in this short story?

TONI CADE BAMBARA

Toni Cade Bambara was born in New York in 1939, grew up in Harlem and Bedford-Stuyvesant, and died at an early age in Philadelphia in 1995. She was one of those African American writers who, during the sixties, became directly involved in the cultural activities in urban communities across the country, and one of the few who continued her socio-political activities till her end. In 1959 she graduated from Queens College, and after studying in Florence and Paris she received her M.A. from the City College of New York in 1964. Later she held various community jobs, taught English and African American Studies, was writer-in-residence at Rutgers University, Stephens College, Atlanta University, and Spelman College, and lectured extensively throughout the U.S. Apart from editing such important anthologies as The Black Woman *(1970),* Tales and Stories for Black Folks *(1971), and* Southern Black Utterances Today *(1975), she published two novels,* The Salt Eaters *(1980) and* If Blessing Comes *(1987), two collections of short stories,* Gorilla, My Love *(1972) and* The Sea Birds Are Still Alive *(1977), wrote several screenplays, and contributed widely to anthologies and periodicals. Toni Cade, who took the name Bambara from a signature on a sketchbook she found in her greatgrandmother's trunk and made it her legal name in 1970, was praised for her unique mastery of the nuances of black speech and her inimitable rendering of street talk, and critics maintain that her stories share a deep affection for her subject and convey her conviction that in spite of all its pain and trouble black life is supported by a feeling of togetherness and neighborly care.*

"The Lesson," which deals not only with the social and economic injustice which becomes so painfully evident when black children from the ghetto pay a visit to the affluent toy store ofF. A. O. Schwarz, but also, in a more basic sense, with the value of learning and thinking as the central means of changing oneself and the world, was originally published in Gorilla, My Love *in 1972.*

The Lesson

BACK IN THE DAYS when everyone was old and stupid or young and foolish and me and Sugar were the only ones just right, this lady moved on our block with nappy hair and proper speech and no makeup. And quite naturally we laughed at her, laughed the way we did at the junk man who went about his business like he was some big-time president and

his sorry-ass horse his secretary. And we kinda hated her too, hated the way we did the winos who cluttered up our parks and pissed on our handball walls and stank up our hallways and stairs so you couldn't halfway play hide-and-seek without a goddamn gas mask. Miss Moore was her name. The only woman on the block with no first name. And she was black as hell, cept for her feet, which were fish-white and spooky. And she was always planning these boring-ass things for us to do, us being my cousin, mostly, who lived on the block cause we all moved North the same time and to the same apartment then spread out gradual to breathe. And our parents would yank our heads into some kinda shape and crisp up our clothes so we'd be presentable for travel with Miss Moore, who always looked like she was going to church, though she never did. Which is just one of things the grown-ups talked about when they talked behind her back like a dog. But when she came calling with some sachet she'd sewed up or some gingerbread she'd made or some book, why then they'd all be too embarrassed to turn her down and we'd get handed over all spruced up. She'd been to college and said it was only right that she should take responsibility for the young ones' education, and she not even related by marriage or blood. So they'd go for it. Specially Aunt Gretchen. She was the main gofer in the family. You got some ole dumb shit foolishness you want somebody to go for, you send for Aunt Gretchen. She been screwed into the go-along for so long, it's a blood-deep natural thing with her. Which is how she got saddled with me and Sugar and Junior in the first place while our mothers were in a la-de-da apartment up the block having a good ole time.

So this one day Miss Moore rounds us all up at the mailbox and it's puredee hot and she's knockin herself out about arith-metic. And school suppose to let up in summer I heard, but she don't never let up. And the starch in my pinafore scratching theshit outta me and I'm really hating this nappy-head bitch and her goddamn college degree. I'd much rather go to the pool or to the show where it's cool. So me and Sugar leaning on the mailbox being surly, which is a Miss Moore word. And Flyboy checking out what everybody brought for lunch. And Fat Butt already wasting his peanut-butter-and-jelly sandwich like the pig he is. And Junebug punchin on Q.T.'s arm for potato chips. And Rosie Giraffe shifting from one hip to the other waiting for somebody to step on her foot or ask her if she from Georgia so she can kick ass, preferably Mercedes'. And Miss Moore asking us do we know what money is, like we a bunch of retards. I mean real money, she say, like it's only poker chips or monopoly papers we lay on the grocer. So right away I'm tired of this and say so. And would much

rather snatch Sugar and go to the Sunset and terrorize the West Indian kids and take their hair ribbons and their money too. And Miss Moore files that remark away for next week's lesson on brotherhood, I can tell. And finally I say we oughta get to the subway cause it's cooler and besides we might meet some cute boys. Sugar done swiped her mama's lipstick, so we ready.

So we heading down the street and she's boring us silly about what things cost and what our parents make and how much goes for rent and how money ain't divided up right in this country. And then she gets to the part about we all poor and live in the slums, which I don't feature. And I'm ready to speak on that, but she steps out in the street and hails two cabs just like that. Then she hustles half the crew in with her and hands me a five-Dollar bill and tells me to calculate 10 percent tip for the driver. And we're off. Me and Sugar and Junebug and Flyboy hangin out the window and hollering to everybody, putting lipstick on each other cause Flyboy a faggot anyway, and making farts with our sweaty armpits. But I'm mostly trying to figure how to spend this money. But they all fascinated with the meter ticking and Junebug starts laying bets as to how much it'll read when Flyboy can't hold his breath no more. Then Sugar lays bets as to how much it'll be when we get there. So I'm stuck. Don't nobody want to go for my plan, which is to jump out at the next light and rim off to the first bar-b-que we can find. Then the driver tells us to get the hell out cause we there already. And the meter reads eighty-five cents. And I'm stalling to figure out the tip and Sugar say give him a dime. And I decide he don't need it bad as I do, so later for him.

But then he tries to take off with Junebug foot still in the door so so we talk about his mama something ferocious. Then we check out that we on Fifth Avenue and everybody dressed up in stockings. One lady in a fur coat, hot as it is. White folks crazy.

"This is the place," Miss Moore say, presenting it to us in the voice she uses at the museum. "Let's look in the windows before 85 we go in."

"Can we steal?" Sugar asks very serious like she's getting the ground rules squared away before she plays. "I beg your pardon," say Miss Moore, and we fall out. So she leads us around the windows of the toy store and me and Sugar screamin, "This is mine, 90 that's mine, I gotta have that, that was made for me, 1 was born for that," till Big Butt drowns us out.

"Hey, I'm goin to buy that there."

"That there? You don't even know what it is, stupid."

"I do so," he say punchin on Rosie Giraffe. "It's a microscope."

"Whatcha gonna do with a microscope, fool?"

"Look at things."

"Like what, Ronald?" ask Miss Moore. And Big Butt ain't got the first notion. So here go Miss Moore gabbing about the thousands of bacteria in a drop of water and the somethinorother in a 100 speck of blood and the million and one living things in the air around us is invisible to the naked eye. And what she say that for? Junebug go to town on that "naked" and we rolling. Then Miss Moore ask what it cost. So we all jam into the window smudgin it up and the price tag say $300. So then she ask how 105 long'd take for Big Butt and Junebug to save up their allowances.

"Too long," I say. "Yeh," adds Sugar, "outgrown it by that time." And Miss Moore say no, you never outgrow learning instru¬ments. "Why, even medical students and interns and," blah, blah, blah. And we ready to choke Big Butt for bringing it up in the first no damn place.

"This here costs four hundred eighty dollars," say Rosie Giraffe. So we pile up all over her to see what she pointin out. My eyes tell me it's a chunk of glass cracked with something heavy, and different-color inks dripped into the splits, then the whole 115 thing put into a oven or something. But for $480 it don't make sense.

"That's a paperweight made of semi-precious stones, fused together under tremendous pressure," she explains slowly, with her hands doing the mining and all the factory work.

"So what's a paperweight?" asks Rosie Giraffe.

"To weigh paper with, dumbbell," say Flyboy, the wise man from the East.

"Not exactly," say Miss Moore, which is what she say when you warm or way off too. "It's to weigh paper down so it won't scatter and make your desk untidy." So right away me and Sugar curtsy to each other and then to Mercedes who is more the tidy type.

"We don't keep paper on top of the desk in my class," say Junebug, figuring Miss Moore crazy or lyin one.

"At home, then," she say. "Don't you have a calendar and a pencil case and a blotter and a letter-opener on your desk at home where you do your homework?" And she know damn well what our homes look like cause she nosys around in them every chance she gets.

"I don't even have a desk," say Junebug. "Do we?"

"No. And I don't get no homework neither," say Big Butt.

"And I don't even have a home," say Flyboy like he do at school to keep the white folks off his back and sorry for him. Send this poor kid to camp posters, is his specialty.

"I do," says Mercedes. "I have a box of stationery on my desk

and a picture of my cat. My godmother bought the stationery and the desk. There's a big rose on each sheet and the envelopes smell like roses."

"Who wants to know about your smelly-ass stationery," say Rosie Giraffe fore I can get my two cents in.

"It's important to have a work area all your own so that..."

"Will you look at this sailboat, please," say Flyboy, cuttin her off and pointin to the thing like it was his. So once again we tumble all over each other to gaze at this magnificent thing in the toy 50 store which is just big enough to maybe sail two kittens across the pond if you strap them to the posts tight. We all start reciting the price tag like we in assembly. "Handcrafted sailboat of fiberglass at one thousand one hundred ninety-five dollars."

"Unbelievable," I hear myself say and am really stunned. I read it again for myself just in case the group recitation put me in a trance. Same thing. For some reason this pisses me off. We look at Miss Moore and she lookin at us, waiting for 1 dunno what.

"Who'd pay all that when you can buy a sailboat set for a quarter at Pop's, a tube of glue for a dime, and a ball of string for eight cents? "It must have a motor and a whole lot else besides," I say. "My sailboat cost me about fifty cents."

"But will it take water?" say Mercedes with her smart ass.

"Took mine to Alley Pond Park once," say Flyboy. "String broke, Lost it. Pity."

"Sailed mine in Central Park and it keeled over and sank. Had

to ask my father for another dollar."

"And you got the strap," laugh Big Butt. "The jerk didn't even have a string on it. My old man wailed on his behind."

Little Q.T. was staring hard at the sailboat and you could see he wanted it bad. But he too little and somebody'd just take it from him. So what the hell. "This boat for kids, Miss Moore?"

"Parents silly to buy something like that just to get all broke up," say Rosie Giraffe.

"That much money it should last forever," I figure.

"My father'd buy it for me if I wanted it."

"Your father, my ass," say Rosie Giraffe getting a chance to fi-nally push Mercedes.

"Must be rich people shop here," say Q.T.

"You are a very bright boy," say Flyboy. "What was your first clue?" And he rap him on the head with the back of his knuckles,

since Q.T. the only one he could get away with. Though Q.T. liable to come up behind you years later and get his licks in when you half expect it.

"What I want to know is," I says to Miss Moore though 1 never talk to her, 1 wouldn't give the bitch that satisfaction, "is how much a real boat costs? I figure a thousand'd get you a yacht any day."

"Why don't you check that out," she says, "and report back to the group?" Which really pains my ass. If you gonna mess up a perfectly good swim day least you could do is have some answers. "Let's go in," she say like she got something up her sleeve. Only she don't lead the way. So me and Sugar turn the comer to where the entrance is, but when we get there I kinda hang back. Not that I'm scared, what's there to be afraid of, just a toy store. But I feel funny, shame. But what I got to be shamed about? Got as much right to go in as anybody. But somehow I can't seem to get hold of the door, so I step away for Sugar to lead. But she hangs back too. And I look at her and she looks at me and this is ridiculous. I mean, damn, I have never ever been shy about doing nothing or going nowhere. But then Mercedes steps up and then Rosie Giraffe and Big Butt crowd in behind and shove, and next thing we all stuffed into the doorway with only Mercedes squeezing past us, smoothing out her jumper and walking right down the aisle. Then the rest of us tumble in like a glued-together jigsaw done all wrong. And people lookin at us. And it's like the time me and Sugar crashed into the Catholic church on a dare. But once we got in there and everything so hushed and holy and the candles and the bowin and the handkerchiefs on all the drooping heads, I just couldn't go through with the plan. Which was for me to run up to the altar and do a tap dance while Sugar played the nose flute and messed around in the holy water. And Sugar kept givin me the elbow. Then later teased me so bad I tied her up in the shower and turned it on and locked her in. And she'd be there till this day if Aunt Gretchen hadn't finally figured I was lyin about the boarder takin a shower.

Same thing in the store. We all walkin on tiptoe and hardly touchin the games and puzzles and things. And I watched Miss Moore who is steady watchin us like she waitin for a sign. LikeMama Drewery watches the sky and sniffs the air and takes note of just how much slant is in the bird formation. Then me and Sugar bump smack into

each other, so busy gazing at the toys, 'specially the sailboat. But we don't laugh and go into our fat-lady bump-stomach routine. We just stare at that price tag. Then Sugar run a finger over the whole boat. And I'm jealous and want to hit her. Maybe not her, but I sure want to punch somebody in the mouth.

"Watcha bring us here for, Miss Moore?"

"You sound angry, Sylvia. Are you mad about something?" Givin me one of them grins like she tellin a grown-up joke that never turns out to be funny. And she's lookin very closely at me like maybe she plannin to do my portrait from memory. I'm mad, but 1 won't give her that satisfaction. So I slouch around the store bein very bored and say, "Let's go."

Me and Sugar at the back of the train watchin the tracks whiz-zin by large then small then gettin gobbled up in the dark. I'm thinkin about this tricky toy I saw in the store. A clown that somersaults on a bar then does chin-ups just cause you yank lightly at his leg. Cost $35. I could see me askin my mother for a $35 birthday clown. "You wanna who that costs what?" she'd say, cocking her head to the side to get a better view of the hole in my head. Thirty-five dollars could buy new bunk beds for Junior and Gretchen's boy. Thirty-five dollars and the whole household could go visit Granddaddy Nelson in the country. Thirty-five dollars would pay for the rent and the piano bill too. Who are these people that spend that much for performing clowns and $1,000 for toy sailboats? What kinda work they do and how they live and how come we ain't in on it? Where we are is who we are, Miss Moore always pointin out. But it don't necessarily have to be that way, she always adds then waits for somebody to say that poor people have to wake up and demand their share of the pie and don't none of us know what kind of pie she talkin about in the first damn place. But she ain't so smart cause I still got her four dollars from the taxi and she sure ain't gettin it. Messin up my day with this shit. Sugar nudges me in my pocket and winks.

Miss Moore lines us up in front of the mailbox where we start-ed from, seem like years ago, and I got a headache for thinkin so hard. And we lean all over each other so we can hold up under the draggy-ass lecture she always finishes us off with at the endbefore we thank her for borin us to tears. But she just looks at us like she readin tea leaves. Finally she say, "Well, what did you think of F.A.O. Schwartz?"

Rosie Giraffe mumbles, "White folks crazy."

"I'd like to go there again when I get my birthday money" says Mercedes, and we shove her out the pack so she has to lean on the mailbox by herself.

"I'd like a shower. Tiring day," say Flyboy.

Then Sugar surprises me by sayin, "You know, Miss Moore, I don't think all of us here put together eat in a year what that sail-boat costs." And Miss Moore lights up like somebody goosed her. "And?" she say, urging Sugar on. Only I'm standin on her foot so she don't continue.

"Imagine for a minute what kind of society it is in which some people can spend on a toy what it would cost to feed a family of six or seven. What do you think?"

"I think," say Sugar pushing me off her feet like she never done before, cause I whip her ass in a minute, "that this is not much of a democracy if you ask me. Equal chance to pursue hap-piness means an equal crack at the dough, don't it?" Miss Moore is besides herself and I am disgusted with Sugar's treachery. So I stand on her foot one more time to see if she'll shove me. She shuts up, and Miss Moore looks at me, sorrowfully I'm thinkin. And somethin weird is goin on, I can feel it in my chest.

"Anybody else learn anything today?" lookin dead at me.

I walk away and Sugar has to run to catch up and don't even seem to notice when I shrug her arm off my shoulder.

"Well, we got four dollars anyway," she says.

"Uh hunh."

"We could go to Hascombs and get half a chocolate layer and then go to the Sunset and still have plenty money for potato chips and ice-cream sodas."

"Uh hunh."

"Race you to Hascombs," she say.

We start down the block and she gets ahead which is O.K. by me cause I'm goin to the West End and then over to the Drive to think this day through. She can run if she want to and even run faster. But ain't nobody gonna beat me at mithin.

I. Memorize the following words and word-combinations, write out the sentences with them from the text and translate. Use them in the situations from the text.

writer-in-residence (n.) affluent block (n.)	to crack (v.) to drip (v.) paperweight (n.)

nappy (adj.)	semi-precious (adj.)
junk man (n.)	to fuse (v.)
sorry-ass (adj.)	tremendous (adj.)
wlino (n.)	dumbbell (n.): (AE si.)
to clutter up (v.)	to scatter (v.)
halfway (adv.) (infml.)	curtsy (n.)
spooky (adj.)	blotter (n.)
to crisp up (v.)	to nosy around (v.)
to hand over (v.)	to tumble (v.)
to spruce up (v.)	to recite (v.)
to go for s.th.	assembly (n.)
to screw (v.)	fiberglass (n.)
go-along (n.)	to stun (v.)
to saddle with	piss off
la-de-da (adj.)	to keel over (v.)
to round up(v.)	to get the strap
puredee (as adv.)	to wail (v.)
to let up (v.)	to rap (v.)
pinafore (n.)	liable (adj.)
surly (adj.)	to check s.th. out (v.): (infml.)
punch (v.)	to mess up (v.): (infml.)
to shift (v.)	to get s.th. up one's sleeve
retard (n.): (infml.)	to hang back (v.)
poker chip (n.)	ridiculous (adj.)
to snatch (v.)	to shove (v.)/to stuff (v.)
to file away (v.)	to tumble (v.)
to swipe	hushed (adj.)
to head down (v.)	to droop
to feature (v.)	to mess around (v.)
to hail a cab	boarder (n.)
to hustle (v.)	to sniff (v.)
to holler (v.)	slant (n.)
to figure (v.)	smack (adv.)
meter	to slouch (v.)
to lay bets	to whizz (v.): (infml.)
to stall (v.) (infml.)	to gobble (v.)
ferocious (adj.)	to somersault (v.)
to square away (v.)	chin- up (n.)
to fall out (v.): (infml.)	to cock (v.)

to drown out (v.) watcha gonna to gab (v.) speck (n.) to go to town: (Black AE) to roll (v.) to jam (v.) to smudge (v.) allowance (n.) to outgrow (v.) to choke (v.) to pile (v.)	to be in on it a share of the pie to nudge (v.) draggy (adj.): (infml) a crack at dough (n.) treachery (n.) chocolate layer (n.)

II. Find some information about:

GEORGIA
FIFTH AVENUE
ALLEY POND PARK
CENTRAL PARK
F.A.O. SCHWARTZ

III. Prepare a literary translation of the passage on page 32 starting with the words "*Me and Sugar at the back of the train watchin the tracks***…" and ending with the words "***… Sugar nudges me in my pocket and winks***."**

IV. Answer the following questions:

1: Sylvia announces that she will deal with something that hap-pened "back in [those] days", thus pointing to a considerable distance between the time of action and the time of telling. What is the effect of this distance upon the overall meaning of the story?

2: Collect the details which Sylvia provides about her daily life and her environment, and discuss her attitude towards these circumstances.

3: What do we learn about the political convictions and the ped-agogical aims of Miss Moore, and what is Miss Moore's function in the story?

4: What sort of language does Sylvia speak? Collect examples and try to work out some characteristics of her speech as well as of the attitudes behind it.

5: Sylvia describes surly as "a Miss Moore word". Are there other 'Miss Moore words,' and what do they reveal about the narrator's development since the time of her visit to the toy store? Is there something like a 'double voice' in the story?

6: How does the narrator describe the "white folks" she sees on Fifth Avenue?

7: When the children enter the store, Sylvia "kinda hang[s] back". Why? In answering this question, consider what she has to say about "shame" and about a previous experience in a Catholic church.

8: After their visit to F. A. O. Schwartz, Miss Moore asks the children whether they have learnt anything. What is "the les-son" they have learnt?

9: Comment on Sylvia's defiant closing statement that "ain't nobody gonna beat [her] at mithin".

10. What figures of speech does the author use in this short story?

FRANCISCO JIMINEZ

*Francisco Jimenez was born in 1943 in San Pedro Tlaquepaque in the state of Jalisco, Mexico. When he was three, his parents moved to Santa Maria, California, as migrant workers, and when he was six, Jimenez joined them on the seasonal circuit. They picked strawberries in Santa Maria during the summer, grapes around Fresno in the early autumn, and cotton in Corcoran during the winter, and then they returned to Santa Maria to harvest carrots and lettuce. Working long hours, constantly moving from town to town, and unable to speak English, Jimenez naturally faded the first grade, but he persevered and soon mastered his second language. He had just made it to junior high school, when he was deported to Mexico as an illegal alien. He returned, however, became an American citizen, received a scholarship, and entered the University of Santa Clara. Having earned his M.A. and Ph.D. in Spanish and Latin American Literature, he became a distinguished scholar and teacher, the author of several textbooks, and the co-faunder and editor*o/Bilingual Review.

*Jimenez said about "The Circuit," which first appeared in 1973 in the*Arizona Quarterly, *that it is an "autobiographical story based on my childhood experiences. The action takes place during a time when my family and I were migrant workers. 'Roberto' is the name of my older brother; 'Panchito' is my nickname. The idea for the story originated many years ago when I was studying English in Junior High School in Santa Maria. Miss Bell, my English teacher, encouraged me to write about my personal experiences. Although English was difficult far me, 1 liked writing and forced myself to write about what I knew most intimately, what I knew best. And that was the life of the migrant worker." Recently his early story has gained new prominence, since Jimenez integrated it into his collection*The Circuit: Stories from the Life of a Migrant Child*(1997), which won several prizes. And with*La Mariposa*(2000), another mooing tale about the plight of a migrant child, and*Breaking Through *(2001), a sequel to* The Circuit, *he has further elaborated upon the experiences of his childhood.*

The Circuit

It was that time of year again. Ito, the strawberry sharecropper, did not smile. It was natural. The peak of the strawberry season was over and

the last few days the workers, most of them *braceros,* were not picking as many boxes as they had during the months of June and July.

As the last days of August disappeared, so did the number of *braceros.* Sunday, only one - the best picker - came to work. I liked him. Sometimes we talked during our half-hour lunch break. That is how I found out he was from Jalisco, the same state in Mexico my family was from. That Sunday was the last time I saw him.

When the sun had tired and sunk behind the mountains, Ito signaled us that it was time to go home. *"Ya esora,"* he yelled in his broken Spanish. Those were the words I waited for twelve hours a day, every day, seven days a week, week after week. And the thought of not hearing them again saddened me.

As we drove home Papa did not say a word. With both hands on the wheel, he stared at the dirt road. My older brother, Roberto, was also silent. He leaned his head back and closed his eyes. Once in a while he cleared from his throat the dust that blew in from outside.

Yes, it was that time of year. When I opened the front door to the shack, I stopped. Everything we owned was neatly packed in cardboard boxes. Suddenly I felt even more the weight of hours, days, weeks, and months of work. I sat down on a box. The thought of having to move to Fresno and knowing what was in store for me there brought tears to my eyes.

That night I could not sleep. I lay in bed thinking about how much I hated this move.

A little before five o'clock in the morning, Papa woke everyone up. A few minutes later, the yelling and screaming of my little brothers and sisters, for whom the move was a great adventure, broke the silence of dawn. Shortly, the barking of the dogs accompanied them.

While we packed the breakfast dishes, Papa went outside to start the "Carcanchita." That was the name Papa gave his old '38 black Plymouth. He bought it in a used car lot in Santa Rosa in the winter of 1949. Papa was very proud of his little jalopy. He had a right to be proud of it. He spent a lot of time looking at other carsbefore buying this one. When he finally chose the "Carcanchita," he checked it thoroughly before driving it out of the car lot. He examined every inch of the car. He listened to the motor, tilting his head from side to side like a parrot, trying to detect any noises that spelled car trouble. After being satisfied with the looks and sounds of the car, Papa then insisted on knowing who the original owner was. He never did find out from the car salesman, but he bought the car

anyway. Papa figured the original owner must have been an important man because behind the rear seat of the car he found a blue necktie.

Papa parked the car out in front and left the motor running. *"Listo,"* he yelled. Without saying a word, Roberto and I began to carry the boxes out to the car. Roberto carried the two big boxes and I carried the two smaller ones. Papa then threw the mattress on top of the car roof and tied it with ropes to the front and rear bumpers.

Everything was packed except Mama's pot. It was an old large galvanized pot she had picked up at an army surplus store in Santa Mariä the year I was born. The pot had many dents and nicks, and the more dents and nicks it acquired the more Mama liked it. *"Mi olla,"* she used to say proudly.

I held the front door open as Mama carefully carried out her pot by both handles, making sure not to spill the cooked beans. When she got to the car, Papa reached out to help her with it. Roberto opened the rear car door and Papä gently placed it on the floor behind the front seat. All of us then climbed in. Papa sighed, wiped the sweat off his forehead with his sleeve, and said wearily: "Es *todo."*

As we drove away, I felt a lump in my throat. I turned around and looked at our little shack for the last time.

At sunset we drove into a labor camp near Fresno. Since Papa did not speak English, Mama asked the camp foreman if he needed any more workers. "We don't need no more," said the foreman, scratching his head. "Check with Sullivan down the road. Can't miss him. He lives in a big white house with a fence around it."

When we got there, Mama walked up to the house. She went through a white gate, past a row of rose bushes, up the stairs to the front door. She rang the doorbell. The porch light went on and a tall husky man came out. They exchanged a few words. After the man went in, Mama clasped her hands and hurried back tothe car. "We have work! Mr. Sullivan said we can stay there the whole season," she said, gasping and pointing to an old garage near the stables.

The garage was worn out by the years. It had no windows. The walls, eaten by termites, strained to support the roof full of holes. The dirt floor, populated by earth worms, looked like a gray road map.

That night, by the light of a kerosene lamp, we unpacked and cleaned our new home. Roberto swept away the loose dirt, leaving the hard ground. Papa plugged the holes in the walls with old newspapers and tin can tops. Mama fed my little brothers and sisters. Papa and Roberto then brought in the mattress and placed it on the far corner of the garage.

"Mama, you and the little ones sleep on the mattress. Roberto, Panchito, and I will sleep outside under the trees," Papa said.

Early next morning Mr. Sullivan showed us where his crop was, and after breakfast, Papa, Roberto, and I headed for the vineyard to pick.

Around nine o'clock the temperature had risen to almost one hundred degrees. I was completely soaked in sweat and my mouth felt as if I had been chewing on a handkerchief. I walked over to the end of the row, picked up the jug of water we had brought, and began drinking. "Don't drink too much; you'll get sick," Roberto shouted. No sooner had he said that than I felt sick to my stomach. I dropped to my knees and let the jug roll off my hands. I remained motionless with my eyes glued on the hot sandy ground. All I could hear was the drone of insects. Slowly I began to recover. I poured water over my face and neck and watched the dirty water run down my arms to the ground.

I still felt a little dizzy when we took a break to eat lunch. It was past two o'clock and we sat underneath a large walnut tree that was on the side of the road. While we ate, Papa jotted down the number of boxes we had picked. Roberto drew designs on the ground with a stick. Suddenly I noticed Papa's face turn pale as he looked down the road. "Here comes the school bus," he whispered loudly in alarm. Instinctively, Roberto and I ran and hid in the vineyards. We did not want to get in trouble for not going to school. The neatly dressed boys about my age got off. They carried books under their arms. After they crossed the street, the busdrove away. Roberto and I came out from hiding and joined Papa. *"Tienen que tener cuidado,"* he warned us.

After lunch we went back to work. The sun kept beating down. The buzzing insects, the wet sweat, and the hot dry dust made the afternoon seem to last forever. Finally the mountains around the valley reached out and swallowed the sun. Within an hour it was too dark to continue picking. The vines blanketed the grapes, making it difficult to see the bunches. *"Vdmonos,"* said Papa, signaling to us that it was time to quit work. Papa then took out a pencil and began to figure out how much we had earned our first day. He wrote down numbers, crossed some out, wrote down some more. *"Quince,"* he murmured.

When we arrived home, we took a cold shower underneath a waterhose. We then sat down to eat dinner around some wooden crates that served as a table. Mama had cooked a special meal for us. We had rice and tortillas with *"came con chile,"* my favorite dish.

The next morning, I could hardly move. My body ached all over. I felt little control over my arms and legs. This feeling went on every morning for days until my muscles finally got used to the work.

It was Monday, the first week of November. The grape season was over and I could now go to school. I woke up early that morning and lay in bed, looking at the stars and savoring the thought of not going to work and of starting sixth grade for the first time that year. Since I could not sleep, I decided to get up and join Papa and Roberto at breakfast. I sat at the table across from Roberto, but I kept my head down. 1 did not want to look up and face him. I knew he was sad. He was not going to school today. He was not going tomorrow, or next week, or next month. He would not go until the cotton season was over, and that was sometime in February. I rubbed my hands together and watched the dry, acid stained skin fall to the floor in little rolls.

When Papa and Roberto left for work, I felt relief. I walked to the top of a small grade next to the shack and watched the "Carcanchita" disappear in the distance in a cloud of dust.

Two hours later, around eight o'clock, I stood by the side of the road waiting for school bus number twenty. When it arrived I climbed in. Everyone was busy either talking or yelling. I sat in an empty seat in the back.

When the bus stopped in front of the school, I felt very nervous. I looked out the bus window and saw boys and girls carrying books under their arms. I put my hands in my pant pockets and walked to the principal's office. When I entered I heard a woman's voice say: "May I help you?" I was startled. I had not heard English for months. For a few seconds I remained speechless. I looked at the lady who waited for an answer. My first instinct was to answer her in Spanish, but I held back. Finally, after struggling for English words, I managed to tell her that I wanted to enroll in the sixth grade. After answering many questions, I was led to the classroom.

Mr. Lerna, the sixth grade teacher, greeted me and assigned me a desk. He then introduced me to the class. I was so nervous and scared .at that moment when everyone's eyes were on me that I wished I were with Papa and Roberto picking cotton. After taking roll, Mr. Lerna gave the class the assignment for the first hour. "The first thing we have to do this morning is finish reading the story we began yesterday," he said enthusiastically. He walked up to me, handed me an English book, and asked me to read. "We are on page 125," he said politely. When I heard this, I felt my blood rush to my head; I felt dizzy. "Would you like to

read?" he asked hesitantly. I opened the book to page 125. My mouth was dry. My eyes began to water. I could not begin. "You can read later," Mr. Lerna said understandingly.

For the rest of the reading period I kept getting angrier and angrier with myself. I should have read, I thought to myself.

During recess I went into the restroom and opened my English book to page 125.1 began to read in a low voice, pretending I was in class. There were many words I did not know. I closed the book and headed back to the classroom.

Mr. Lerna was sitting at his desk correcting papers. When I entered he looked up at me and smiled. I felt better. I walked up to him and asked if he could help me with the new words. "Gladly," he said.

The rest of the month I spent my lunch hours working on English with Mr. Lerna, my best friend at school.

One Friday during lunch hour Mr. Lerna asked me to take a walk with him to the music room. "Do you like music?” he asked me as we entered the building."Yes, I like *corridos,”* I answered. He then picked up a trumpet, blew on it and handed it to me. The sound gave me goose bumps. I knew that sound. I had heard it in many corridos. "How would you like to learn how to play it?" he asked. He must have read my face because before I could answer, he added: "I'll teach you how to play it during our lunch hours."

That day I could hardly wait to get home to tell Papa and Mama the great news. As I got off the bus, my little brothers and sisters ran up to meet me. They were yelling and screaming. I thought they were happy to see me, but when I opened the door to our shack, I saw that everything we owned was neatly packed in cardboard boxes.

I. Memorize the following words and word-combinations, write out the sentences with them from the text and translate. Use them in the situations from the text.

migrant worker (n.)	to strain (v.)
to persevere (v.)	to plug (v.)
to deport (v.)	crop (n.)
sharecropper (n.)	head for (v.)
shack (n.)	vineyard (n.)
in store	to glue (v.)
jalopy (n.)	drone (n.)

to tilt (v.) rear seat (n.) necktie (n.) rear bumper (n.) to galvanize (v.) army surplus store (n.) dent (n.) nick (n.) to feel a lump inone's throat labor camp (n.) foreman (n.) to scratch (v.) porch (n.) husky (adj.) to clasp (v.) to gasp (v.)	dizzy (adj.) to jot (v.) to beat down (v.) to buzz (v.) vine (n.) to blanket (v.) waterhose (n.) crate (n.) to savor (BE: savour) (v.) to stain (v.) to assign (v.) roll (n.) hesitant (adj.) recess (n.) goose bumps (n.pl.)

II. Find some information about:

JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL *BRACERO* *JALISCO* *YA ESORA* *FRESNO* *CARCANCHITA*	*PLYMOUTH* *SANTA ROSA* *LISTO* *SANTA MARIA* *TORTILLA* *CARNE CON CHILE*

III. Prepare a literary translation of the passage on page 41 starting with the words "*Mr. Lerna, the sixth grade teacher...***" and ending with the words "***... I thought to myself***."**

IV. Answer the following questions:

1: Define the narrative perspective of the story and analyze its crucial function by exploring what would happen if the story were told in the third person by an omniscient author.

2: Describe the economic and social situation of the migrant family, and discuss the way in which they deal with this situation.

3: What do Papa's old car, "the 'Carcanchita'", and Mama's second-hand pot, "mi olla", stand for?

4: Is the circular movement of the family's 'circuit' mirrored by the structure of the story? If so, how?

5: Evaluate Mr. Lerna's behavior. Is he a good teacher?

6: What metaphorical meaning do such details of the setting as Sullivan's house and his old garage assume?

7: Find out about the controversial issue of 'bilingualism,' a problem that mostly concerns Spanish-speaking people in the U.S., and discuss how it is exemplified in the story.

8: When Mr. Lerna asks the boy whether he likes music, the boy answers "Yes, I like *corridos"*. Find out about the role of *corridos* in Mexican culture and discuss the implications of the boy's answer and the appropriateness of his learning to play the trumpet.

9. What figures of speech does the author use in this essay?

DANNY SANTIAGO

"The Somebody" first appeared in February 1970 in Redbook *and was then reprinted in*The Best American Short Stories of 1971 *with a note that read: "Danny Santiago supplies no vital statistics. He has said of himself 'When it comes to biography, I am muy burro as we say in Spanish which means worse than mulish.' 'The Somebody' is his only published work " Not until 1983 did Danny Santiago's name reappear, when his first novel,* Famous All Over Town, *appeared, the final chapter of which is a reworking of "The Somebody." The novel was praised as a classic novel of initiation and given the Rosenthal Award for having added "luster to the enlarging literary genre cf immigrant experience, of social, cultural and psychological threshold. [...] The durable young narrator spins across a multi-colored scene of crime, racial violence and extremes of dislocation, seeking and perhaps finding his awn space. The exuberant mixes with the nerve-wracking; and throughout sly slippages of language enact a comedy on the theme of communication." When the author did not pick up his $5,000 check, his absence was understood as just another sign of his reclusiveness, but then it became known that the young Chicano writer was neither young nor a Chicano. He was an Anglo in his 70s named Daniel James ('Danny Santiago' in Spanish), who had graduated from Andover and Tale and was a prizewinning playwright and the co-author of the musical comedy* Bloomer Girl, *which had been successfully performed on Broadway in 1944.* As *a Hollywood screen writer he had joined the Communist party in the thirties, and although he had resigned later, the House Committee on Un-American Activities blacklisted him in 1951. Thus unable to publish any works, he and his wife lived quietly in the Mexican-American barrios of East Los Angeles, where he got to know his neighbors so well that he could write about their experiences as if he were one of them. He died on 18 May 1988, with* Famous All Over Town *assuring him an enduring place in American literature.*

The Somebody

This is Chato talking, Chato de Shamrock, from the Eastside in old L.A., and I want you to know this is a big day in my life because today I quit school and went to work as a writer. I write on fences or buildings or anything that comes along. I write my name, not the one I got from my father. I want no part of him. I write Chato, which means Catface, because

I have a flat nose like a cat. It's a Mexican word because that's what I am, a Mexican, and I'm not ashamed of it. I like that language, too, man. It's way better than English to say what you feel. But German is the best. It's got a real rugged sound, and I'm going to learn to talk it someday.

After Chato I write "de Shamrock." That's the street where I live, and it's the name of the gang I belong to, but the others are all gone now. Their families had to move away, except Gorilla is in jail and Blackie joined the navy because he liked swimming. But I still have our old arsenal. It's buried under the chickens, and I dig it up when I get bored. There's tire irons and chains and pick handles with spikes and two zip guns we made and they shoot real bullets but not very straight. In the good old days nobody cared to tangle with us. But now I'm the only one left.

Well, today started off like any other day. The toilet roars like a hot rod taking off. My father coughs and spits about nineteen times and hollers it’s six-thirty. So I holler back I'm. quitting school. Things hit me like that - sudden.

"Don't you want to be a lawyer no more," he says in Spanish, "and defend the Mexican people?"

My father thinks he is very funny, and next time I make any plans, he's sure not going to hear about it.

"Don't you want to be a doctor," he says, "and cut off my leg for nothing someday?"

"Due beast ine dumb cop," I tell him in German, but not very loud.

"How will you support me," he says, "when I retire? Or will you marry a rich old woman that owns a pool hall?"

"I'm checking out of this dump! You'll never see me again!"

I hollered in at him, but already he was in the kitchen making a big noise in his coffee. I could be dead and he wouldn't take me serious. So I laid there and waited for him to go off to work.When I woke up again, it was way past eleven. I can sleep forever these days. So I got out of bed and put on clean jeans and my windbreaker and combed myself very neat because already I had a feeling this was going to be a big day for me.

I had to wait for breakfast because the baby was sick and throwing up milk on everything. There is always a baby vomiting in my house. When they're born, everybody comes over and says: *"Que* cute!" but nobody passes any comments on the dirty way babies act or the dirty way they were made either. Sometimes my mother asks me to hold one for her but it always cries, maybe because I squeeze it a little hard when nobody's looking.

When my mother finally served me, 1 had to hold my breath, she smelled so bad of babies. I don't care to look at her anymore. Her legs got those dark-blue rivers running all over them. I kept waiting for her to bawl me out about school, but I guess she forgot, or something. So I cut out.

Every time I go out my front door 1 have to cry for what they've done to old Shamrock Street. It used to be so fine, with solid homes on both sides. Maybe they needed a little paint here and there but they were cozy. Then the S.P. railroad bought up all the land except my father's place because he was stubborn. They came in with their wrecking bars and their bulldozers. You could hear those houses scream when they ripped them down. So now Shamrock Street is just front walks that lead to a hole in the ground, and piles of busted cement. And Pelon's house and Blackie's are just stacks of old boards waiting to get hauled away. I hope that never happens to your street, man.

My first stop was the front gate and there was that sign again, the big S wrapped around a cross like a snake with rays coming out, which is the mark of the Sierra Street gang, as everybody knows. I rubbed it off, but tonight they'll put it back again. In the old days they wouldn't dare to come on our street, but without your gang you're nobody. And one of these fine days they're going to catch up with me in person and that will be the end of Chato de Shamrock.

So I cruised on down to Main Street like a ghost in a graveyard. Just to prove I'm alive, I wrote my name on the fence at the corner. A lot of names you see in public places are written very sloppy. Not me. I take my time. Like my fifth-grade teacher used to say, if other people are going to see your work, you owe itto yourself to do it right. Mrs. Cully was her name and she was real nice, for an Anglo. My other teachers were all cops but Mrs. Cully drove me home one time when some guys were after me. I think she wanted to adopt me but she never said anything about it. I owe a lot to that lady, and especially my writing. You should see it, man - it's real smooth and mellow, and curvy like a blond in a bikini. Everybody says so. Except one time they had me in Juvenile by mistake and some doctor looked at it. He said it proved I had something wrong with me, some long word. That doctor was crazy, because I made him show me his writing and it was real ugly like a barb-wire fence with little chickens stuck on the points. You couldn't even read it.

Anyway, I signed myself very clean and neat on that corner. And then I thought, Why not look for a job someplace? But I was more in the mood to write my name, so I went into the dime store and helped myself to two boxes of crayons and some chalk and cruised on down Main, writing

all the way. I wondered should 1 write more than my name. Should I write, "Chato is a fine guy," or, "Chato, is wanted by the police"? Things like that. News. But 1 decided against it. Better to keep them guessing. Then I crossed over to Forney Playground. It used to be our territory, but now the Sierra have taken over there like everyplace else. Just to show them, I wrote on the tennis court and the swimming pool and the gym. I left a fine little trail of Chato de Shamrock in eight colors. Some places I used chalk, which works better on brick or plaster. But crayons are the thing for cement or anything smooth, like in the girls' rest room. On that wall I also drew a little picture the girls would be interested in and put down a phone number beside it. I bet a lot of them are going to call that number, but it isn't mine because we don't have a phone in the first place, and in the second place I'm probably never going home again.

I'm telling you, I was pretty famous at the Forney by the time I cut out, and from there I continued my travels till something hit me. You know how you put your name on something and that proves it belongs to you? Things like school books or gym shoes? So I thought, How about that, now? And I put my name on the Triple A Market and on Morrie's Liquor Store and on the Zocalo, which is a beer joint. And then I cruised on up Broadway, getting rich. I took over a barber shop and a furniture store and the Plymouth agency. And the firehouse for laughs, and the phonecompany so I could call all my girl friends and keep my dimes. And then there I was at Webster and Garcia's Funeral Home with the big white columns. At first I thought that might be bad luck, but then I said, Oh, well, we all got to die sometime. So I signed myself, and now I can eat good and live in style and have a big time all my life, and then kiss you all good-bye and give myself the best damn funeral in L.A. for free.

And speaking of funerals, along came the Sierra right then, eight or ten of them down the street with that stupid walk which is their trademark. I ducked into the garage and hid behind the hearse. Not that I'm a coward. Getting stomped doesn't bother me, or even shot. What I hate is those blades, man. They're like a piece of ice cutting into your belly. But the Sierra didn't see me and went on by. I couldn't hear what they were saying but I knew they had me on their mind. So I cut on over to the Boys' Club, where they don't let anybody get you, no matter who you are. To pass the time I shot some baskets and played a little pool and watched the television, but the story was boring, so it came to me, Why not write my name on the screen? Which I did with a squeaky pen. Those cowboys sure looked fine with Chato de Shamrock written all over them. Everybody got a kick out of it. But of course up comes Mr. Calderon and makes me wipe

it off. They're always spying on you up there. And he takes me into his office and closes the door.

"Well," he says, "and how is the last of the dinosaurs?"

Meaning that the Shamrocks are as dead as giant lizards.

Then he goes into that voice with the church music in it and I look out of the window.

"I know it's hard to lose your gang, Chato," he says, "but this is your chance to make new friends and straighten yourself out. Why don't you start coming to Boys’ Club more?"

"It's boring here," I tell him.

"What about school?"

"I can't go," I said. "They'll get me."

"The Sierra's forgotten you're alive," he tells me.

"Then how come they put their mark on my house every night?"

"Do they?"

He stares at me very hard. I hate those eyes of his. He thinks he knows everything. And what is he? Just a Mexican like everybody else.

"Maybe you put that mark there yourself," he says. "To make yourself big. Just like you wrote on the television."

"That was my name! I like to write my name!"

"So do dogs," he says. "On every lamppost they come to."

"You're a dog yourself," I told him, but I don't think he heard me. He just went on talking. Brother, how they love to talk up there! But I didn't bother to listen, and when he ran out of gas I left. From now on I’m scratching that Boys' Club off my list.

Out on the street it was getting dark, but I could still follow my trail back toward Broadway. It felt good seeing Chato written everyplace, but at the Zocalo I stopped dead. Around my name there was a big red heart done in lipstick with some initials I didn't recognize. To tell the truth, I didn't know how to feel. In one way I was mad that anyone would fool with my name, especially if it was some guy doing it for laughs. But what guy carries lipstick? And if it was a girl, that could be kind of interesting.

A girl is what it turned out to be. I caught up with her at the telephone company. There she is, standing in the shadows, drawing her heart around my name. And she has a very pretty shape on her, too. I sneak up behind her very quiet, thinking all kinds of crazy things and my blood shooting around so fast it shakes me all over. And then she turns around and it's only Crusader Rabbit. That's what we called her from the television show they had then, on account of her teeth in front.

When she sees me, she takes off down the alley, but in twenty feet I catch her. I grab for the lipstick, but she whips it behind her. I reach around and try to pull her fingers open, but her hand is sweaty and so is mine. And there we are, stuck together all the way down. I can feel everything she's got and her breath is on my cheek. She twists up against me, kind of giggling. To tell the truth, I don't like to wrestle with girls. They don't fight fair. And then we lost balance and fell against some garbage cans, so I woke up. After that I got the lipstick away from her very easy.

"What right you got to my name?" I tell her. "I never gave you permission."

"You sign yourself real fine," she says.

I knew that already.

"Let's go writing together," she says.

"The Sierra's after me."

"I don't care," she says. "Come on, Chato - you and me can have a lot of fun."

She came up close and giggled that way. She put her hand on my hand that had the lipstick in it. And you know what? I'm ashamed to say I almost told her yes. It would be a change to go writing with a girl. We could talk there in the dark. We could decide on the best places. And her handwriting wasn't too bad either. But then I remembered I had my reputation to think of. Somebody would be sure to see us, and they'd be laughing at me all over the Eastside. So I pulled my hand away and told her off.

"Run along, Crusader," I told her. "I don't want no partners, and especially not you."

"Who are you calling Crusader?" she screamed. "You ugly, squash-nose punk."

She called me everything. And spit at my face but missed. I didn't argue. I just cut out. And when I got to the first sewer I threw away her lipstick. Then I drifted over to the banks atBroadway and Bailey, which is a good spot for writing because a lot of people pass by there.

Well, I hate to brag, but that was the best work I've ever done in all my life. Under the street lamp my name shone like solid gold. I stood to one side and checked the people as they walked past and inspected it. With some you can't tell just how they feel, but with others it rings out like a cash register. There was one man. He got out of his Cadillac to buy a paper and when he saw my name he smiled. He was the age to be my father. I bet he'd give me a job if 1 asked him. I bet he'd take me to his home and to

his office in the morning. Pretty soon I'd be sitting at my own desk and signing my name on letters and checks and things. But 1 would never buy a Cadillac, man. They burn too much gas.

Later a girl came by. She was around eighteen, I think, with green eyes. Her face was so pretty I didn't dare to look at her shape. Do you want me to go crazy? That girl stopped and really studied my name like she fell in love with it. She wanted to know me, I could tell. She wanted to take my hand and we'd go off together just holding hands and nothing dirty. We'd go to Beverly Hills and nobody would look at us the wrong way. I almost said "Hi" to that girl, and, "How do you like my writing?" But not quite.

So here 1 am, standing on this corner with my chalk all gone and only one crayon left and it's ugly brown. My fingers are too cold besides. But I don't care because I just had a vision, man. Did they ever turn on the lights for you so you could see the whole world and everything in it? That's how it came to me right now. I don't need to be a movie star or boxing champ to make my name in the world. All I need is plenty of chalk and crayons. And that's easy. L.A. is a big city, man, but give me a couple of months and I'll be famous all over town. Of course they'll try to stop me - the Sierra, the police and everybody. But 1'11 be like a ghost, man. I'll be real mysterious, and all they'll know is just my name, signed like I always sign it, CHATO DE SHAMROCK with rays shooting out like from the Holy Cross.

I. Memorize the following words and word-combinations, write out the sentences with them from the text and translate. Use them in the situations from the text.

vital statistics (n.)	to cruise (v.)
mulish (adj.)	graveyard (n.)
to mimeograph (v.)	sloppy (adj.)
initiation (n.)	mellow (adj.)
luster (BE: lustre) (n.)	JUVENILE (n.): (short for)
durable (adj.)	barb(ed)-wire (n.)
exuberant (adj.)	dime store (n.)
nerve-wracking (adj.)	crayon (n.)
sly (adj.)	to keep s.o. guessing (v.)
slippage (n.)	trail (n.)

to enact (v.) reclusiveness (n.) to blacklist (v.) shamrock (n.) tire (BE: tyre) iron (n.) pick (n.) spike (n.) zip gun (n.) to tangle with (v.): (infml.) hot rod (n.) to holler (v.) pool hall (n.) to check out (v.) windbreaker (n.): (BE) windcheater) neat (adj.) to vomit (v.) to bawl (out) (v.) to cut out (v.) to rip (s.th.) down (v.) to bust (v.) stack (n.) to haul (v.) to catch up (v.)	TRIPLE A MARKET joint (n.): (si., derog.) funeral home (n.) to duck (v.) hearse (n.) to stomp (v.) squeaky (adj.) kick (n.) to spy (up)on (v.) to straighten s.o. out (v.) to scratch (off) (v.) dead (adv.) to sneak up (v.) to whip (v.) to tell s.b. off (v.): (infml.) (esp. of a teacher, parent, manager, etc.) squash-nose (n.) punk (n.) sewer (n.) to drift (v.) to brag (v.): (derog.) cash register (n.) champ (n.)

II. Find some information about:

CHICANO *ANDOVER* *YALE* *HOUSE COMMITTEE ON UN-AMERICAN ACTIVITIES* *BARRIO*	*CHATO* *EASTSIDE OF LOS ANGELES* *CRUSADER RABBIT* *BEVERLY HILLS*

III. Prepare a literary translation of the passage on page 47 starting with the words "*So I cruised on down to Main Street...***" and ending with the words "***... You couldn't even read it***."**

IV. Answer the following questions:

1: Define the narrative perspective, and discuss whether Chato's point of view can be understood as an example of the 'innocent eye.'

2: What does Chato reveal - intentionally as well as unintentionally - about his character and his predicament? Is he as tough as he pretends to be? Substantiate your answers by referring to relevant passages.

3: Define Chato's relationship with both his father and his mother by collecting all relevant facts, and describe his neighborhood and the type of urban environment in which he lives in "the Eastside in old L.A.".

4: Define Chato’s relationship to his gang and the effects which the breaking-up of this gang has upon him. Why is it that he cannot make it on his own?

5: Try to explain why Chato loves to write his name on all sorts of objects. Consider the relationship between one's 'name' and one's identity.

6: According to the Bible, God endowed Adam with the right of naming - "and whatsoever Adam called every living creature, that was the name thereof" (Genesis 2:19). Discuss Chato's notions about the relationship between naming something and taking possession of it in the light of this reference.

7: Try to explain the title of the story by investigating whether one can become a "somebody" by writing one's name.

8: Assess Chato's attitude towards the other sex by analyzing his relevant observations and his behavior towards Crusader Rabbit and his dreams about the unnamed girl that studies his name.

9: Does Chato develop in the course of the story?

10. What figures of speech does the author use in this short story?

HISAYE YAMAMOTO

Hisaye "Yamamoto was born in 1921 in Redondo Beach, California, as the child of Japanese immigrants. She began to write as a teenager (for a time under the pseudonym of'Napoleon') but had to wait until she was twenty-seven before a literary magazine accepted her first story. During World War II she was interned for three years in Poston, Arizona, where she served as reporter and columnist for the camp newspaper, the Poston Chronicle, *After the war she worked for three years for the* Los Angeles Tribune, *a black weekly, before a fellowship allowed her to write full time for a while and her short stories began to appear in national journals. After two years as a volunteer in a Catholic Worker rehabilitation farm on Staten Island, she married and returned to Los Angeles where, since 1961, her duties as a wife and a mother of five children have kept her from writing any new fiction. All of Yamamoto's stories, which explore such issues as growing up with foreign-bom parents, mixing with different ethnic groups, and the problems of a dual personality, grow out of the personal and historical circumstances ofls- sei and Nisei in the U.S., and the appearance of these stories in diverse periodicals made Yamamoto one of the first Japanese-American writers to gain national recognition after the war, when anti-Japanese feelings were still widespread. However, it was not until 1988 that fifteen of her stories, which span a forty-year career and form the only portrait of prewar rural Japanese America in existence, were collected as* 'Seventeen Syllables' and Other Stories *and thus made available to a larger audience.*

*"Yoneko's Earthquake" appeared first in 1951 in*Furioso, 6, *1, and was chosen as one of Martha Foley's* Best American Short Stories: 1952.

Yoneko's Earthquake

Yoneko Hosoume became a free-thinker on the night of March 10, 1933, only a few months after her first actual recognition of God. Ten years old at the time, of course she had heard rumors about God all along, long before Marpo came. Her cousins who lived in the city were all Christians, living as they did right next door to a Baptist church exclusively for Japanese people. These city cousins, of whom there were several, had been baptized en masse and were very proud of their condition. Yoneko was impressed when she heard of this and thereafter

was given to referring to them as "my cousins, the Christians." She, too, yearned at times after Christianity, but she realized the absurdity of her whim, seeing that there was no Baptist church for Japanese in the rural community she lived in. Such a church would have been impractical, moreover, since Yoneko, her father, her mother, and her little brother Seigo were the only Japanese thereabouts. They were the only ones, too, whose agriculture was so diverse as to include blackberries, cabbages, rhubarb, potatoes, cucumbers, onions, and canteloupes. The rest of the countryside there was like one vast orange grove.

Yoneko had entered her cousins' church once, but she could not recall the sacred occasion without mortification. It had been one day when the cousins had taken her and Seigo along with them to Sunday school. The church was a narrow wooden building, mysterious-looking because of its unusual bluish-gray paint and its steeple, but the basement schoolroom inside had been disappointingly ordinary, with desks, a blackboard, and erasers. They had all sung "Let Us Gather at the River" in Japanese. This goes:

Mamonaku kanata no
Nagare no soba de Tanoshiku ai-masho Mata tomodachi to
Mamonaku ai-masho
Kirei-na, kirei-na kawa de Tanoshiku ai-masho Mata tomodachi to.

Yoneko had not known the words at all, but always clever in such situations, she had opened her mouth and grimaced nonchalantlyto the rhythm. What with everyone else singing at the top of his lungs, no one had noticed that she was not making a peep. Then everyone had sat down again and the man had suggested, "Let us pray." Her cousins and the rest had promptly curled their arms on the desks to make nests for their heads, and Yoneko had done the same. But not Seigo. Because when the room had become so still that one was aware of the breathing, the creaking, and the cluttering in the trees outside, Seigo, sitting with her, had suddenly flung his arm around her neck and said with concern, "Sis, what are you crying for? Don't cry." Even the man had laughed and Yoneko had been terribly ashamed that Seigo should thus disclose them to be interlopers. She had pinched him fiercely and he had begun to cry, so she had had to drag him outside, which was a fortunate move, because he had immediately wet his pants. But he had been only three then, so it was not very fair to expect dignity of him.

So it remained for Marpo to bring the word of God to Yoneko - Marpo with the face like brown leather, the thin mustache like Edmund Lowe's, and the rare, breathtaking smile like white gold. Marpo, who was

twenty-seven years old, was a Filipino and his last name was lovely, something like Humming Wing, but no one ever ascertained the spelling of it. He ate principally rice, just as though he were Japanese, but he never sat down to the Hosoume table, because he lived in the bunkhouse out by the barn and cooked on his own kerosene stove. Once Yoneko read somewhere that Filipinos trapped wild dogs, starved them for a time, then, feeding them mountains of rice, killed them at the peak of their bloatedness, thus insuring themselves meat ready to roast, stuffing and all, without further ado. This, the book said, was considered a delicacy. Unable to hide her disgust and her fascination, Yoneko went straightway to Marpo and asked, "Marpo, is it true that you eat dogs?", and he, flashing that smile, answered, "Don't be funny, honey!" This caused her no end of amusement, because it was a poem, and she completely forgot about the wild dogs.

Well, there seemed to be nothing Marpo could not do. Mr. Hosoume said Marpo was the best hired man he had ever had, and he said this often, because it was an irrefutable fact among Japanese in general that Filipinos in general were an indolent lot. Mr. Hosoume ascribed Marpo's industry to his having grown up in Hawaii, where there is known to be considerable Japanese influence. Marpo had gone to a missionary school there and he owned a Bible given him by one of his teachers. This had black leather covers that gave as easily as cloth, golden edges, and a slim purple ribbon for a marker. He always kept it on the little table by his bunk, which was not a bed with springs but a low, threeplank shelf with a mattress only. On the first page of the book, which was stiff and black, his teacher had written in large swirls of white ink, "As we draw near to God, He will draw near to us."

What, for instance, could Marpo do? Why, it would take an entire, leisurely evening to go into his accomplishments adequately, because there was not only Marpo the Christian and Marpo the best hired man, but Marpo the athlete, Marpo the musician (both instrumental and vocal), Marpo the artist, and Marpo the radio technician:

(1) As an athlete, Marpo owned a special pair of black shoes, equipped with sharp nails on the soles, which he kept in shape with the regular application of neatsfoot oil. Putting these on, he would dash down the dirt road to the highway, a distance of perhaps half a mile, and back again. When he first came to work for the Hosoumes, he undertook this sprint every evening before he went to get his supper, but as time went on he referred to these shoes less and less and in the end, when he left, he had not touched them for months. He also owned a musclebuilder sent him by

Charles Atlas which, despite his unassuming size, he could stretch the length of his outspread arms; his teeth gritted then and his whole body became temporarily victim to a jerky vibration. (2) As an artist, Marpo painted larger-than-life water colors of his favorite movie stars, all of whom were women and all of whom were blonde, like Ann Harding and Jean Harlow, and tacked them up on his walls. He also made for Yoneko a folding contraption of wood holding two pencils, one with lead and one without, with which she, too, could obtain doublesized likenesses of any picture she wished. It was a fragile instrument, however, and Seigo splintered it to pieces one day when Yoneko was away at school. He claimed he was only trying to copy Boob McNutt from the funny paper when it failed. (3) As a musician, Marpo owned a violin for which he had paid over one hundred dollars. He kept this in a case whose lining was red velvet, first wrapping it gently in a brilliant red silk scarf. This scarf, which weighednothing, he tucked under his chin when he played, gathering it up delicately by the center and flicking it once to unfurl it - a gesture Yoneko prized. In addition to this, Marpo was a singer, with a soft tenor which came out in professional quavers and rolled r's when he applied a slight pressure to his Adam's apple with thumb and forefinger. His violin and vocal repertoire consisted of the same numbers, mostly hymns and Irish folk airs. He was especially addicted to "The Rose of Tralee" and the "Londonderry Air.” (4) Finally, as a radio technician who had spent two previous winters at a specialists' school in the city, Marpo had put together a bulky table-size radio which brought in equal proportions of static and entertainment. He never got around to building a cabinet to house it and its innards of metal and glass remained public throughout its lifetime. This was just as well, for not a week passed without Marpo's deciding to solder one bit or another. Yoneko and Seigo became a part of the great listening audience with such fidelity that Mr. Hosoume began remarking the fact that they dwelt more with Marpo than with their own parents. He eventually took a serious view of the matter and bought the naked radio from Marpo, who thereupon put away his radio manuals and his soldering iron in the bottom of his steamer trunk and divided more time among his other interests.

However, Marpo's versatility was not revealed, as it is here, in a lump. Yoneko uncovered it fragment by fragment every day, by dint of unabashed questions, explorations among his possessions, and even silent observation, although this last was rare. In fact, she and Seigo visited with Marpo at least once a day and both of them regularly came away amazed with their findings. The most surprising thing was that Marpo was, after all

this, a rather shy young man meek to the point of speechlessness in the presence of Mr. and Mrs. Hosoume. With Yoneko and Seigo, he was somewhat more self-confident and at ease.

It is not remembered now just how Yoneko and Marpo came to open their protracted discussion on religion. It is sufficient here to note that Yoneko was an ideal apostle, adoring Jesus, desiring Heaven and fearing Hell. Once Marpo had enlightened her on these basics, Yoneko never questioned their truth. The questions she put up to him, therefore, sought neither proof of her exegeses nor balm for her doubts, but simply additional color to round out her mental images. For example, who did Marpo suppose wasGod's favorite movie star? Or, what sound did Jesus' laughter have (it must be like music, she added, nodding sagely, answering herself to her own satisfaction), and did Marpo suppose that God's sense of humor would have appreciated the delicious chant she had learned from friends at school today:

There ain't no bugs on us, There ain 't no bugs on us, There may be bugs on the rest of you mugs, But there ain't no bugs on us?

Or did Marpo believe Jesus to have been exempt from stinging eyes when he shampooed that long, naturally wavy hair of his?

To shake such faith, there would have been required a most monstrous upheaval of some sort, and it might be said that this is just what happened. For early on the evening of March 10,1933, a little after five o'clock this was, as Mrs. Hosoume was getting supper, as Marpo was finishing up in the fields alone because Mr. Hosoume had gone to order some chicken fertilizer, and as Yoneko and Seigo were listening to Skippy, a tremendous roar came out of nowhere and the Hosoume house began shuddering violently as though some giant had seized it in his two hands and was giving it a good shaking. Mrs. Hosoume, who remembered similar, although milder experiences from her childhood in Japan, screamed, *"Jishin, jishin!"* before she ran and grabbed Yoneko and Seigo each by a hand and dragged them outside with her. She took them as far as the middle of the rhubarb patch near the house, and there they all crouched, pressed together, watching the world about them rock and sway. In a few minutes, Marpo, stumbling in from the fields, joined them, saying, "Earthquake, earthquake!" and he gathered them all in his arms, as much to protect them as to support himself.

Mr. Hosoume came home later that evening in a stranger's car, with another stranger driving the family Reo. Pallid, trembling, his eyes wildly staring, he could have been mistaken for a drunkard, except that he was famous as a teetotaler. It seemed that he had been on the way home when

the first jolt came, that the old green Reo had been kissed by a broken live wire dangling from a suddenly leaning pole. Mr. Hosoume, knowing that the end had come by electrocution, had begun to writhe and kick and this had been his salvation. His hands had flown from the wheel, the car had swerved into a ditch, freeing itself from the sputtering wire.

Later it was found that he was left permanently inhibited about driving automobiles and permanently incapable of considering electricity with calmness. He spent the larger part of his later life weakly, wandering about the house or fields and lying down frequently to rest because of splitting headaches and sudden dizzy spells.

So it was Marpo who went back into the house as Yoneko screamed, "No, Marpo, no!" and brought out the Hosoumes' kerosene stove, the food, the blankets, while Mr. Hosoume huddled on the ground near his family

The earth trembled for days afterwards. The Hosoumes and Marpo Humming Wing lived during that time on a natural patch of Bermuda grass between the house and the rhubarb patch, remembering to take three meals a day and retire at night. Marpo ventured inside the house many times despite Yoneko's protests and reported the damage slight: a few dishes had been broken; a gallon jug of mayonnaise had fallen from the top pantry shelf and splattered the kitchen floor with yellow blobs and pieces of glass.

Yoneko was in constant terror during this experience. Immediately on learning what all the commotion was about, she began praying to God to end this violence. She entreated God, flattered Him, wheedled Him, commanded Him, but He did not listen to her at all - inexorably, the earth went on rumbling. After three solid hours of silent, desperate prayer, without any results whatsoever, Yoneko began to suspect that God was either powerless, callous, downright cruel, or nonexistent. In the murky night, under a strange moon wearing a pale ring of light, she decided upon the last as the most plausible theory. "Ha," was one of the things she said tremulously to Marpo, when she was not begging him to stay out of the house, "you and your God!"

The others soon oriented themselves to the catastrophe with philosophy, saying how fortunate they were to live in the country where the peril was less than in the city and going so far as to regard the period as a sort of vacation from work, with their enforced alfresco existence a sort of camping trip. They tried to bring Yoneko to partake of this pleasant outlook, but she, shivering with each new quiver, looked on them as dreamers who refused to see thing as they really were. Indeed, Yoneko's reaction was so notable that the Hosoume household thereafter spoke of the event as "Yoneko's earthquake."

After the earth subsided and the mayonnaise was mopped off the kitchen floor, life returned to normal, except that Mr. Hosoume stayed at home most of the time. Sometimes if he had a relatively painless day, he would have supper on the stove when Mrs. Hosoume came in from the fields. Mrs. Hosoume and Marpo did all the field labor now, except on certain overwhelming days when several Mexicans were hired to assist them. Marpo did most of the driving, too, and it was now he and Mrs. Hosoume who went into town on the weekly trip for groceries. In fact Marpo became indispensable and both Mr. and Mrs. Hosoume often told each other how grateful they were for Marpo.

When summer vacation began and Yoneko stayed at home, too, she found the new arrangement rather inconvenient. Her father's presence cramped her style: for instance, once when her friends came over and it was decided to make fudge, he would not permit them, saying fudge used too much sugar and that sugar was not a plaything; once when they were playing paper dolls, he came along and stuck his finger up his nose and pretended he was going to rub some snot off onto the dolls. Things like that. So on some days, she was very much annoyed with her father.

Therefore when her mother came home breathless from the fields one day and pushed a ring at her, a gold-colored ring with a tiny glasslike stone in it, saying, "Look, Yoneko, I'm going to give you this ring. If your father asks where you got it, say you found it on the street." Yoneko was perplexed but delighted both by the unexpected gift and the chance to have some secret revenge on her father, and she said, certainly, she was willing to comply with her mother's request. Her mother went back to the fields then and Yoneko put the pretty ring on her middle finger, taking up the loose space with a bit of newspaper. It was similar to the rings found occasionally in boxes of Crackerjack, except that it appeared a bit more substantial.

Mr. Hosoume never asked about the ring; in fact, he never noticed she was wearing one. Yoneko thought he was about to, once, but he only reproved her for the flamingo nail polish she was wearing, which she had applied from a vial brought over by Yvonne Fournier, the French girl two orange groves away. "You look like a Filipino," Mr. Hosoume said sternly, for it was another irrefutable fact among Japanese in general that Filipinos in general were a gaudy lot. Mrs. Hosoume immediately came to her defense, saying that in Japan, if she remembered correctly, young girls did the same thing. In fact she remembered having gone to elaborate lengths to tint her fingernails: she used to gather, she said, the petals of the red *tsubobana* or the purple *kogane* (which grows on the underside of stones),

grind them well, mix them with some alum powder, then cook the mixture and leave it to stand overnight in an envelope of either persimmon or taro leaves (both very strong leaves). The second night, just before going to bed, she used to obtain threads by ripping a palm leaf (because real thread was dear) and tightly bind the paste to her fingernails under shields of persimmon or taro leaves. She would be helpless for the night, the fingertips bound so well that they were alternately numb or aching; but she would grit her teeth and tell herself that the discomfort indicated the success of the operation. In the morning, finally releasing her fingers, she would find the nails shining with a translucent red-orange color.

Yoneko was fascinated, because she usually thought of her parents as having been adults all their lives. She thought that her mother must have been a beautiful child, with or without bright fingernails, because, though surely past thirty, she was even yet a beautiful person. When she herself was younger, she remembered she had at times been so struck with her mother’s appearance that she had dropped to her knees and mutely clasped her mother's legs in her arms. She had left off this habit as she learned to control her emotions, because at such times her mother had usually walked away, saying, "My, what a clinging child you are. You've got to learn to be a little more independent." She also remembered she had once heard someone comparing her mother to "a dewy, half-opened rosebud."

Mr. Hosoume, however, was irritated. "That's no excuse for Yoneko to begin using paint on her fingernails,” he said. "She’s only ten."

"Her Japanese age is eleven, and we weren't much older," Mrs. Hosoume said.

"Look," Mr. Hosoume said, "if you're going to contradict every piece of advice I give the children, they'll end up disobeying us both and doing what they very well please. Just because I'm ill just now is no reason for them to start being disrespectful."

"When have I ever contradicted you before?" Mrs. Hosoume said.

"Countless times," Mr. Hosoume said.

"Name one instance,” Mrs. Hosoume said.

Certainly there had been times, but Mr. Hosoume could not happen to mention the one requested instance on the spot and he became quite angry. "That's quite enough of your insolence," he said. Since he was speaking in Japanese, his exact accusation was that she was *nama-iki,* which is a shade more revolting than being merely insolent.

"Nama-iki, nama-iki?" said Mrs. Hosoume. "How dare you? I'll not have anyone calling me *nama-iki'."*

At that, Mr. Hosoume went up to where his wife was ironing and slapped her smartly on the face. It was the first time he had ever laid hands on her. Mrs. Hosoume was immobile for an instant, but she resumed her ironing as though nothing had happened, although she glanced over at Marpo, who happened to be in the room reading a newspaper. Yoneko and Seigo forgot they were listening to the radio and stared at their parents, thunderstruck.

"Hit me again," said Mrs. Hosoume quietly, as she ironed. "Hit me all you wish."

Mr. Hosoume was apparently about to, but Marpo stepped up and put his hand on Mr. Hosoume's shoulder. "The children are here," said Marpo, "the children."

"Mind your own business," said Mr. Hosoume in broken English. "Get out of here!"

Marpo left, and that was about all. Mrs. Hosoume went on ironing, Yoneko and Seigo turned back to the radio, and Mr. Hosoume muttered that Marpo was beginning to forget his place. Now that he thought of it, he said, Marpo had been increasingly impudent towards him since his illness. He said just because he was temporarily an invalid was no reason for Marpo to start being disrespectful. He added that Marpo had better watch his step or that he might find himself jobless one of these fine days.

And something of the sort must have happened. Marpo was here one day and gone the next, without even saying good-bye to Yoneko and Seigo. That was also the day the Hosoume family went to the city on a weekday afternoon, which was most unusual. Mr. Hosoume, who now avoided driving as much as possible, handled the cumbersome Reo as though it were a nervous stallion, sitting on the edge of the seat and hugging the steering wheel. He drove very fast and about halfway to the city struck a beautiful collie which had dashed out barking from someone's yard. The car jerked with the impact, but Mr. Hosoume drove right on and Yoneko, wanting suddenly to vomit, looked back and saw the collie lying very still at the side of the road.

When they arrived at the Japanese hospital, which was their destination, Mr. Hosoume cautioned Yoneko and Seigo to be exemplary children and wait patiently in the car. It seemed hours before he and Mrs. Hosoume returned, she walking with very small, slow steps and he assisting her. When Mrs. Hosoume got in the car, she leaned back and dosed her eyes. Yoneko inquired as to the source of her distress, for she was obviously in pain, but she only answered that she was feeling a little under the weather and that the doctor had administered some necessarily

astringent treatment. At that Mr. Hosoume turned around and advised Yoneko and Seigo that they must tell no one of coming to the city on a weekday afternoon, absolutely no one, and Yoneko and Seigo readily assented. On the way home they passed the place of the encounter with the collie, and Yoneko looked up and down the stretch of road but the dog was nowhere to be seen.

Not long after that the Hosoumes got a new hired hand, an old Japanese man who wore his gray hair in a military cut and who, unlike Marpo, had no particular interests outside working, eating, sleeping, and playing an occasional game of *goh* with Mr. Hosoume. Before he came Yoneko and Seigo played sometimes in the empty bunkhouse and recalled Marpo's various charms together. Privately, Yoneko was wounded more than she would admit even to herself that Marpo should have subjected her to such an abrupt desertion. Whenever her indignation became too great to endure gracefully, she would console herself by telling Seigo that, after all, Marpo was a mere Filipino, an eater of wild dogs.

Seigo never knew about the disappointing new hired man, because he suddenly died in the night. He and Yoneko had spent the hot morning in the nearest orange grove, she driving him to distraction by repeating certain words he could not bear to hear: she had called him Serge, a name she had read somewhere, instead of Seigo; and she had chanted off the name of the tires theywere rolling around like hoops as Goodrich Silver-TO-town, Goodrich Silver-TO-town, instead of Goodrich Silvertown. This had enraged him, and he had chased her around the trees most of the morning. Finally she had taunted him from several trees away by singing "You're a Yellow-streaked Coward," which was one of several small songs she had composed. Seigo had suddenly grinned and shouted, "Sure!" and walked off leaving her, as he intended, with a sense of emptiness. In the afternoon they had perspired and followed the potato-digging machine and the Mexican workers - both hired for the day - around the field, delighting in unearthing marble-sized, smoothskinned potatoes that both the machine and the men had missed. Then in the middle of the night Seigo began crying, complaining of a stomach ache. Mrs. Hosoume felt his head and sent her husband for the doctor, who smiled and said Seigo would be fine in the morning. He said it was doubtless the combination of green oranges, raw potatoes, and the July heat. But as soon as the doctor left, Seigo fell into a coma and a drop of red blood stood out on his underlip, where he had evidently bit it. Mr. Hosoume again fetched the doctor, who was this time very grave and wagged his head, saying, several times, "It looks very bad." So Seigo died at the age of five.

Mrs. Hosoume was inconsolable and had swollen eyes in the morning for weeks afterwards. She now insisted on visiting the city relatives each Sunday, so that she could attend church services with them. One Sunday she stood up and accepted Christ. It was through accompanying her mother to many of these services that Yoneko finally learned the Japanese words to "Let Us Gather at the River." Mrs. Hosoume also did not seem interested in discussing anything but God and Seigo. She was especially fond of reminding visitors how adorable Seigo had been as an infant, how she had been unable to refrain from dressing him as a little girl and fixing his hair in bangs until he was two. Mr. Hosoume was very gentle with her and when Yoneko accidentally caused her to giggle once, he nodded and said, "Yes, that's right, Yoneko, we must make your mother laugh and forget about Seigo." Yoneko herself did not think about Seigo at all. Whenever the thought of Seigo crossed her mind, she instantly began composing a new song, and this worked very well.

One evening, when the new hired man had been with them awhile, Yoneko was helping her mother with the dishes when shefound herself being examined with such peculiarly intent eyes that, with a start of guilt, she began searching in her mind for a possible crime she had lately committed. But Mrs. Hosoume only said, "Never kill a person, Yoneko, because if you do, God will take from you someone you love."

"Oh, that," said Yoneko quickly, "I don't believe in that, I don't believe in God." And her words tumbling pell-mell over one another, she went on eagerly to explain a few of her reasons why.

If she neglected to mention the test she had given God during the earthquake, it was probably because she was a little upset. She had believed for a moment that her mother was going to ask about the ring (which, alas, she had lost already, somewhere in the flumes along the canteloupe patch).

I. Memorize the following words and word-combinations, write out the sentences with them from the text and translate. Use them in the situations from the text.

to intern (v.)	to sputter (v.)
ISSEI	dizzy spell
NISEI	to huddle (v.)
to baptize (v.)	to venture (v.)
whim (n.)	to splatter (v.)

thereabouts (adv.)	blob (n.): a
canteloupe	commotion (n.)
orange grove (n.)	to entreat (v.)
mortification (n.)	to wheedle (v.)
steeple (n.)	inexorably (adv.)
nonchalantly (adv.)	callous (adj.)
to chitter (v.)	downright (adv.)
to disclose (v.)	murky (adj.)
interloper (n.)	tremulously (adv.)
bunkhouse (n.)	alfresco (adj.)
bloatedness (n.)	to partake of (v.)
without further ado	quiver (n.)
irrefutable (adj.)	to subside (v.)
indolent (adj.)	indispensable (adj.)
to ascribe s.th. to (v.)	to cramp s.o.'s style: (infml.)
threeplank	fudge (n.)
leisurely (adj.)	to perplex (v.)
neatsfoot oil (n.)	to comply with (v.)
musclebuilder (n.)	to reprove (v.)
unassuming (adj.)	sternly (adv.)
to grit (v.)	to go to elaborate lengths
to tack (v.)	to tint (v.)
lead (n.)	persimmon (n.)
fragile (adj.)	to rip (v.)
to splinter (v.)	numb (adj.)
to tuck (v.)	to grit one's teeth
to flick (v.)	translucent (adj.)
to unfurl (v.)	JAPANESE AGE
innards (n.)	on the spot
to solder (v.)	insolence (n.)
fidelity (n.)	NAMA-1KI
soldering iron (n.)	impudent (adj.)
versatility (n.)	cumbersome (adj.)
in a lump	to caution (v.)
by dint of	exemplary(adj.)
unabashed (adj.)	astringent (n.)
meek (adj.)	to assent (v.)
to protract (v.)	to subject s.o. to s.th. (v.)
exegesis	desertion (n.)

exempt from upheaval (n.) to shudder (v.) JISHIN rhubarb (n.) to crouch (v.) to sway (v.) to stumble (v.) pallid (adj.) teetotaler (n.) live wire (n.) to dangle (v.) electrocution (n.) to writhe (v.) to swerve (v.) ditch (n.)	indignation to endure (v.) to console (v.) distraction hoop (n.) to enrage (v.) to taunt (v.) yellow (adj.) to perspire (v.) grave (adj.) to wag (v.) inconsolable (adj.) intent (adj.) pell-mell (adv.) flume (n.)

II. Find some information about:

EDMUND LOWE *CHARLES ATLAS* *ANN HARDING* *JEAN HARLOW*	*TSUBOBANA* *VERTOWN*

III. Prepare a literary translation of the passage on page 62 starting with the words "*When they arrived at the Japanese hospital...***" and ending with the words "***... nowhere to be seen***."**

IV. Answer the following questions:

1: The events of the story are experienced by, and narrated as filtered through, the 'innocent eye' of little Yoneko. What is the effect of this point of view, and could it be that Yoneko tells us, without knowing that she does, a 'second' story she herself is not aware of? If so, what is this story about?

2: Yamamoto is praised for her accomplished style. Analyse the major stylistic means which she employs in her story.

3: Trace the development of Yoneko’s relationship with the Christian God from her incipient fascination to her deep disillusionment.

4: Characterize Marpo, consider why Yoneko finds him so fascinating, and investigate his crucial role in the story.

5: What is the meaning of the "gold-colored ring with a tiny glasslike stone", which Yoneko gets from her mother, and why is she asked to lie about it to her father?

6: When the Hosoumes go "to the city on a weekday afternoon", Mr. Hosoume runs over a beautiful dog which, on their way back, is "nowhere to be seen". Explain the meaning which this dog has for the 'second' story which Yoneko tells us, without knowing that she does.

7: Obviously, Yoneko neither understands nor cares for her mother's warning "never [to] kill a person" because then "God will take from you someone you love". Which events and which persons does this observation refer to, and what is the major, and unspoken, event that Yoneko remains unaware of?

8. What figures of speech does the author use in this short story?

FRANK CHIN

Frank Chin was born in 1940 in Berkeley, California. He attended the local University of California, where he edited the undergraduate humor magazine, The Pelican. *He then transferred to the State University of Iowa, and later received his B.A. from the University of California at Santa Barbara. He has worked as a railroad clerk and brakeman, as a production writer, a freelance consultant and lecturer on Chinese-America and racism, as a lecturer at the University of California at Davis, San Francisco State College, and the University of California at Berkeley, and as a film consultant and artistic director of the Asian American Theater workshop. He is the author of two plays,* The Chickencoop Chinaman *(1972) and* The Year of the Dragon *(1974), the earlier of which was the first play by a Chinese American to be produced in New York City; of two controversial novels,* Donald Duk *(1991) and* Gunga Din Highway *(1994); and of a collection of essays,* Bulletproof Buddhists and Other Essays (Intersections) *(1998). He is known to a wider audience as one of the co-editors of the groundbreaking and openly partisan anthologies* Aiiieeeee! An Anthology of Asian-American Writers *(1974) and its greatly enlarged sequel,* The Big Aiiieeeee! *(1991). Eight of his many short stories are collected in* The Chinaman Pacific & Frisco R.R. Co. *(1988), which won the American Book Award.*

Chin is certainly the most outspoken and controversial among contemporary Chinese American writers, and he once described his position thus: "America is illiterate in, hostile to, deadset against the Chinese-American sensibility. I don't like that. Nothing but racist polemics have been written about us, from the 19th century missionaries to Tom Wolfe. Nothing but lies that have, through long acceptance, become the sick racist truths of America's collective unconscious coocoo. I don't like that. [...] And all my writing [...] is Chinaman backtalk." This attitude of an enraged 'Chinaman' writer also infuses his story "Food for All His Dead," which appeared first in Contact.

Food for All His Dead

"Jus' forty-fie year 'go, Doctah Sun Yat-sen free China from da Manchus. Dats' why all us Chinee, alia ovah da woil, are celebrate Octob' tan or da Doubloo Tan ...!"

The shouted voice came through the open bathroom window. The shouting and music was still loud after rising through the night's dry air; white moths jumped on the air, danced through the window over the voice, and lighted quickly on the wet sink, newly reddened from his father's attack. Johnny's arms were around his father's belly, holding the man upright against the edge of the sink to keep the man's mouth high enough to spit lung blood into the drain....

The man's belly shrank and filled against Johnny's arms as the man breathed and spat, breathed and spat, the belly shrinking and filling. The breaths and bodies against each other shook with horrible rhythms that could not be numbed out of Johnny's mind. "Pride," Johnny thought, "pa's pride for his reputation for doing things ... except dying. He's not proud of dying, so it's a secret between father and son. ..." At the beginning of the man's death, when he had been Johnny's father, still! commanding and large, saying, "Help me. I'm dying; don't tell," and removing his jacket and walking to the bathroom. Then came the grin - pressed lips twisted up into the cheeks - hiding the gathering blood and drool. Johnny had cried then, knowing his father would die. But now the man seemed to have been always dying and Johnny always waiting, waiting with what he felt was a coward's loyalty to the dying, for he helped the man hide his bleeding and was sick himself, knowing he was not waiting for the man to die but waiting for the time after death when he could relax.

"... free from da yoke of Manchu slab'ry, in'epen'ence, no moah queue' on da head! Da's whafo' dis big a parade! An' here, in San Francisco, alia us Chinee-'mellican 're pwowd!..."

"It's all gone ... I can't spit any more. Get my shirt, boy. I'm going to make a speech tonight. ..." The man slipped from the arms of the boy and sat on the toilet lid and closed his mouth. His bare chest shone as if washed with dirty cooking oil and looked as if he should have been chilled, not sweating, among the cold porcelain and tile of the bathroom.

To the sound of herded drums and cymbals, Johnny wiped the sweat from his father's soft body and dressed him without speaking. He was full of the heat of wanting to cry for his father but would not.

His father was heavier outside the house.

They staggered each other across the alleyway to the edge of Portsmouth Square. They stood together at the top of the slight hill, their feet just off the concrete onto the melted fishbone grass, and could see the brightly lit reviewing stand, and they saw over the heads of the crowd, the dark crowd of people standing in puddles of each other, moving like oily things and bugs floating on a tide; to their left, under trees, children played

and shouted on swings and slides; some ran toward Johnny and his father and crouched behind their legs to hide from giggling girls. And they could see the street and the parade beyond the crowd. The man stood away from the boy but held tightly to Johnny's arm. The man swallowed a greasy sound and grinned. "I almost feel I'm not dying now. Parades are like that. I used to dance the Lion Dance in China, boy. I was always in the parades."

Johnny glanced at his father and saw the man's eyes staring wide with the skin around the eyes stretching for the eyes to open wider, and Johnny patted his father's shoulder and watched the shadows of children running across the white sand of the play area. He was afraid of watching his father die here; the man was no longer like his father or a man; perhaps it was the parade. But the waiting, the lies and waiting so long with a flesh going to death that the person was no longer real as a life but a parody of live things, grinning. The man was a fish drying and shrinking inside its skin on the sand, crazy, mimicking swimming, Johnny thought, but a fish could be lifted and slapped against a stone, thrown to cats; for his father, Johnny could only wait and help the man stay alive without helping him die. "That’s probably where you got the disease," Johnny said.

"Where, boy?"

"Back in China."

"No, I got it here. I was never sick for one day in China." The man began walking down the hill toward the crowd.

"Back in China...."

They walked down the hill, the man's legs falling into steps with his body jerking after his falling legs; Johnny held his father,held the man back to keep him from falling over his own feet. The man's breath chanted dry and powdered out of his mouth and nostrils to the rhythm of the drums, and his eyes stared far ahead into the parade; his lips opened and showed brick-colored teeth in his grin. "Not so fast, *ah-bah!"* Johnny shouted and pulled at his father's arm. He was always frightened at the man's surges of nervous life.

"Don't run,” Johnny said, feeling his father's muscles stretch as he pulled Johnny down the hill toward the crowd. "Stop running, pa!” And his father was running and breathing out fog into the hot night and sweating dirty oil, and trembling his fleshy rump inside his baggy trousers, dancing in stumbles with dead senses. "Pa, not so fast, dammit!" You're going to have another attack! Slow down!"

"I can’t stop, boy."

They were in the shadow of the crowd now, and children chased around them.

"Look! There they are!" the man said.

"Dere you're, ladies and genulimans! Eben da lion are bow in respack to us tonigh'!"

The crowd clapped and whistled, and boys shoved forward to see. Old women, roundbacked in their black overcoats, lifted their heads to smile; they stood together and nodded, looking like clumps of huge beetles with white faces.

"Closer to the platform, boy; that's where I belong," the man said. He leaned against Johnny's shoulder and coughed out of his nostrils. Johnny heard the man swallow and cringed. The man was grinning again, his eyes anxious, the small orbs jumping scared spiders all over the sockets. "Aren't you happy you came, boy? Look at all the people."

"Take time to catch your breath, *ah-bah.* Don't talk. It's wrong for you to be here anyhow."

"Nothing's wrong, boy; don't you see all your people happy tonight?" As long as ..." he swallowed and put his head against Johnny's cheek, then made a sound something like laughter, "as I've been here ... do you understand my Chinese?" Then slowly in English, catching quick breaths between his words, "I be here, allabody say dere chillren're gonna leab Chinatong and go way,but 'snot so, huh?" His voice was low, a guttural monotone. "Look a'em all, dey still be Chinee. I taught da feller dat teach dem to dance how to do dat dancer boy. Johnny? dis're you home, here, an' I know you gat tire, but alia you fran's here, an' dey likee you." His face was speaking dose to Johnny and chilled the boy's face with hot breath.

The boy did not look at his father talking to him but stared stiffly out to the street, watching the glistening arms of boys jerking the bamboo skeletons of silk-hided lions over their heads. His father was trying to save him again, Johnny thought, trying to be close like he had been to him how long ago when his father was a hero from the war. The man spoke as if he had saved his life to talk to his son now, tonight, here among the eyes and sounds of Chinese.

"I'm sorry, *ah-bah,* I can't help it ..." was all Johnny could answer sincerely. He knew it would be cruel to say, "Pa, I don't want to be a curiosity like the rest of the Chinese here. I want to be something by myself," so he did not, not only because of the old man, but because he was not certain he believed himself; it had been easy to believe his own shouted words when he was younger and safe with his parents; it had been easy not to like what he had then - when he knew he could stay; then,

when the man was fat and not dying, they were separate and could argue, but not now; now he was favored with the man's secret; they were horribly bound together now. The old man was dying and still believing in the old ways, still sure - even brave, perhaps - and that meant something to Johnny.

"An' you see dam boiv in respack now, an' da’s good lucks to ev'eybody!"

The lion dancers passed, followed by a red convertible with boys beating a huge drum on the back seat.

Johnny knew the parades; the lion dancers led the wait for the coming of the long dragon, and the end. The ends of the parades with the dragon were the most exciting, were the loudest moment before the chase down the streets to keep the dragon in sight. He was half aware of the air becoming brittle with the noise of the dances and the crowd, and, with his father now, was almost happy, almost anxious, dull, the way he felt when he was tiredand staring in a mirror, slowly realizing that he was looking at his own personal reflection; he felt pleased and depressed, as if he had just prayed for something.

"You know," the man said, "I wan' you to be somebody here. Be doctor, mak' moneys and halp da Chinee, or lawyer, or edge- nerer, make moneys and halp, and people're respack you." He patted the boy's chest. "You tall me now you won' leab here when I die, hokay?"

"I don't know, pa." The boy looked down to the trampled grass between his feet and shrugged off what he did not want to say. They were hopeless to each other now. He looked over his shoulder to his father and could not answer the chilled face, and they stared a close moment onto each other and were private, holding each other and waiting.

Policemen on motorcycles moved close to the feet of the crowd to move them back. The boys wearing black-and-red silk trousers and white sweatshirts, coaxing the clumsy dragon forward with bells and shafts, could be seen now; they were dancing and shouting past the reviewing stand. The dragon's glowing head lurched side to side, rose and fell, its jaw dangling after the goading boys. As the dragon writhed and twisted about itself, boys jumped in and out from under its head and belly to keep the dragon fresh.

"Maybe I'm not Chinese, pa! Maybe I'm just a Chinese accident. You're the only one that seems to care that I'm Chinese." The man glared at the boy and did not listen. "Pa, most of the people I don't like are Chinese. They even *laugh* with accents, Christ!" He turned his head from the man, sorry for what he said. It was too late to apologize.

"You dare to talk to your father like that?" the man shouted in Chinese. He stood back from the boy, raised himself and slapped him, whining through his teeth as his arm swung heavily toward the boy's cheek. "You're no son of mine! No son! I'm ashamed of you!"

The shape of the bamboo skeleton was a shadow within the thinly painted silk of the dragon, and boys were shouting inside.

"Pa, *ah-bah,* I'm sorry."

"Get me up to the platform; I gotta make a speech."

Pa, you've got to go home."

"I'm not dead yet; you'll do as I say."

"All right, I'll help you up because you won't let me help you home. But I'll leave you up there, pa. I'll leave you for ma and sister to bring home."

"From da Pres'den, of da United State' 'mellica! 'To alia ob da Chinee-'mellican on da celebrate ob dere liberate from da Manchu.

"I'm trying to make you go home for your own good."

"You're trying to kill me with disgrace. All right, leave me. Get out of my house, too."

"Pa, I'm trying to help you. You're dying!" The boy reached for his father, but the man stepped away. "You'll kill ma by not letting her take care of you."

"Your mother's up on the platform waiting for me."

"Because she doesn't know how bad you are. I do. I have a right to make you go home."

"It's my home, not yours. Leave me alone." The man walked the few steps to the edge of the platform and called his wife. She came down and helped him up. She glanced out but did not see Johnny in the crowd. Her cheeks were made up very pink and her lipstick was still fresh; she looked very young next to Johnny's father, but her hands were old, and seemed older because of the bright nail polish and jade bracelet.

Johnny knew what his father would tell his mother and knew he would have to trust them to be happy without him. Perhaps he meant he would have to trust himself to be happy without them ... the feeling would pass; he would wait and apologize to them both, and he would not have to leave, perhaps. Everything seemed wrong, all wrong, yet everyone, in his own way, was right. He turned quickly and walked out of the crowd to the children's play area. He sat on a bench and stretched his legs straight out in front of him. The dark old women in black coats stood by on the edges of the play area watching the nightbleached faces of children flash in and out of the light as they ran through each other's shadows. Above him, Johnny

could hear the sound of pigeons in the trees. Chinatown was the same and he hated it now. Before, when he was younger, and went shopping with his mother, he had enjoyed the smells of the shops and seeing colored toys between the legs of walking people; he had been proud to look up and see his mother staring at the numbers on the scales that weighed meat, tosee the shopkeepers smile and nod at her. And at night, he had played here, like the children chasing each other in front of him now.

"What'sa wrong, Johnny? Tire?" He had not seen the girl standing in front of him. He sat up straight and smiled. "You draw more pitchers on napkin for me tonigh?"

"No, I was with pa." He shrugged. "You still got the napkins, huh?"

"I tole you I want dem. I'm keeping 'em." She wore a short white coat over her red *cheongsam,* and her hair shook down over her face from the wind.

"I wanta walk," he said. "You wanta walk?"

”1 gotta gat home before twalve."

"Me too,"

"I'll walk for you dan, okay?" She smiled and reached a hand down for him.

"You'll walk *with* me, not/or me. You're not a dog." He stood and took her hand. He enjoyed the girl; she listened to him; he did not care if she understood what he said or knew what he wanted to say. She listened to him, would listen with her eyes staring with a wide frog's stare until he stopped speaking, then her body would raise and she would sigh a curl of girl's voice and say, "You talk so nice...."

The tail of an embroidered dragon showed under her white coat and seemed to sway as her thigh moved. "You didn' come take me to the parade, Johnny?"

"I was with pa." Johnny smiled. The girl's hand was dryfeeling, cold and dry like a skin of tissue-paper-covered flesh. They walked slowly, rocking forward and back as they stepped up the hill. "I'm always with pa, huh?" he said bitterly. "I'm sorry."

"'sail right. Is he still dying?"

"Everyone’s dying here; it's called the American’s common cold."

"Don' talk you colleger stuff to me! I don' unnerstan' it, Johnny."

"He's still dying ... always. I mean, sometimes I think he won't die or is lying and isn't dying."

"Wou'n't that be good, if he weren't dying? And if it was all a joke? You could all laugh after."

"I don't know, Sharon!" He whined on the girl's name and loosened her hand, but she held.

"Johnny?"

"Yeah?"

"What'll you do if he dies?"

Johnny did not look at the girl as he answered, but lifted his head to glance at the street full of lights and people walking between moving cars. Grant Avenue. He could smell incense and caged squabs, the dank smell of damp fish heaped on tile from the shops' now." I think I'd leave. I know what that sounds like, like I'm waiting for him to die so I can leave; maybe it's so. Sometimes I think I'd kill him to stop all this waiting and lifting him to the sink and keeping it a secret. But I won't do that."

"You won' do that..." Sharon said.

"An' now, I like to presan' da Pres'den ob da Chinee Benabolen'..."

"My father," Johnny said.

The girl clapped her hands over her ears to keep her hair from jumping in the wind. "You father?" she said.

"I don't think so," Johnny said. They walked close to the walls, stepped almost into doorways to allow crowding people to pass them going down the hill toward the voice. They smelled grease and urine of open hallways, and heard music like birds being strangled as they walked over iron gratings.

"You don't think so what?" Sharon asked, pulling him toward the crowd.

"I don't think so what you said you didn't think so. ..." He giggled, "I'm sort of funny tonight. I was up all last night listening to my father practice his speech in the toilet and helping him bleed when he got mad. And this morning I started to go to classes and fell asleep on the bus; so I didn't go to classes, and I'm still a wake. I'm not tired but kind of stupid with no sleep, dig, Sharon?"

The girl smiled and said, "I dig, Johnny. You the same way every time I see you almos'."

"And I hear myself talking all this stupid stuff, but it's sort of great, you know? Because I have to listen to what I'm saying or I'll miss it."

"My mother say you cute."

They were near the top of the street now, standing in front of a wall stand with a fold-down shelf covered with Chinese magazines, nickel comic books, postcards, and Japanese souvenirs of Chinatown. Johnny, feeling ridiculous with air between his joints and his cheeks tingling with the anxious motion of the crowd, realized he was tired, then realized he

was staring at the boy sitting at the wall stand and staring at the boy's leather cap.

"What are you loo' at, huh?" the boy said in a girl's voice. Sharon pulled at Johnny and giggled. Johnny giggled and relaxed to feeling drunk and said, "Are you really Chinese?”

"What're you ting, I'm a Negro soy sauce chicken?"

"Don't you know there's no such thing as a real Chinaman in all of America? That all we are are American Indians cashing in on a fad?"

"Fad? Don' call me a fad. You fad youselv."

"No, you’re not Chinese, don't you understand? You see it all started when a bunch of Indians wanted to quit being Indians and fighting the cavalry and all, so they left the reservation, see?"

"In'ian?"

"And they saw that there was this big kick about Chinamen, so they braided their hair into queues and opened up laundries and restaurants and started reading Margaret Mead and Confucius and Pearl Buck and became respectable Chinamen and gained some self-respect."

"Chinamong! You battah not say Chinamong."

"But the reservation instinct stuck, years of tradition, you see? Something about needing more than one Indian to pull off a good rain dance or something, so they made Chinatown! And here we are!"

He glanced around him and grinned. Sharon was laughing, her shoulders hopping up and down. The boy blinked, then pulled his cap lower over his eyes. "It's all right to come out now, you see?" Johnny said. "Indians are back in vogue and the Chinese kick is wearing out. ..." He laughed until he saw the boy's confused face. "Aww nuts," he said, "this is no fun."

He walked after Sharon through the crowd, not feeling the shoulders and women's hips knocking against him. "I'd like to get outta here so quick, Sharon; I wish I had something to do! What do I do here? What does anybody do here? I'm bored! My mother’s a respected woman because she can tell how muchmonosodium glutamate is in a dish by smelling it, and because she knows how to use a spitoon in a restaurant. Everbody's Chinese here, Sharon."

"Sure!” the girl laughed and hopped to kiss his cheek. "Didn' you like that?"

"Sure, I liked it, but I'm explaining something. You know, nobody shoulda let me grow up and go to any school outside of Chinatown." They walked slowly, twisting to allow swaggering men to pass. "Then, maybe everything would be all right now, you see? I'm stupid, I don't know what

I'm talking about. I shouldn't go to parades and see all those kids. I remember when I was a kid. Man, then I knew everything. I knew all my aunts were beautiful, and all my cousins were small, and all my uncles were heroes from the war and the strongest guys in the world that smoked cigars and swore, and my grandmother was a queen of women." He nodded to himself. "I really had it made then, really, and I knew more then than I do now.”

"What'd'ya mean? You smart now! You didn't know how to coun' or spall, or nothin'; now you in colleger."

"I had something then, you know? 1 didn't have to ask about anything; it was all there; 1 didn't have questions; I knew who I was responsible to, who I should love, who I was afraid of, and all my dogs were smart."

"You lucky, you had a dog!" The girl smiled.

"And all the girls wanted to be nurses; it was fine! Now, I'm just what a kid should be - stupid, embarrassed. I don't know who can tell me anything.

"Here, in Chinatown, I'm undoubtedly the most enlightened, the smartest fortune cookie ever baked to a golden brown, but out there ... God!" He pointed down to the end of Grant Avenue, past ornamented lamps of Chinatown to the tall buildings of San Francisco, "Here, I'm fine - and bored stiff. Out there - Oh, hell, what'm I talking about. You don't know either; I try to tell my father, and he doesn't know, and he's smarter'n you."

"If you don't like stupids, why'd you talk to me so much?”

"Because I like you. You're the only thing I know that doesn't fight me. ... You know I think I've scared myself into liking this place for a while. See what you've done by walking with me? You've made me a good Chinese for my parents again. I think I'll sell firecrackers." He was dizzy now, overwhelmed by the soundof too many feet and clicking lights. "I even like you, Sharon!" He swung her arm and threw her ahead of him and heard her laugh. "My grandmother didn't read English until she watched television and read 'The End'; that's pretty funny, what a kick!" They laughed at each other and ran among the shoulders of the crowd, shouting "Congratulations!” in Chinese into the shops, "Congratulations!” to a bald man with long hair growing down the edges of his head.

"Johnny, stop! You hurt my wrist!"

It was an innocent kiss in her hallway, her eyes closed so tight the lashes shrank and twisted like insect legs, and her lips puckered long, a dry kiss with closed lips. "Good night, Johnny ... John," she said. And he

waved and watched her standing in the hallway, disappearing as he walked down the stairs; then, out of sight, he ran home.

He opened the door to the apartment and hoped that his father had forgotten. "Fine speech, pa!" he shouted.

His little sister came out of her room, walking on the toes of her long pajamas. "Brother? Brother, *ah-bah,* he's sick!" she said. She looked straight up to Johnny as she spoke and nodded. Johnny stepped past his sister and ran to the bathroom and opened the door. His mother was holding the man up to the sink with one hand and holding his head with the other. The man's mess spattered over her *cheongsam.* The room, the man, everything, was uglier because of his mother's misery in her bright *cheongsam. "Ah bah?"* Johnny said gently as if calling the man from sleep for dinner. They did not turn. He stepped up behind the woman. "I can do that, *ah-mah;* I'm a little stronger than you."

"Don't you touch him! You!" She spoke with her cheek against the man's back and her eyes closed. "He told me what you did, what you said, and you're killing him! If you want to leave, just go! Stop killing this man!"

"Not me, ma. He's been like this a long time. I've been helping him almost every night. He told me not to tell you."

"You think I don't know? I've seen you in here with him when I wanted to use the bathroom at night, and I've crept back to bed without saying anything because I know your father's pride. And you want to go and break it in a single night! First it's your telling everybody how good you are! Now go and murder your father.

"Ma, I'm sorry. He asked me, and I tried to make him understand. What do you want me to do, lie? I'll call a doctor."

"Get out; you said you're going to leave, so get out," the man said, lifting his head.

"I'll stay, ma, *ah-bah,* I'll stay."

"It's too late," his mother said. "I don’t want you here."

The time was wrong ... nobody's fault that his father was dying; perhaps, if his father was not dying out of his mouth, Johnny could have argued and left or stayed, but now, he could not stay without hate. "Ma, I said I'm calling a doctor...."

After the doctor came, Johnny went to his room and cried loudly, pulling his sheets from his bed and kicking at the wall until his foot became numb. He shouted his hate for his father and ignorant mother into his pillow until his face was wet with tears. His sister stood next to his bed

and watched him, patting his ankle and saying over and over, "Brother, don't cry, brother ..."

Johnny sat up and held the small girl against him. "Be a good girl," he said. "You're going to have my big room now. I'm moving across the bay to school." He spoke very quietly to his sister against the sound of their father's spitting.

Sharon held his sister's elbow and marched behind Johnny and his mother. A band played in front of the coffin, and over the coffin was a large photograph of the dead man. Johnny had a miniature of the photograph in his wallet and would always carry it there. Without being told, he had dressed and was marching now beside his mother behind the coffin and the smell of sweet flowers. It was a parade of black coats and hats, and they all wore sunglasses against the sun; the sky was green, seen through the glasses, and the boys playing in Portsmouth Square had green shadows about them. A few people stopped on the street and watched.

I. Memorize the following words and word-combinations, write out the sentences with them from the text and translate. Use them in the situations from the text.

groundbreaking (adj.)	to glisten (v.)
sequel (n.)	silk-hided (adj.)
outspoken (adj.)	brittle (adj.)
coocoo (n.):	to pat (v.)
backtalk (n.)	to shrug off (v.)
alia ovah da woil	to coax (v.)
to numb (v.)	clumsy (adj.)
to twist (v.)	shaft (n.)
drool (n.)	reviewing stand (n.)
yoke (n.)	to lurch (v.)
slab'ry	to dangle (v.)
queue (n.)	to goad (v.)
to chill (v.)	to writhe (v.)
tile (n.)	to whine (v.)
to herd (v.)	alia ob da Chinee-'mellican on da celebrate ob dere liberate
cymbal (n.)	
to stagger (v.)	jade (n.)
alleyway (n.)	night- bleached (adj.)
to crouch (v.)	to shrug (v.)

greasy (adj.) to shrink (v.) to mimic (v.) to jerk (v.) to chant (v.) AH-BAH surge (n.) baggy (adj.): stumble (n.) genulimans respack to shove (v.) clump (n.) to cringe (v.) orb (n.) allabody say dere chillren're gonna leab Chinatong guttural (adj.) alia you fran's here, an' dey likee you stiffly	to sway (v.): incense (n.) squab (n.): grease (n.) to strangle (v.) grating (n.) tingle (v.) to cash in on (v.) fad (n.) to stick (v.) to pull s.th. off (v.): (infml.) in vogue (n.) nuts (interj.) spitoon (n.) to swagger (v.) to have it made (v.): (infml.) bored stiff to pucker (v.) to spatter (v.) numb (adj.)

II. Find some information about:

THE MANCHUS *PORTSMOUTH SQUARE* *CHEONGSAM* *GRANT AVENUE* *CHINEE BENABOLEN'*	*MARGARET MEAD* *CONFUCIUS* *PEARL S(YDENSTRICKER) BUCK* *FORTUNE COOKIE* *ACROSS THE BAY*

III. Prepare a literary translation of the passage on page 72 starting with the words "*Johnny knew what his father...*" and ending with the words "*... in front of him now*."

IV. Answer the following questions:

1: Find out what makes Johnny's father so proud of Chinatown and what makes Johnny feel so unhappy in his childhood environment. Then discuss why the conflict between father and son is more than just a variation of the usual generational conflict.

2: How effective is the dialect which is used to characterize certain speakers? Does it make them sound more authentic or just funny?

3: How are women depicted in the story, and what are Johnny's reasons for "enjoy[ing]" Sharon's company?

4: Collect some relevant background information about San Francisco's Chinatown, and discuss the general atmosphere of the setting of the story.

5: Define the narrative perspective of the story, and investigate whether Johnny's point of view can be understood as the outcome of growing up between a "here, in Chinatown" and an "out there" in the 'white' world as the realms of two conflicting cultures.

6: Why is it that Johnny can say that "there's no such thing as a real Chinaman in all of America? That all we are are American Indians cashing in on a fad”?

7: The short coda to the story informs the reader that Johnny "would always carry" a photograph of his dead father in his wallet. Does this mean that the son is proud of his father in spite of their fight, and what are the metaphorical implications of this statement with regard to the relationship between Johnny’s future and his past?

8: What figures of speech does the author use in this short story?

SIMON J. ORTIZ

Simon J. Ortiz was born in 1941 in Albuquerque, New Mexico, but spent his childhood in the Acoma Pueblo community, where his father, a woodcarver, served as a clan elder charged with keeping the religious knowledge and customs of the Acoma people. Ortiz attended the Bureau of Indian Affairs day school at McCarty's through grade six, and was then enrolled in St. Catherine's Indian School, a Catholic boarding school in Santa Fe. After high school he worked for a year in the uranium industry near Grants and then went to college to study chemistry. But he soon quit and enlisted in the Army. Afterwards he attended the University of New Mexico and the famous Writers' School at the University of Iowa. Meanwhile, he has established his reputation as a leading Native American writer, has taught Native American literature and creative writing at San Diego State University, Navajo Community College, the University of New Mexico, and other schools, and has spent some time in the Veterans' Administration hospital in Ft. Lyons, Colorado, where he underwent treatment for alcoholism, an illness which, in his own words, "has taken a terrific and painful toll" on his life. His work includes several volumes of poetry, which range from Naked in the Wind *(1971),* Going for the Rain *(1976) and* A Good Journey *(1977) to*From Sand Creek: Rising in This Heart Which Is Our America *(1981),* Woven Stone *(1992) and* After and Before the Lightning *(1994), and three short-fiction collections entitled* Howbah Indians *(1978),* Fightin': New and Collected Short Stories *(1983) and* Men on the Moon: Collected Short Stories *(1999). He has also written several volumes of children's literature and a number of important non-ftctional texts such as* Speaking for the Generations: Native Writers on Writing *(1998). And he has edited a representative collection of short stories by Native American writers,* Earth Power Coming: Short Fiction in Native American Literature *(1983), as well as, together with Rudolfo Anaya, a collection of literature in commemoration of the Pueblo Revolt tricentennial, entitled* Ceremony of Brotherhood, 1680 -1980 *(1981).*

His story "Kaiser and the War" appeared first in the New Mexico Quarterly *in 1969.*

Kaiser and the War

Kaiser got out of the state pen when I was in the fourth grade. I don't know why people called him Kaiser. Some called him Hitler too, since he

was Kaiser, but I don't think he cared at all what they called him. He was probably just glad to get out of the state pen.

Kaiser got into the state pen because he didn't go into the army. That's what my father said anyway, and because he was a crazy nut, according to some people, which was probably why he didn't want to go into the army in the first place, which was what my father said also.

The army wanted him anyway, or maybe they didn't know he was crazy or supposed to be. They came for him out at home on the reservation, and he said he wasn't going to go because he didn't speak good English. Kaiser didn't go to school more than just the first or second grade. He said what he said in Indian and his sister said it in English for him. The army men, somebody from the county draft board, said they'd teach him English, don't worry about it, and how to read and write and give him clothes and money when he got out of the army so that he could start regular as any American. Just like anybody else, and they threw in stuff about how it would be good for our tribe and the people of the U.S.A.

Well, Kaiser, who didn't understand that much English anyway, listened quietly to his sister telling him what the army draft-board men were saying. He didn't ask any questions, just once in a while said, "Yes," like he'd been taught to say in the first grade. Maybe some of the interpretation was lost the way his sister was doing it, or maybe he went nuts like some people said he did once in a while because the next thing he did was to bust out the door and start running for Black Mesa.

The draft-board men didn't say anything at first, and then they got pretty mad. Kaiser's sister cried because she didn't want Kaiser to go into the army, but she didn't want him running out just like that either. She had gone to the Indian school in Albuquerque, and she had learned that stuff about patriotism, duty, honor - even if you were said to be crazy.

At about that time, their grandfather, Faustin, cussed in Indian at the draft-board men. Nobody had noticed when he came into the house, but there he was, fierce-looking as hell as usual,although he wasn't fierce at all. Then he got mad at his granddaughter and the men, asked what they were doing in his house, making the women cry and not even sitting down like friendly people did. Old Faustin and the army confronted each other. The army men were confused and getting more and more nervous. The old man told the girl to go out of the room, and he'd talk to the army himself, although he didn't speak a word of English except "goddammey," which didn't sound too much like English but he threw it in once in a while anyway.

Those army men tried to get the girl to come back, but the old man wouldn't let her. He told her to get to grinding corn or something useful. They tried sign language, and when Faustin figured out what they were waving their hands around for, he laughed out loud. He wouldn't even take the cigarettes offered him, so the army men didn't say anything more. The last thing they did, though, was give the old man a paper, but they didn't explain what it was for. They probably hoped it would get read somehow.

Well, after they left, the paper did get read by the girl, and she told Faustin what it was about. The law was going to come and take Kaiser to jail because he wouldn't go into the army by himself. Grandfather Faustin sat down and talked quietly to himself for a while and then he got up to look for Kaiser.

Kaiser was on his way home by then, and his grandfather told him what was going to happen. They sat down by the side of the road and started to make plans. Kaiser would go hide up on Black Mesa and maybe go all the way to Brushy Mountain if the law really came to poking around seriously. Faustin would take him food and tell him the news once in a while.

Everybody in the village knew what was going on pretty soon. Some approved, and some didn't. Some thought it was pretty funny. My father, who couldn't go in the army even if he wanted to because there were too many of us kids, laughed about it for days. The people who approved of it and thought it funny were the ones who knew Kaiser was crazy and that the army must be even crazier. The ones who disapproved were mostly those who were scared of him. A lot of them were the parents or brother of girls who they must have suspected of liking Kaiser. Kaiser was pretty good-looking and funny in the way he talked for a crazy guy. And he was a hard worker. He worked every dayout in the fields or up at the sheep camp for his parents while 80 they were alive and for his sister and nephew and grandfather.

These people, who were scared of him and said he should have gone into the army perhaps it'll do him good, didn't want him messing around their daughters or sisters, which they said he did from time to time. Mostly these people were scared he would do 85 *something,* and there was one too many nuts around in the village anyway, they said.

My old man didn't care though. He was buddies with Kaiser. When there was a corn dance up at the community hall they would have a whole lot of fun singing and laughing and joking, 90 and once in a while when someone brought around a bottle or two they would really get going and the officers of the tribe would have to warn them to behave themselves.

Kaiser was O.K. though. He came around home quite a lot. His own kinfolks didn't care for him too much because he was 95 crazy, and they didn't go out of their way to invite him to eat or spend the night when he dropped by their homes and it happened to get dark before he left. My mother didn't mind him around. When she served him something to eat, she didn't act like he was nuts, or supposed to be; she just served him and fussed loo over him like he was a kid, which Kaiser acted like a lot of the time. I guess she didn't figure a guy who acted like a kid was crazy.

Right after we finished eating, if it happened to be supper, my own grandfather, who was a medicine man, would talk to him 105 and to all of us kids who were usually paying only half attention. He would tell us advice, about how the world was, how each person, everything, was important. And then he would tell us stories about the olden times. Legends mostly, about the *katzina,* Spider Woman, where our *hano,* people came from. Some of the stories 110 were funny, some sad, and some pretty boring. Kaiser would sit there, not saying anything except *"Eheh,"* which is what you're supposed to say once in a while to show that you're listening to the olden times.

After half of us kids were asleep, Grandfather would quit talking, only Kaiser wouldn't want him to quit and he'd ask for more, but Grandfather wouldn't tell any more. What Kaiser would do was start telling himself about the olden times. He'd lie on the floor in the dark, or sometimes up on the roof which was wherehe'd sleep in the summer, talking. And sometimes he'd sing, which is also part of the old times. I would drift off to sleep just listening to him.

Well, he didn't come around home after he went up on Black Mesa. He just went up there and stayed there. The law, which was the County Sheriff, an officer, and the Indian Agent from the Indian Affairs office in Albuquerque, came out to get him, but nobody would tell them where he was. The law had a general idea where he was, but that didn't get them very far because they didn’t know the country around Black Mesa. It's rougher than hell up there, just a couple of sheep camps in a lot of country.

The Indian Agent had written a letter to the officers of the tribe that they would come up for Kaiser on a certain day. There were a lot of people waiting for them when they drove up to the community meeting hall. The County Sheriff had a bulging belly and he had a six-shooter strapped to his hip. When the men standing outside the community hall saw him step out of the government car, they made jokes. Just like the Lone Ranger, someone said. The law didn't know what they were laughing about, and they said, Hello, and paid no attention to what they couldn't understand.

Faustin was among them. But he was silent and he smoked a roll-your-own. The Agent stopped before him, and Faustin took a slow drag on his roll-your-own but didn't look at the man.

"Faustin, my old friend," the Agent said. "How are you?"

The old man didn't say anything. He let the tobacco smoke out slowly and looked straight ahead. Someone in the crowd told Faustin what the Agent had said, but the old man didn't say anything at all.

The law thought he was praying or that he was a wise man contemplating his answer, the way he was so solemn-like, so they didn't press him. What Faustin was doing was ignoring the law. He didn't want them to talk with him. He turned to a man at his side.

"Tell this man I do not want to talk. I can't understand what they're saying in American anyway. And I don't want anyone to tell me what they say. I'm not interested." He looked at the government then, and he dismissed their presence with his indignation.

"The old man isn't gonna talk to you." someone said.

The Agent and Sheriff Big Belly glared at the man. "Who's in charge around here?" the Sheriff said.

The Indians laughed. They joked by calling each other big belly. The Governor of the tribe and two chiefs came soon. They greeted the law, and then they went into the meeting hall to confer about Kaiser.

"Well, have you brought Kaiser?" the Indian Agent asked, although he saw that they hadn't and knew that they wouldn't.

"No," the Governor said. And someone translated for him. "He will not come."

"Well, why don't you bring him? If he doesn't want to come, why don't you bring him. A bunch of you can bring him," the Agent said. He was becoming irritated.

The Governor, chiefs, and men talked to each other. One old man held the floor a while, until others got tired of him telling about the old times and how it was and how the Americans had said a certain thing and did another and so forth. Someone said, "We can bring him. Kaiser should come by himself anyway. Let's go get him." He was a man who didn't like Kaiser. He looked around carefully when he got through speaking and sat down.

"Tell the Americans that is not the way," one of the chiefs said. "If our son wants to meet these men he will come." And the law was answered with the translation.

'Til be a son-of-a-bitch," the Sheriff said, and the Indians laughed quietly. He glared at them and they stopped. "Let's go get him ourselves," he continued.

The man who had been interpreting said, "He is crazy."

"Who's crazy?" the Sheriff yelled, like he was refuting an accusation. "I think you're all crazy."

"Kaiser, I think he is crazy," the interpreter said like he was ashamed of saying so. He stepped back, embarrassed.

Faustin then came to the front. Although he said he didn't want to talk with the law, he shouted. "Go get Kaiser yourself. If he's crazy, I hope he kills you. Go get him."

"O.K.," the Agent said when the interpreter finished. "We'll go get him ourselves. Where is he?" The Agent knew no one would tell him, but he asked it anyway.

With that, the Indians assumed the business that the law came to do was over, and that the law had resolved what it came to do in the first place. The Indians began to leave.

"Wait," the Agent said. "We need someone to go with us. He's up on Black Mesa, but we need someone to show us where."

The men kept on leaving. "We'll pay you. The government will pay you to go with us. You're deputized," the Agent said. "Stop them, Sheriff," he said to the County Sheriff, and the Sheriff yelled, "Stop, come back here," and put a hand to his six-shooter. When he yelled, some of the Indians looked at him to laugh. He sure looked funny and talked funny. But some of them came back. "All right, you're deputies, you'll get paid," the Sheriff said. Some of them knew what that meant, others weren't too sure. Some of them decided they'd come along for the fun of it.

The law and the Indians piled into the government car and a pickup truck which belonged to one of the deputies who was assured that he would get paid more than the others.

Black Mesa is fifteen miles back on the reservation. There are dirt roads up to it, but they aren't very good; nobody uses them except sheepherders and hunters in the fall. Kaiser knew what he was doing when he went up there, and he probably saw them when they were coming. But it wouldn't have made any difference, because when the law and the deputies came up to the foot of the mesa they still weren't getting anywhere. The deputies, who were still Indians, wouldn't tell or didn't really know where Kaiser was at the moment. So they sat for a couple of hours at the foot of the mesa, debating what should be done. The law tried to get the deputies to talk. The Sheriff was boiling mad by this time,

getting madder too, and he was for *persuading* one of the deputies into telling where Kaiser was exactly. But he reasoned the deputy wouldn't talk, being that he was Indian too, and so he shut up for a while. He had figured out why the Indians laughed so frequently even though it was not as loud as before they were deputized.

Finally, they decided to walk up Black Mesa. It's rough going, and when they didn't know which was the best way to go up they found it was even rougher. The real law dropped back one by one to rest on a rock or under a pinon tree until only the deputies were left. They watched the officer from the Indian Affairs office sitting on a fallen log some yards back. He was the last one to keep up so far, and he was unlacing his shoes. The deputies waited patiently for him to start again and for the others to catch up.

"It's sure hot," one of the deputies said.

Yes, maybe it'll rain soon," another said.

"No, it rained for the last time last month. Maybe next year"

"Snow then," another said.

They watched the Sheriff and the Indian Agent walking toward them half a mile back. One of them limped.

"Maybe the Americans need a rest," someone said. "We walked a long ways."

"Yes, they might be tired," another said. "I'll go tell that one that we're going to stop to rest," he said, and walked back to the law sitting on the log. "We gonna stop to rest," he told the law. The law didn't say anything as he massaged his feet. And the deputy walked away to join the others.

They didn't find Kaiser that day or the next day. The deputies said they could walk all over the mesa without finding him for all eternity, but they wouldn't find him. They didn't mind walking, they said. As long as they got paid for their time. Their crops were already in, and they'd just hire someone to haul winter wood for them now that they had the money. But they refused to talk. The ones who wanted to tell where Kaiser was, if they knew, didn't say so out loud, but they didn't tell anyway so it didn't make any difference. They were too persuaded by the newly found prosperity of employment.

The Sheriff, exhausted by the middle of the second day of walking the mesa, began to sound like he was for going back to Albuquerque. Maybe Kaiser'd come in by himself; he didn't see any sense in looking for some Indian anyway just to get him into the army. Besides, he'd heard the Indian was crazy. When the Sheriff had first learned the Indian's name was

Kaiser he couldn't believe it, but he was assured that wasn't his real name, just something he was called because he was crazy. But the Sheriff didn't feel any better or less tired, and he was getting jumpy about the crazy part.

At the end of the second day, the law decided to leave. Maybe we'll come back, they said. We'll have to talk this over with the Indian Affairs officials. Maybe it'll be all right if that Indian doesn't have to be in the army after all. And they left. The Sheriff, his six-shooter off his hip now, was pretty tired out, and he didn't say anything.

The officials for the Indian Affairs didn't give up though. They sent back some more men. The County Sheriff decided it wasn'tworth it; besides, he had a whole county to take care of. And the Indians were deputized again. More of them volunteered this time; some had to be turned away. They had figured out how to work it; they wouldn't have to tell, if they knew, where Kaiser was. All they would have to do was walk and say from time to time, "Maybe he's over there by that canyon. Used to be there was some good hiding places back when the Apache and Navajo were raising hell." And some would go over there and some in the other direction, investigating good hiding places. But after camping around Black Mesa for a week this time, the Indian Affairs gave up. They went by Faustin's house the day they left for Albuquerque and left a message: the government would wait, and when Kaiser least expected it, they would get him and he would have to go to jail.

Kaiser decided to volunteer for the army. He had decided to after he had watched the law and the deputies walk all over the mesa. Grandfather Faustin had come to visit him up at one of the sheep camps, and the old man gave him all the news at home, and then he told Kaiser the message the government had left.

"O.K.," Kaiser said. And he was silent for a while and nodded his head slowly like his grandfather did. "I'll join the army."

"No," his grandfather said. "I don't want you to. I will not allow you."

"Grandfather, I do not have to mind you. If you were my grandfather or uncle on my mother's side, I would listen to you and probably obey you, but you are not, and so I will not obey you."

"You are really crazy then," Grandfather Faustin said. "If that's what you want to do, go ahead." He was angry and he was sad, and he got up and put his hand on his grandson's shoulder and blessed him in the people's way. After that the old man left. It was in the evening when he left the sheep camp, and he walked for a long time away from Black Mesa before he started to sing.

The next day, Kaiser showed up at home. He ate with us, and after we ate we sat in the living room with my grandfather.

"So you've decided to go into the Americans' army," my grandfather said. None of us kids, nor even my parents, had known he was going, but my grandfather had known all along. He probably knew as soon as Kaiser had walked into the house. Maybe even before that.

My grandfather blessed him then, just like Faustin had done, and he talked to him of how a man should behave and what he should expect. Just general things, and Grandfather turned sternly toward us kids, who were playing around as usual. My father and mother talked with him too, and when they were through, my grandfather put corn meal in Kaiser's hand for him to pray with. Our parents told us kids to tell Kaiser goodbye and good luck, and after we did he left.

The next thing we heard was that Kaiser was in the state pen.

Later on, some people went to visit him up at the state pen. He was O.K. and getting fat, they said, and he was getting on O.K. with everybody, the warden told them. And when someone had asked Kaiser, if he was O.K., he said he was fine and he guessed he would be American pretty soon, being that he was around them so much. The people left Kaiser some home-baked bread and dried meat and came home after being assured by the warden that he'd get out pretty soon, maybe right after the war. Kaiser was a model inmate. When the visitors got home to the reservation, they went and told Faustin his grandson was O.K., getting fat and happy as any American. Old Faustin didn't have anything to say about that.

Well, the war was over after a while. Faustin died sometime near the end of it. Nobody had heard him mention Kaiser at all. Kaiser's sister and nephew were the only ones left at their home. Sometimes someone would ask about Kaiser, and his sister or nephew would say, "Oh, he's fine. He'll be home pretty soon. Right after the war." But after the war was over, they just said he was fine.

My father and a couple of other guys went down to the Indian Affairs office to see what they could find out about Kaiser. They were told that Kaiser was going to stay in the pen longer now because he had tried to kill somebody. Well, he just went crazy one day, and he made a mistake, so he'll just have to stay in for a couple of more years or so, the Indian Affairs said. That was the first anybody heard of Kaiser trying to kill somebody, and some people said why the hell didn't they put him in the army for that like they wanted to in the first place. So Kaiser remained in the pen long after the war was over, and most of the guys who had gone into the army from the tribe had come home. When he was due toget out, the Indian

Affairs sent a letter to the Governor, and several men from the village went to get him.

My father said Kaiser was quiet all the way home on the bus. Some of the guys tried to joke with him, but he just wouldn't laugh or say anything. When they got off the bus at the highway and began to walk home, the guys broke into song, but that didn't bring Kaiser around. He kept walking quiet and reserved in his gray suit. Someone joked that Kaiser probably owned the only suit in the whole tribe.

"You lucky so-and-so. You look like a rich man," the joker said. The others looked at him sharply and he quit joking, but Kaiser didn't say anything.

When they reached his home, his sister and nephew were very happy to see him. They cried and laughed at the same time, but Kaiser didn't do anything except sit at the kitchen table and look around. My father and the other guys gave him advice and welcomed him home again and left.

After that, Kaiser always wore his gray suit. Every time you saw him he was wearing it. Out in the fields or at the plaza watching the *katzina,* he wore the suit. He didn't talk much any more, my father said, and he didn't come around home any more either. The suit was getting all beat-up looking, but he just kept on wearing it so that some people began to say that he was showing off.

"That Kaiser," they said, "he's always wearing his suit, just like he was an American or something. Who does he think he is anyway?" And they'd snicker, looking at Kaiser with a sort of envy. Even when the suit was torn and soiled so that it hardly looked anything like a suit, Kaiser wore it. And some people said, "When he dies, Kaiser is going to be wearing his suit." And they said that like they wished they had gotten a suit like Kaiser's.

Well, Kaiser died, but without his gray suit. He died up at one of his distant relative's sheep camps one winter. When someone asked about the suit, they were told by Kaiser's sister that it was rolled up in some newspaper at their home. She said that Kaiser had told her, before he went up to the sheep camp, that she was to send it to the government. But, she said, she couldn't figure out what he meant, whether Kaiser had meant the law or somebody, maybe the state pen or the Indian Affairs.

The person who asked about the suit wondered about Kaiser's instructions. He couldn't figure out why Kaiser wanted to send a beat-up suit back. And then he figured, Well, maybe that's the 400 way it was when you either went into the, state pen or the army and became an American.

I. Memorize the following words and word-combinations, write out the sentences with them from the text and translate. Use them in the situations from the text.

clan elder (n.) to enlist (v.) commemoration (n.) tricentennial (n.) state pen (n.) draft board (n.) to go nuts: (infml.) to bust (v.): (infml.) to cuss (v.) to figure out (v.) the law to poke around (v.) to mess around (v.) to be buddies with (n.): (in infml. AE) community hall (n.) to get going (v.) kinfolks (n.pl.) to drop by (v.) to fuss over (v.) to drift off (v.) to bulge (v.) six-shooter (n.): (in AE) to strap (v.) roll-your-own (n.) drag (n.)	solemn to dismiss (v.) indignation (n.) to glare (v.) to confer about (v.) to hold the floor to refute (v.) to deputize (v.) to pile into (v.) pickup truck boiling (adv.) pinon tree (n.) to unlace (v.) to limp (v.) eternity (n.) to haul (v.) jumpy (adj.) to turn away (v.): to raise hell sternly (adv.) warden (n.) inmate (n.) due (adj.) to bring around (v.) so-and-so beat-up (adj.) to snicker (v.) to soil (v.)

II. Find some information about:

ACOMA PUEBLO *BLACK MESA* *ALBUQUERQUE*	*SPIDER WOMAN* *INDIAN AGENT* *INDIAN AFFAIRS OFFICE*

BRUSHY MOUNTAIN *CORN DANCE* *KATZINA*	*LONE RANGER* *APACHE*

III. Prepare a literary translation of the passage on page 87 starting with the words "*Black Mesa is fifteen miles back on the reservation***." and ending with the words "***... before they were deputized***."**

IV. Answer the following questions:

1: Define the narrative perspective of the story, and discuss the effect of this (retrospective and somehow communal) point of view with regard to the overall effect of the story.

2: Collect all the relative details and make up a character portrait of Kaiser. Then consider the description of him as "a crazy nut" and "a crazy guy" and discuss who, in your view, are the really 'crazy' people.

3: Analyze the relationship between the white power structure (the army, the Indian Agent, the County Sheriff) and the Native Americans.

4: Consider whether the power struggle between the whites and the 'Indians' can be understood as a variation of the old folk motif of the underdog outwitting the overlord.

5: Examine the comparison between the County Sheriff and "the Lone Ranger", and find out about its hidden implications.

6: What is the meaning of the 'gray suit? Why does Kaiser wear it all the time after his release from prison, and why does he order his sister "to send it to the government" after his death?

7: Collect all references to the traditional culture of the 'Indian' community and discuss its state of 'assimilation.'

8: Obviously, the story is very funny in parts. Try to describe the type of humor which Ortiz creates and investigate the means he uses in order to make the reader smile.

9: What figures of speech does the author use in this short story?

LOUISE ERDRICH

Karen Louise Erdrich was born in 1954 in Little Falls, Minnesota. She is of German-American and Chippewa descent and a member of the Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa. She grew up in North Dakota, received her B.A. from Dartmouth College in 1976 and her M.A. from Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore, in 1977. Then she worked as *Visiting Poetry Teacher for the North Dakota State Arts Council and as creative-writing teacher at Johns Hopkins University. In 1981 she married the writer Michael Anthony Dorris, and they lived with their six children in Cornish Flat, New Hampshire, until in April 1997 Dorris's suicide shocked the literary world. After a volume of poetry,* Jacklight *(1984), Erdrich scored a major success with her first novel,* Love Medicine *(1984), which won both the Book Critics Circle Award for Fiction and the* Los Angeles Times *award for best novel of the year and was translated into about twenty foreign languages. Her next novels,* The Beet Queen *(1986) and* Tracks *(1988) were equally successful. In 1991 she collaborated with her husband on a bestselling novel,* The Crown of Columbus. *She has also published numerous short stories, for which she has won such prestigious awards as the National Magazine Fiction Award, the Pushcart Prize or the First Prize O.Henry Award.*

In 1993, Erdrich published a new and expanded edition of Love Medicine, *and in 1995 she brought out* The Blue Jay's Dance, *a collection of nature essays, cultural notes, recipes, and insights about motherhood. In 1996 she published both* Grandmother Pigeon, *a short tale for children, and* Tales of Burning Love, *a novel which involves some characters from her Dakota tetralogy. Her most recent novel,* The Antelope Wife *(1998), which deals with the intersection of Anishinaabe and Etiro-American cultures with regard to temporal continuity, represents a thematic and stylistic return to her earlier works.*

Her story "The Bingo Van," which is a moving exploration of the pains and promises of growing up in a world defined by culture conflict, appeared first on 19 February 1990 in The New Yorker *and was later incorporated, in a slightly changed version, into her novel* The Bingo Palace *(1994), which completed the Dakota Quartet begun with* Love Medicine *and continued in* The Beet Queen *and* Tracks.

The Bingo Van

WHEN I WALKED into bingo that night in early spring, I didn't have a girlfriend, a home or an apartment, a piece of land or a car, and I wasn't tattooed yet, either. Now look at me. I'm walking the reservation road in borrowed pants, toward a place that isn't mine, downhearted because I'm left by a woman. All I have of my temporary riches is this black pony running across the back of my hand - a tattoo I had Lewey's Tattoo Den put there on account of a waking dream. I'm still not paid up. I still owe for the little horse. But if Lewey wants to repossess it, then he'll have to catch me first.

Here's how it is on coming to the bingo hall. It's a long, low quonset barn. Inside, there used to be a pall of smoke, but now the smoke-eater fans in the ceiling take care of that. So upon first entering you can pick out your friends. On that night in early spring, I saw Eber, Clay, and Robert Morrissey sitting about halfway up toward the curtained stage with their grandmother Lulu. By another marriage, she was my grandma, too. She had five tickets spread in front of her. The boys each had only one. When the numbers rolled, she picked up a dabber in each hand. It was the Earlybird game, a one-hundred-dollar prize, and nobody had got too wound up yet or serious.

"Lipsha, go get us a Coke," said Lulu when someone else bin- goed. "Yourself, too."

I went to the concession with Eber, who had finished high school with me. Clay and Robert were younger. We got our soft drinks and came back, set them down, pulled up to the table, and laid out a new set of tickets before us. Like I say, my grandmother, she played five at once, which is how you get the big money. In the long run, much more than breaking even, she was one of those rare Chippewas who actually profited by bingo. But, then again, it was her only way of gambling. No pull-tabs, no blackjack, no slot machines for her. She never went into the back room. She banked all the cash she won. I thought I should learn from Lulu Lamartine, whose other grandsons had stiff new boots while mine were worn down into the soft shape of moccasins. I watched her.

Concentration. Before the numbers even started, she set her mouth, snapped her purse shut. She shook her dabbers so that thefoam-rubber tips were thoroughly inked. She looked at the time on her watch. The Coke, she took a drink of that, but no more than a sip. She was a narrow-eyed woman with a round jaw, curled hair. Her eyeglasses, blue plastic, hung

from her neck by a gleaming chain. She raised the ovals to her eyes as the caller took the stand. She held her dabbers poised while he plucked the ball from the chute. He read it out: B-7. Then she was absorbed, scanning, dabbing, into the game. She didn't mutter. She had no lucky piece to touch in front of her. And afterward, even if she lost a blackout game by one square, she never sighed or complained.

All business, that was Lulu. And all business paid.

I think I would have been all business too, like her, if it hadn't been for what lay behind the stage curtain to be revealed. I didn't know it, but that was what would change the order of my life. Because of the van, I'd have to get stupid first, then wise. You see, I had been floundering since high school, trying to catch my bearings in the world. It all lay ahead of me, spread out in the sun like a giveaway at a naming ceremony. Only thing was, I could not choose a prize. Something always stopped my hand before it reached.

"Lipsha Morrissey, you got to go for a vocation." That's what 1 told myself, in a state of nervous worry. I was getting by on almost no money, relying on my job as night watchman in a bar. That earned me a place to sleep, twenty dollars per week, and as much beef jerky, Beer Nuts, and spicy sausage sticks as I could eat.

I was now composed of these three false substances. No food in a bar has a shelf life of less than forty months. If you are what you eat, I would live forever, I thought.

And then they pulled aside the curtain, and I saw that I wouldn't live as long as I had coming unless I owned that van. It had every option you could believe - blue plush on the steering wheel, diamond side windows, and complete carpeted interior. The seats were easy chairs, with little headphones, and it was wired all through the walls. You could walk up close during intermission and touch the sides. The paint was cream, except for the design picked out in blue, which was a Sioux Drum border. In the back there was a small refrigerator and a carpeted platform for sleeping. It was a home, a portable den with front-wheel drive. I could see myself in it right off. I could see I *was* it.

On TV, they say you are what you drive. Let's put it this way: I wanted to be that van.

Now, I know that what I felt was a symptom of the national decline. You'll scoff at me, scorn me, say,’What right does that waste Lipsha Morrissey, who makes his living guarding beer, have to comment outside of his own tribal boundary? But I was able to investigate the larger picture,

thanks to Grandma Lulu, from whom I learned to be one-minded in my pursuit of a material object.

I went night after night to the bingo. Every hour I spent there, I grew more certain I was close. There was only one game per night at which the van was offered, a blackout game, where you had to fill every slot. The more tickets you bought, the more your chances increased. I tried to play five tickets, like Grandma Lulu did, but they cost five bucks each. To get my van, I had to shake hands with greed. I got unprincipled.

You see, my one talent in this life is a healing power I get passed down through the Pillager branch of my background. It's in my hands. I snap my fingers together so hard they almost spark. Then I blank out my mind, and I put on the touch. I had a reputation up to then for curing sore joints and veins. I could relieve ailments caused in an old person by a half century of grinding stoop-over work. I had a power in myself that flowed out, resistless. I had a richness in my dreams and waking thoughts. But I never realized I would have to give up my healing source once I started charging for my service.

You know how it is about charging. People suddenly think you are worth something. Used to be, I'd go anyplace I was called, take any price or take nothing. Once I let it get around that I charged a twenty for my basic work, however, the phone at the bar rang off the hook.

"Where's that medicine boy?" they asked. "Where's Lipsha?"

I took their money. And it's not like beneath the pressure of a twenty I didn't try, for I did try, even harder than before. I skipped my palms together, snapped my fingers, positioned them where the touch inhabiting them should flow. But when it came to blanking out my mind I consistently failed. For each time, in the center of the cloud that came down into my brain, the van was now parked, in perfect focus.

I suppose I longed for it like for a woman, except I wasn't that bad yet, and, anyway, then I did meet a woman, which set me back in my quest.

Instead of going for the van with everything, saving up to buy as many cards as I could play when they got to the special game, for a few nights I went short term, for variety, with U-Pickem cards, the kind where you have to choose the numbers for yourself.

First off, I wrote in the shoe and pants sizes of those Morrissey boys. No luck. So much for them. Next I took my birth date and a double of it - still no go. I wrote down the numbers of my grandma's address and her anniversary dates. Nothing. Then one night I realized if my U-Pickem was

going to win it would be more like *revealed,* rather than a forced kind of thing. So I shut my eyes, right there in the middle of the long bingo table, and I let my mind blank out, white and fizzing like the screen of a television, until something formed. The van, as always. But on its tail this time a license plate was officially fixed and numbered. I used that number, wrote it down in the boxes, and then I bingoed.

***

I got two hundred dollars from that imaginary license. The money was in my pocket when I left. The next morning, I had fifty cents. But it's not like you think with Serena, and I'll explain that. She didn't want something from me; she didn't care if I had money, and she didn't ask for it. She was seventeen and had a two-year-old boy. That tells you about her life. Her last name was American Horse, an old Sioux name she was proud of even though it was strange to Chippewa country. At her older sister's house Serena's little boy blended in with the younger children, and Serena herself was just one of the teenagers. She was still in high school, a year behind the year she should have been in, and she had ambitions. Her idea was to go into business and sell her clothing designs, of which she had six books.

I don't know how I got a girl so decided in her future to go with me, even that night. Except I told myself, "Lipsha, you're a nice-looking guy. You're a winner." And for the moment I was. I went right up to her at the Coin-Op and said, "Care to dance?", which was a joke - there wasn't anyplace to dance. Yet she likedme. We had a sandwich and then she wanted to take a drive, so we tagged along with some others in the back of their car. They went straight south, toward Hoopdance, off the reservation, where action was taking place.

"Lipsha," she whispered on the way, "I always liked you from a distance."

"Serena," I said, "I liked you from a distance, too."

So then we moved close together on the car seat. My hand was on my knee, and I thought of a couple of different ways I could gesture, casually pretend to let it fall on hers, how maybe if I talked fast she wouldn't notice, in the heat of the moment, her hand in my hand, us holding hands, our lips drawn to one another. But then I decided to boldly take courage, to take her hand as, at the same time, I looked into her eyes. I did this. In the front, the others talked among themselves. Yet we just sat there. After a while she said, "You want to kiss me?"

But I answered, not planning how the words would come out, "Our first kiss has to be a magic moment only we can share."

Her eyes went wide as a deer's, and her big smile bloomed. Her skin was dark, her long hair a burnt-brown color. She wore no jewelry, no rings, just the clothing she had sewed from her designs - a suit jacket and pair of pants that were the tan of eggshells, with symbols picked out in blue thread on the borders, the cuffs, and the hem. I took her in, admiring, for some time on that drive before I realized that the reason Serena's cute outfit nagged me so was on account of she was dressed up to match my bingo van. I could hardly tell her this surprising coincidence, but it did convince me that the time was perfect, the time was right.

They let us off at a certain place just over the reservation line, and we got out, hardly breaking our gaze from each other. You want to know what this place was? I'll tell you. O.K. So it was a motel - a long, low double row of rooms, painted white on the outside, with brown wooden doors. There was a beautiful sign set up, featuring a lake with some fish jumping out of it. We stood beside the painted water.

"I haven't done this since Jason," she said. That was the name of her two-year-old son. "I have to call up my sister first."

There was a phone near the office, inside a plastic shell. She went over there.

"He's sleeping," she said when she returned.

I went into the office, stood before the metal counter. There was a number floating in my mind.

"Is Room 22 available?" I asked.

I suppose, looking at me, I look too much like an Indian. The owner, a big sandy-haired woman in a shiny black blouse, noticed that. You get so you see it cross their face the way wind blows a disturbance on water. There was a period of contemplation, a struggle in this woman's thinking. Behind her the television whispered. Her mouth opened, but I spoke first.

"This here is Andrew Jackson," I said, tenderizing the bill. "Known for setting up our Southern relatives for the Trail of Tears. And to keep him company we got two Mr. Hamiltons."

The woman turned shrewd, and took the bills.

"No parties." She held out a key attached to a square of orange plastic.

"Just sex." I could not help but reassure her. But that was talk, big talk from a person with hardly any experience and nothing that resembled a birth-control device. I wasn't one of those so-called studs who couldn't open up their wallets without dropping a foil-wrapped square. No, Lipsha Morrissey was deep at

heart a romantic, a wild-minded kind of guy, I told myself, a fool with no letup. I went out to Serena, and took her hand in mine. I was shaking inside but my voice was steady and my hands were cool.

"Let's go in." I showed the key. "Let's not think about tomorrow."

"That's how I got Jason," said Serena.

So we stood there.

"I'll go in," she said at last. "Down two blocks, there's an all-night gas station. They sell 'em."

I went. O.K. Life in this day and age might be less romantic in some ways. It seemed so in the hard twenty-four-hour fluorescent light, as I tried to choose what I needed from the rack by the counter. It was quite a display; there were dazzling choices - textures, shapes. I saw I was being watched, and I suddenly grabbed what was near my hand - two boxes, economy size.

"Heavy date?"

I suppose the guy on the late shift was bored, could not resist. His T-shirt said "Big Sky Country." He was grinning in an ugly way. So I answered.

"Not really. Fixing up a bunch of my white buddies from Montana. Trying to keep down the sheep population."

His grin stayed fixed. Maybe he had heard a lot of jokes about Montana blondes, or maybe he was from somewhere else. I looked at the boxes in my hand, put one back.

"Let me help you out," the guy said. "What you need is a bag of these."

He took down a plastic sack of little oblong party balloons, Day-Glo pinks and oranges and blues.

"Too bright," I said. "My girlfriend's a designer. She hates

clashing colors." I was breathing hard suddenly, and so was he. Our eyes met and narrowed.

"What does she design?" he said. "Bedsheets?"

"What does yours design?" 1 said. "Wool sweaters?"

I put money between us. "For your information, my girl friend's not only beautiful but she and 1 are the same species."

"Take the money," I said. "Hand over my change and I'll be out of here. Don't make me do something I'd regret."

"I'd be real threatened." The guy turned from me, ringing up my sale. "I'd be shaking, except I know you Indian guys are chickenshit."

I took my package, took my change.

"Baaaaa," I said, and beat it out of there. It's strange how a bashful kind of person like me gets talkative in some of our less pleasant border-town situations.

I took a roundabout way back to Room 22 and tapped on the door. There was a little window right beside it. Serena peeked through, and let me in.

"Well," I said then, in that awkward interval, "guess we're set."

She took the bag from my hand and didn't say a word, just put it on the little table beside the bed. There were two chairs. Each of us took one. Then we sat down and turned on the television. The romance wasn't in us now for some reason, but there was something invisible that made me hopeful about the room.

It was just a small place, a modest kind of place, clean. You could smell the faint chemical of bug spray the moment you stepped inside. You could look at the television hung on the wall, or examine the picture of golden trees and a waterfall. You could take a shower for a long time in the cement shower stall, standing on your personal shower mat for safety. There was a little tin desk. You could sit down there and write a letter on a sheet of plain paper from the drawer. The lampshade was made of reeds, pressed and laced tight together. The spread on the double mattress was reddish, a rusty cotton material. There was an air-conditioner, with a fan we turned on.

"I don't know why we're here," I said at last. "I'm sorry."

Serena took a small brush from her purse.

"Comb my hair?"

I took the brush and sat on the bed, just behind her. I began at the ends, very careful, but there were hardly any tangles to begin with. Her hair was a quiet brown without variation. My hand followed the brush, smoothing after each stroke, until the fall of her hair was a hypnotizing silk. I could lift my hand away from her head and the hair would follow, electric to my touch, in soft strands that hung suspended until I returned to the brushing. She never moved, except to switch off the light and then the television. She sat down again in the total dark and said, "Please, keep on," so I did. The air got thick. Her hair got lighter, full of blue static, charged so that I was held in place by the attraction. A golden spark jumped on the carpet. Serena turned toward me. Her hair floated down around her at that moment like a tent of energy.

Well, the money part is not related to that. I gave it all to Serena, that's true. Her intention was to buy material and put together the creations

that she drew in her notebooks. It was fashion with a Chippewa flair, as she explained it, and sure to win prizes at the state home-ec. contest. She promised to pay me interest when she opened her own shop. The next day, after we had parted, after I had checked out the bar I was supposed to night-watch, I went off to the woods to sit and think. Not about the money, which was Serena's - and good luck to her - but about her and me.

She was two years younger than me, yet she had direction and a child, while I was aimless, lost in hyperspace, using up my talent, which was already fading from my hands. I wondered what our future could hold. One thing was sure: 1 never knew a man to support his family by playing bingo, and the medicine calls for Lipsha were getting fewer by the week, and fewer, as my touch failed to heal people, fled from me, and lay concealed.

I sat on ground where, years ago, my greats and my greatgreats, the Pillagers, had walked. The trees around me were the dense birch and oak of old woods. The lake drifted in, gray waves, white foam in a bobbing lace. Thin gulls lined themselves up on a sandbar. The sky went dark. I closed my eyes, and that is when the little black pony galloped into my mind. It sped across the choppy waves like a skipping stone, its mane a banner, its tail a flag, and vanished on the other side of the shore.

It was luck. Serena's animal. American Horse.

"This is the last night I'm going to try for the van," I told myself. I always kept three twenties stuffed inside the edging of my blanket in back of the bar. Once that stash was gone I'd make a real decision. I'd open the yellow pages at random, and where my finger pointed I would take that kind of job.

Of course, I never counted on winning the van.

I was playing for it on the shaded side of a blackout ticket, which is always hard to get. As usual, I sat with Lulu and her boys. Her vigilance helped me. She let me use her extra dabberand she sat and smoked a filter cigarette, observing the quiet frenzy that was taking place around her. Even though that van had sat on the stage for five months, even though nobody had yet won it and everyone said it was a scam, when it came to playing for it most people bought a couple of tickets. That night, I went all out and purchased eight.

A girl read out the numbers from the hopper. Her voice was dear and light on the microphone. I didn’t even notice what was happening - Lulu pointed out one place I had missed on the winning ticket. Then I had just two squares left to make a bingo and I suddenly sweated, I broke out into a chill, I went cold and hot at once. After all my pursuit, after all my plans, 1

was N-6 and G-60. I had narrowed myself, shrunk into the spaces on the ticket. Each time the girl read a number and it wasn't that 6 or 60 I sickened, recovered, forgot to breathe.

She must have read twenty numbers out before N-6. Then, right after that, G-60 rolled off her lips.

I screamed. I am ashamed to say how loud I yelled. That girl came over, got the manager, and then he checked out my numbers slow and careful while everyone hushed.

He didn't say a word. He checked them over twice. Then he pursed his lips together and wished he didn't have to say it.

"It's a bingo," he finally told the crowd.

Noise buzzed to the ceiling - talk of how close some others had come, green talk - and every eye was turned and cast on me, which was uncomfortable. I never was the center of looks before, not Lipsha, who everybody took for granted around here. Not all those looks were for the good, either. Some were plain envious and ready to believe the first bad thing a sour tongue could pin on me. It made sense in a way. Of all those who'd stalked that bingo van over the long months, I was now the only one who had not lost money on the hope.

***

O.K., so what kind of man does it make Lipsha Morrissey that the keys did not tarnish his hands one slight degree, and that he beat it out that very night in the van, completing only the basic paperwork? I didn't go after Serena, and I can't tell you why. Yet I was hardly ever happier. In that van, I rode high, but that's thething. Looking down on others, even if it's only from the seat of a van that a person never really earned, does something to the human mentality. It's hard to say. I changed. After just one evening riding the reservation roads, passing with a swish of my tires, I started smiling at the homemade hot rods, at the clunkers below me, at the old-lady cars nosing carefully up and down the gravel hills.

I started saying to myself that I should visit Serena, and a few nights later I finally did go over there. I pulled into her sister's driveway with a flourish I could not help, as the van slipped into a pothole and I roared the engine. For a moment, I sat in the dark, letting my headlamps blaze alongside the door until Serena's brother-in-law leaned out.

"Cut the lights!" he yelled. "We got a sick child."

I rolled down my window, and asked for Serena.

"It's her boy. She's in here with him." He waited. I did, too, in the dark. A dim light was on behind him and I saw some shadows, a small girl in those pajamas with the feet tacked on, someone pacing back and forth.

"You want to come in?" he called.

But here's the gist of it. I just said to tell Serena hi for me, and then I backed out of there, down the drive, and left her to fend for herself. I could have stayed there. I could have drawn my touch back from wherever it had gone to. I could have offered my van to take Jason to the I.H.S. I could have sat there in silence as a dog guards its mate, its own blood. I could have done something different from what I did, which was to hit the road for Hoopdance and look for a better time.

I cruised until I saw where the party house was located that night. I drove the van over the low curb, into the yard, and I parked there. I watched until I recognized a couple of cars and saw the outlines of Indians and mixed, so I knew that walking in would not involve me in what the newspapers term an episode. The door was white, stained and raked by a dog, with a tiny fanshaped window. I went through and stood inside. There was movement, a kind of low-key swirl of bright hair and dark hair tossing alongside each other. There were about as many Indians as there weren't. This party was what we call around here a Hairy Buffalo, and most people were grouped around a big brown plastic garbage can that served as the punch bowl for the allpurposestuff, which was anything that anyone brought, dumped in along with pink Hawaiian Punch. I grew up around a lot of the people, and others I knew by sight. Among those last, there was a young familiar-looking guy.

It bothered me. I recognized him, but I didn't know him. I hadn't been to school with him, or played him in any sport, because I did not play sports. I couldn't think where I'd seen him until later, when the heat went up and he took off his bomber jacket. Then "Big Sky Country" showed, plain letters on a bright-blue background.

I edged around the corner of the room, into the hall, and stood there to argue with myself. Would he recognize me, or was I just another face, a customer? He probably wasn't really from Montana, so he might not even have been insulted by our little conversation, or remember it anymore. I reasoned that he had probably picked up the shirt vacationing, though who would want to go across that border, over to where the world got meaner? I told myself that I should calm my nerves, go back into the room, have fun. What kept me from doing that was the sudden thought of Serena, of our night together and what I had bought and used.

Once I remembered, I was lost to the present moment. One part of me caught up with the other. I realized that I had left Serena to face her crisis, alone, while I took off in my brand-new van.

I have a hard time getting drunk. It's just the way I am. I start thinking and forget to fill the cup, or recall something I have got to do, and just end up walking from a party. I have put down a full can of beer before and walked out to weed my grandma's rhubarb patch, or work on a cousin's car. Now I was putting myself in Serena's place, feeling her feelings.

What would he want to do that to me for?

I heard her voice say this out loud, just behind me, where there was nothing but wall. I edged along until I came to a door, and then I went through, into a tiny bedroom full of coats, and so far nobody either making out or unconscious upon the floor. I sat on a pile of parkas and jean jackets in this little room, an alcove in the rising buzz of the party outside. I saw a phone, and I dialled Serena's number. Her sister answered.

"Thanks a lot," she said when I said it was me. "You woke up Jason."

"What's wrong with him?" I asked.

There was a silence, then Serena's voice got on the line. "I'm going to hang up.”

"Don't."

"He's crying. His ears hurt so bad he can't stand it."

"I'm coming over there."

"Forget it. Forget you."

She said the money I had loaned her would be in the mail. She reminded me it was a long time since the last time I had called. And then the phone went dead. I held the droning receiver in my hand, and tried to clear my mind. The only thing I saw in it, clear as usual, was the van. I decided this was a sign *for me to* get in behind the wheel. I should drive straight to Serena's house, put on the touch, help her son out. So I set my drink on the windowsill. Then I slipped out the door and I walked down the porch steps, only to find them waiting.

I guess he had recognized me after all, and I guess he was from Montana. He had friends, too. They stood around the van, and their heads were level with the roof, for they were tall.

"Let's go for a ride," said the one from the all-night gas pump.

He knocked on the window of my van with his knuckles. When I told him no thanks, he started karate-kicking the door. He wore black cowboy boots, pointy-toed, with hard-edged new heels. They left ugly dents every time he landed a blow.

"Thanks anyhow,” I repeated. "But the party's not over." I tried to get back into the house, but, like in a bad dream, the door was stuck, or locked. I hollered, pounded, kicked at the very marks that desperate dog

had left, but the music rose and nobody heard. So I ended up in the van. They acted very gracious. They urged me to drive. They were so polite that I tried to tell myself they weren't all that bad. And sure enough, after we had drove for a while, these Montana guys said they had chipped in together to buy me a present.

"What is it?" I asked. "Don't keep me in suspense."

"Keep driving," said the pump jockey.

"I don't really go for surprises," I said. "What's your name, anyhow?"

"Marty."

"I got a cousin named Marty," I said.

"Forget it."

The guys in the back exchanged a grumbling kind of laughter, a knowing set of groans. Marty grinned, turned toward me from the passenger seat.

"If you really want to know what we're going to give you, I'll tell. It's a map. A map of Montana."

Their laughter got wild and went on for too long.

"I always liked the state," I said in a serious voice.

"No shit," said Marty. "Then I hope you like sitting on it." He signalled where I should turn, and all of a sudden I realized that Lewey's lay ahead. Lewey ran his Tattoo Den from the basement of his house, kept his equipment set up and ready for the weekend.

"Whoa," I said. I stopped the van. "You can't tattoo a person against his will. It's illegal."

"Get your lawyer on it tomorrow." Marty leaned in dose for me to see his eyes. I put the van back in gear but just chugged along, desperately thinking. Lewey was a strange kind of guy, an old Dutch sailor who got beached here, about as far as you can get from salt water. I decided that I'd ask Marty, in a polite kind of way, to beat me up instead. If that failed, I would tell him that there were many states I would not mind so much - smaller, rounder ones.

"Are any of you guys from any other state?" I asked, anxious to trade.

"Kansas."

"South Dakota."

It wasn't that I really had a thing against those places, understand; it's just that the straight-edged shape is not a Chippewa preference. You look around you, and everything you see is round, everything in nature. There are no perfect boundaries, no borders. Only human-made things tend toward cubes and squares - the van, for instance. That was an example.

Suddenly I realized that I was driving a wheeled version of the state of North Dakota.

"Just beat me up, you guys. Let's get this over with. I'll stop."

But they laughed, and then we were at Lewey's.

The sign on his basement door said COME IN. I was shoved from behind and strapped together by five pairs of heavy, footballtoughened hands. I was the first to see Lewey, I think, the first to notice that he was not just a piece of all the trash and accumulated junk that washed through the concrete-floored cellar but a person, sitting still as any statue, in a corner, on a chair that creaked and sang when he rose and walked over.

He even looked like a statue - not the type you see in history books, I don't mean those, but the kind you see for sale as you drive along the highway. He was a Paul Bunyan, carved with a chain saw. He was rough-looking, finished in big strokes.

"Please," I said, "I don't want.. .”

Marty squeezed me around the throat and tousled up my hair, like friendly.

"He's just got cold feet. Now remember, Lewey, map of Montana. You know where. And put in a lot of detail."

I tried to scream.

"Like I was thinking," Marty went on, "of those maps we did in grade school showing products from each region. Cows' heads, oil wells, those little sheaves of wheat, and so on."

"Tie him up," said Lewey. His voice was thick, with a commanding formal accent. "Then leave."

They did. They took my pants and the keys to the van. I heard the engine roar and die away, and I rolled from side to side in my strict bindings. I felt Lewey's hand on my shoulder.

"Be still." His voice had changed, now that the others were gone, to a low sound that went with his appearance and did not seem at all unkind. I looked up at him. A broke-down God is who he looked like from my worm's-eye view. His beard was pure white, long and patchy, and his big eyes frozen blue. His head was half bald, shining underneath the brilliant fluorescent tubes in the ceiling. You never know where you're going to find your twin in the world, your double. I don't mean in terms of looks - I'm talking about mind-set. You never know where you're going to find the same thoughts in another brain, but when it happens you know it right off, just like the two of you were connected by a small electrical wire that suddenly glows red-hot and sparks. That's what happened when I met Lewey Koep.

"I don't have a pattern for Montana," he told me. He untied my ropes with a few quick jerks, sneering at the clumsiness of theknots. Then he sat in his desk chair again, and watched me get my bearings.

"I don't want anything tattooed on me, Mr. Koep," I said. "It's a kind of revenge plot."

He sat in silence, in a waiting quiet, hands folded and face composed. By now I knew I was safe, but I had nowhere to go, and so I sat down on a pile of magazines. He asked, "What revenge?" and I told him the story, the whole thing right from the beginning, when I walked into the bingo hall. I left out the personal details about Serena and me, but he got the picture. I told him about the van.

"That's an unusual piece of good fortune."

"Have you ever had any? Good fortune?"

"All the time. Those guys paid plenty, for instance, though I suppose they'll want it back. You pick out a design. You can owe me."

He opened a book he had on the table, a notebook with plastic pages that clipped in and out, and handed it over to me. I didn't want a tattoo, but I didn't want to disappoint this man, either. I leafed through the dragons and the hearts, thinking how to refuse, and then suddenly I saw the horse. It was the same picture that had come into my head as I sat in the woods. Now here it was. The pony skimmed, legs outstretched, reaching for the edge of the page. I got a thought in my head, clear and vital, that this little horse would convince Serena I was serious about her.

"This one."

Lewey nodded, and heated his tools.

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That's why I got it put on, that little horse, and suffered pain. Now my hand won't let me rest. It throbs and aches as if it was coming alive again after a hard frost had made it numb. I know I'm going somewhere, taking this hand to Serena. Even walking down the road in a pair of big-waisted green pants belonging to Lewey Koep, toward the So Long Bar, where I keep everything I own in life, I'm going forward. My hand is a ball of pins, but when I look down I see the little black horse running hard, fast, and serious.

I'm ready for what will come next. That's why I don't fall on the ground, and I don't yell, when I come across the van in a field. At first, I think it is the dream van, the way I always see it in my vision. Then I look, and it's the real vehicle. Totalled.

My bingo van is smashed on the sides, kicked and scratched, and the insides are scattered. Stereo wires, glass, and ripped pieces of carpet are spread here and there among the new sprouts of wheat. I force open a door that is bent inward. I wedge myself behind the wheel, which is tipped over at a crazy angle, and I look out. The windshield is shattered in a sunlight burst, through which the world is cut to bits.

I've been up all night, and the day stretches long before me, so I decide to sleep where I am. Part of the seat is still wonderfully upholstered, thick and plush, and it reclines now - permanently, but so what? I relax into the small comfort, my body as warm as an animal, my thoughts drifting. I know I'll wake to nothing, but at this moment I feel rich. Sinking away, I feel like everything worth having is within my grasp. All I have to do is put my hand into the emptiness.

I. Memorize the following words and word-combinations, write out the sentences with them from the text and translate. Use them in the situations from the text.

den (n.)	reed (n.)
to pay up (v.)	to lace (v.)
to repossess (v.)	tangle (n.)
quonset barn (n.)	strand (n.)
wound up (adj.)	to suspend (v.)
in the long run	state home-ec. Contest
to break even (v.)	hyperspace (n.)
to gamble (v.)	to bob (v.)
pull-tab (n.)	sandbar (n.)
slot machine (n.)	choppy (adj.)
to poise (v.)	stash (n.): (infml.)
to pluck (v.)	vigilance (n.)
to dab (v.)	frenzy (n.)
lucky piece (n.)	scam (n.)
to flounder (v.)	green (adj.): (infml.)
to catch (get) one's bearings	to cast (v.)
giveaway (n.)	to pin on (s.o.) (v.)
to get by (v.)	to stalk (v.)

shelf life (n.)	to tar-
plush (n.):	clunker (n.)
den (n.)	to nose (v.)
to scoff (at) (v.)	pothole (n.)
to scorn (v.)	to tack on (v.)
tribal boundary (n.)	to fend for o.s. (v.)
one-minded (adj.)	I.H.S.
to blank out (v.)	to stain (v.)
grinding (adj.)	to rake (v.):
stoop-over work (n.)	low-key (adj.)
to go short term	to toss (v.)
no go: (infml.)	allpurpose (adj.)
to fizz (v.)	rhubarb (n.)
to blend in with (v.)	to make out (v.)
Coin-Op (n.)	alcove (n.)
to tag along (v.) (infml.)	to drone (v.)
hem (n.)	to holler (v.)
to nag (v.)	pound (v.)
to tenderize (v.)	to chip in (s.th.) (v.)
shrewd (adj.)	to chug along (v.)
to attach (v.)	to tousle (v.)
letup (n.)	mind-set (n.)
heavy date:	to sneer (at) (v.)
oblong (adj.)	clumsiness (n.)
to clash (v.)	to leaf through (v.)
to ring up (v.)	to throb (v.)
chickenshit (adj.)	to wedge (v.)
to beat it (v.)	to tip (over) (v.)
bashful (adj.)	to upholster (v.)
roundabout (adj.)	to recline (v.)

II. Find some information about:

CHIPPEWA	*YELLOW PAGES*
NAMING CEREMONY	*HAWAIIAN PUNCH*
SIOUX	*PAUL BUNYAN*
ANDREW JACKSON	
MR. HAMILTON	

III. Prepare a literary translation of the passage on page 107 starting with the words "*Be still*." and ending with the words "... *That's what happened when I met Lewey Koep*."

IV. Answer the following questions:

1: Having collected all relevant details, make up a character portrait of Lipsha.

2: What does the bingo van represent for Lipsha, and in which way can it be contrasted with the horse he has tattooed on his hand?

3: How are the hands of Lipsha, Big Sky, and Lewey described, and in which way can they be said to represent the characters of their owners?

4: Collect all relevant examples and work out an explanation of why Lipsha dislikes all things that have the shape of a square.

5: Look for contrasting examples of natural and man-made electricity, and explain the significance of natural electricity in Lipsha's story.

6: What are Lipsha's attitudes to nature on the one hand and to technology on the other? And how are these attitudes related to Lipsha being both an 'Indian' and a twentieth-century American?

7: Investigate the different stages of Lipsha's relationship with Serena and give reasons for his behavior.

8: Discuss Lipsha's healing power and what happens to it and why. Do you think that it will return at the end of the story? Give reasons.

9: Find instances of 'Indian humor' and comment on how they work.

10: Critics have pointed out that both the form and the style of the story reflect the pattern of Chippewa oral tales and that Lipsha can be understood as a Chippewa trickster figure. Discuss.

11: What figures of speech does the author use in this short story?

Sources:

1. "Black Is My Favorite Color" taken from *The Stories of Bernard Malamud,* 1963 by Bernard Malamud. Farrar, Strauss & Giroux Inc., New York: pp. 15.
2. "Everyday Use" taken from *In Love & Trouble: Stories of Black Women* by Alice Walker, Harcourt Brace & Company, Orlando 1973: pp. 35.
3. "The Lesson" taken from *Gorilla, My Love* by Toni Cade Bambara, 1972 Random House Inc., New York: pp. 53.
4. "The Circuit" taken from *North of the Rio Grande* ed. by Edward Simmen, Francisco Jimenez, Santa Clara 1973: pp. 70.
5. "The Somebody" by Danny Santiago, 1970 by Danny Santiago. First appeared in *Redbook Magazine,* Brandt & Brandt Literary Agents, New York: pp. 83.
6. "Yoneko's Earthquake" taken from *Seventeen Syllables and other Stories* by Hisaye Yamamoto, 1988 by Hisaye Yamamoto and Kitchen Table: Women of Color Press, New York: pp. 98.
7. "Food for All His Dead" by Frank Chin taken from *Asian-American Authors* ed. by Kai-yu Hsu & Helen Palubinskas 1972, by Frank Chin, San Francisco: pp. 121.
8. "Kaiser and the War" taken from *The Man to Send Rain Clouds* ed. by Kenneth Rosen, 1969 by Simon Ortiz, San Fidel: pp. 143.
9. "The Bingo Van" taken from *Talking Leaves: Conternpory Native American Short Stories* ed. by Craig Lesley, 1990 by Louise Erdrich, New York: pp. 162.

Навчальне видання

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MULTICULTURAL AMERICA.
Nine American Short Stories

Навчально-методичний посібник

Підп. до друку 27.08.2021. Формат 60х84/16.
Гарнітура «Times New Roman».
Ум. друк. арк. 6,6.

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Свідоцтво суб'єкта видавничої справи ДК № 2718 від 12.12.2006