

“A Mosaic of Voices: Writers Explore Multiculturalism”

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A Study Guide

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INTRODUCTION:

In our country, elements of our distinct cultures and heritages play a significant part in our daily life experience. The field of healthcare is intimately intertwined with these elements, as our perspective can influence both how we seek health and how we administer it. At Bellevue Hospital, it is evident that an understanding of cultural variance is integral in order to best cater our healthcare system to the diverse demographic of New York City. Here at the *Bellevue Literary Review*, we've done our best to capture the diversity of the entire country through pieces of fiction, non-fiction, and poetry that highlight the benefits, challenges, and general qualities of a diversified society.

These stories, essays, and poems from the *Bellevue Literary Review* provide a way to discuss and dissect the complexities of multiculturalism, as it exists both within a medical context and within our lives in a broader sense. This guide also serves as a way for the reader to further examine the implications of style, voice, and content in creative writing. The study guide is useful for teachers, social workers, health care professionals, adult continuing education courses, and reading groups that want to learn and teach about culture from a literary standpoint. The study guide is free, and is available online at www.BLReview.org.

We welcome your questions and comments. Please contact us at info@BLReview.org.

FICTION

“Commotio Cordis” by Priya Anand (page 10)

1. Paying close attention to imagery, discuss the role of place in the story.
2. Explore the island community’s relationship. Consider the following scenes: the crowds waiting outside the hospital, May and Lydia catching a ride to the Carnivale, the Carnivale itself.
3. Lydia’s father is present throughout the story, but he is subtle and says nothing. Explore his relationship with Lydia, with May.
4. Discuss the relationship between Lydia and May.
5. Signing is a form of visual communication. How does Anand translate this verbally? Is this effective?
6. How and where does Anand foreshadow the accident?
7. Reread the scenes featuring the mangoes. Do they serve a symbolic significance?
8. Discuss deafness as it relates to and affects the characters.
9. How does the absence of sound at times enrich the sensory imagery?
10. May fears “what it might mean to steal fruit from the dead,” but Lydia does this anyway. Discuss the role of the supernatural. Was the accident punishment for stealing mangoes from the dead?
11. Discuss the scene of the accident, the blow. How does Anand verbalize such a feeling?
12. The title, “Commotio Cordis,” refers to the often deadly agitation of the heart caused by a severe blow to the chest. The medical term is translated as “the agitation of the heart;” however, *commotio* can also be translated as “arousing of emotion” or “excitement.” How might these other translations relate to the story?

Deafness
Independence
Pain (physical)
Community
Commotio cordis
Childhood

“What Lies Beneath” by Mary Akers (page 22)

1. Discuss Akers’s use of second person. Why might she choose this style?
2. Why is Dani attracted to studying the parrotfish?
3. This story takes the protagonist to stay with a Muslim family in Egypt. How do gender roles in Islam inform the narrative? How are they portrayed in the story?
4. Further discuss the role of the setting. Consider the imagery used in describing the desert.
5. Discuss Salim’s “parables” and their role.
6. Reread Salim’s description of his family and consider the interactions between family members. What is their family dynamic like? Is it what you would have expected?
7. Consider Dani’s family. What is his relationship with his mother? His father? His wife?

8. Explore the theme of identity, but go beyond Dani. How do other characters deal with their own/each other's identity?
9. The title, "What Lies Beneath," can be interpreted numerous ways (beneath the sea, beneath the skin, beneath the clothes). Take this idea further and discuss.
10. In contemporary US politics and culture, gender identity and Islam are both subject to controversy. By weaving these together in one story of tolerance, what might Akers be suggesting?

Gender reassignment surgery
Identity
Biology
Gender roles
Religion/ God
Pain (emotional and physical)

"Flamingo Valley" by Amanda Lee Koe (page 37)

1. Describe the relationship, the tensions between the Chinese and Malay peoples. What differences between them threaten the relationship of Deddy Haikel and Ling Ko Mui?
2. What other factors threaten their relationship?
3. Discuss the effect of nonlinear storytelling. How might this story have a different feeling if told chronologically?
4. Compare the past being told as present and the past being told as memory. How do these two techniques complement each other? Why does Koe use both?

Alzheimer's Disease
Aging
Star-crossed lovers

"Mr. Abhyankar Learns to Drop Bombs" by Prasad Bodas (page 53)

1. This story deals with teen depression and suicide. How does this perspective lend itself to a different take on this frequently addressed topic?
2. Discuss how the narrator and his wife 'assimilate' into American culture. What were the obstacles they faced?
3. What steps were taken in Nathu's recovery? How does the narrator react to the opinions of the professionals?
4. Analyze how the narrator uses music to connect with his son. Is he successful? Why is just listening to his music at breakfast not an effective means of connection?
5. Consider the relationship between the narrator and his wife. How does it change through time as described in the story?
6. The gun that the narrator purchases seems to be mentioned only as a facet of Americanization at the beginning of the story. How does it become a symbol of protection? Why does it lose that symbol for the narrator? What does it become by the end of the story?

7. When the narrator starts doing his ‘rap’ it seems like perhaps he is being a little ‘crazy’ with the beat-boxing and the dancing. It is this outlandish behavior, however, that seems to wake Nathu up from his “altered state” as the narrator puts it. Consider the idea of role reversal here and describe how the relationship between the narrator and Nathu shifts.

Father/son relationship
Locational and cultural change
Suicide
Psychotherapy
Acceptance

“Diplomacy” by Susan Land (page 66)

1. The author puts the reader into the role of the narrator throughout the work, how does this serve to further an empathetic reading of the text?
2. The narrator tends transfer between the present, future, and past as the story progresses. Evaluate the importance of contextualization for the plot, and how this tactic potentially enhances the text as a whole.
3. The narrator spends a time on his bicycle as he narrates flashbacks and flash-forwards for the reader. How does the idea of transit lend itself to allowing the story to move forward as the narrator moves through memories and ideas?
4. What do we discover about the narrator and his family while he is riding his bike? What might that have to do with the idea of “moving forward”?
5. The latter section of the story focuses on being what the narrator calls “diplomatic” and he assesses the diplomatic qualities possessed by different characters in the story. Describe what the narrator might say a ‘true diplomat’ is. Do any of the characters fit that description? If so, who? How so?
6. The story presents a family that has come to live in America for a short time after having lived in Vienna and it is presumed that they will return to Vienna after the story ends. Discuss how the family has found a ‘distance’ between their different lives- their Viennese lives and their American lives.
7. What is the relationship between physical distance and emotional distance as presented in this story? Is there distance between certain characters that might be enhanced by physicality?
8. At the end of the story, Luke finds that he solemnly accepts his mother’s decision to reinstate her employment. What are some moments of acceptance, or a lack of acceptance, in this story? How do these moments potentially shape Luke as a character, or even demonstrate what he believes to be diplomacy?
9. Analyze the relationships functioning (or not functioning) within this family structure. What elements are highlighted by Luke, and which are perhaps purposefully omitted?

Distance, physical and emotional
Familial relationships/Filipiety
Acceptance
Exploration of Sexuality

“Sirens” by Joshunda Sanders (page 79)

1. From the beginning, Sanders uses metaphors that equate body parts to different foods. What impression does this have on the reader? How does it foreshadow the problems that Tasha will face?
2. Tasha’s hair seems to be a powerful source of anxiety for her. Why is this? What does it signify?
3. How does the bracelet change the story? What does it give Tasha that makes her think it has special powers?

Motherly neglect
Food anxiety
Child abuse
Bullying

“Silhouettes and Shadows” by Vishwas R. Gaitonde (page 92)

1. The title of this piece relates to how the narrator describes himself and Danny Keenan. There is a subtle difference between the two words but there are bigger connotations inherent therein. Examine how these characters are different and analyze why the narrator would use these words to describe himself and Keenan.
2. Explain the depictions of race and cultural difference present throughout the text. Draw specific examples of cultural tensions from the text.
3. The narrator struggles with economic pressures and explains that he feels ashamed to be hungry. Analyze how these pressures shape his morals and ethics in connection to his financial situation.
4. The narrator says that his family has fallen down in the world “through no fault of [his] or [his] family’s.” Yet, later, he describes his father as “always...sitting at the roadside with a friend.” Brainstorm as to why, perhaps, the narrator feels the need to provide for his family in light of this fact.
5. Evaluate the relationship between the narrator and Keenan as the story progresses. How does the narrator use Keenan for his own benefit? Describe at least three instances where the narrator tries to or succeeds in taking advantage of Keenan. How does this relate to the rickshaw drivers trying to take advantage of Keenan?
6. After stealing Keenan’s money, the narrator starts to feel guilty. Close read a few lines of his internal struggle and consider the Heinz dilemma. Given the circumstances, what *is* the ethical route? Does the narrator make the ‘right’ decision?
7. What motivates the narrator to spend money that he does not really have the ability to spend on the tile for Keenan? What sort of absolution might this bring him?
8. What literary purpose is served through the mention of all the birds in New Zealand that cannot fly? Make an argument and use example from the text to support it.

Economic diversity
Friendship
Research
Hunger

“Forest Hills” by Michael Powers (page 120)

1. This story is a retrospective, written from the speaker’s perspective in the future, looking back on actions of the past. How does our understanding of what comes to light in the story change our perspective on the first event, the speaker finding the \$100 bill?
2. How do you think the speaker truly felt about the woman he “loved”? Despite professing that he loved her, do his actions after she leaves seem in line with this assertion?
3. Why does the brother feel responsible for rehabilitating his brother’s life?
4. The speaker’s brother works as a direct contrast to him in this story; he lives in the countryside with a happy life and a loving wife. Why did the author choose to use the brother as this stark contrast?
5. The speaker doesn’t remember the names of the people who help him travel from Massachusetts and New Hampshire, but he remembers their faces and cars. What does this say about his focus and priorities?
6. Why does the speaker’s connection with the Boston doctor remain with him for so long, and reappear while he’s staying with his brother? What resonates between them?
7. The speaker eventually rejects life on his brother’s farm. Why does he return to his old life, despite the limited opportunities it provides?
8. What is the significance of closing the story with the metaphor of the man throwing a ball for his dog?

Death and loss

Brothers

Country vs. city life

Life prospects

Human connection

“Examining Rooms” by Midge Raymond (page 139)

1. The beginning of the story presents the reader with an intriguing, if slightly confusing, plotline. Taking only this section into account, what were your expectations for the story? How did seeing this encounter first color the rest of the work?
2. Claire describes her “role” as Bruce’s rebound to be one she’s played over and over. How does this relate to her work for the medical school evaluations? How, by the end of the story, has she become a dynamic character? Has she broken away from this role?
3. How does Claire’s career mirror her personal affairs? Use textual evidence in your comparison, and try making a Venn diagram to visually explain the relationship.
4. Why does Claire like playing the part of the schoolgirl? What does this say about power? What connections might this have to her life in the Big Picture of things?
5. How does Claire feel about Lisa, the lawyer she interviews with? How does this initial feeling expand over time in the story? Does it affect the outcome of Claire’s career?
6. When Jack introduces himself, he does so without using the “Dr.” title. Consider Claire’s reaction and explain how their relationship expands and contracts as the story unfolds.

7. Compare the second and third sessions that Claire has with Jack. Who has the power in these situations? Is there a shift? Evaluate the relationship between where Claire is in her career path and how she regards Jack.

Relationships

Career goals

Intimacy

“Patrimony” by Nancy Green (page 156)

1. Given the title, it is clear that this story will have to do with father-figures and patriarchal relationships. Evaluate how this inference comes to fruition throughout the story.
2. How does the narrator see Dr. Zampano? Does her perception color her reflections while waiting, anxiously, for their meeting? How so?
3. Several moments are spent parenthetically discussing the narrator’s relationship to her father- and in fact the first sentence tells the reader that none of this would have come to be were it not for her father’s death and the narrator’s subsequent inheritance. Discuss, using a psychological lens, the type of relationship had therein. (use specific textual evidence to support discussion)
4. The narrator continually personalizes Dr. Zampano’s inaccessibility. Why might this be happening? In what ways does this relate back to her relationship with her father?
5. The narrator continually psychoanalyzes her own thoughts, particularly the section where any latent sexual tension is discussed. Evaluate the possibility of this being a consideration of the oedipal complex. Illustrate how this might or might not be the drive behind that strain of thought.
6. More than once the narrator reassures herself that she is “not a child.” Further, she considers the anthropomorphization of time, and frequently records what time has passed. How might these concepts be related?
7. The narrator explains that much of her dissertation will be focused on motivation, and even lets the reader see some of the dialogue from a case study being used as evidence. Why, then, is the narrator- a supposed expert on motivation- unable to just knock on the door?
8. The narrator discusses wanting to change Angela’s responses to fit the thesis, but also discusses wanting to change Angela into a more motivated or ‘stronger’ person so that she would exit this abusive relationship. How might that apparent savior complex be a result of the narrator’s own experiences?
9. The narrator discusses how, potentially, Dr. Zampano wanted to work at a bigger, more prestigious university and is taking out his failures on her work. What might this conclusion illuminate on the narrator’s relationship with her father and his motivation for treating her the way he did?

Father figures

Self-reflection

Unconscious desires

“Passion Parties” by David Milofsky (page 166)

1. At the beginning of the story, it seems as if the author is responding to his own title, “the name itself was intriguing.,” how does you respond at first to the title? What are your expectations? Once you’ve read the work, how has your reaction changed?
2. The catalogue that Bebe gives the narrator is described as having “a house and garden tone with regard to their products.” What would be the purpose of marketing these products this way? Might authors sometimes write plainly about spicy topics? What effects does the type of diction or tone being described here have on the prospective audience?
3. In a conversation with Stan, the narrator muses that “calling old people seniors..implies a kind of respect and deference that in conflict with reality.” Do you agree with the narrators view here? Why or why not? Why might Stan have this attitude, given his relationship with other characters in the story?
4. The narrator describes these parties to be a sanitized business, comparable to the “nothing” side of his chosen Faulkner quote. In what ways does the text support this opinion? Why might the ‘sanitation’ of it be a necessary part of the execution of these parties?
5. The narrator takes time to discuss the innermost private lives of others and how we perceive such lives as either existing or not depending on how far involved we wish to get. He provides an example of taking a walk around the block and seeing people’s homes but, perhaps, never wondering what goes on behind the doors and windows. What are some other examples in everyday life where we, as people in a society, refuse to imagine other people complexly? What effect might this have on society as a community of people?
6. In what ways do characters in the story attempt to break down barriers between themselves and the narrator? How does he react? In response, how does his wife react?
7. What literary purpose is served when Bebe (with children in tow) knocks on and enters through the door of the narrator’s home? What emotional responses are connected to this moment? What does this scene mean for the narrator and the relationship between himself and his neighbor?
8. When the narrator goes to talk to Stan, Stan seems rather calm for someone who had just been throwing dishes around the house. Of what is this behavior indicative? How do the subsequent events relate to this one calm moment?
9. How does being dragged into the lives of these neighbors seem to affect the narrator? Has he changed at all by the end of the story?

Societal conventions of sexuality
Marital relationships
Boundaries and curiosity

NONFICTION

“So Far” by Cristina Negrón (page 110)

1. How does the beginning of this story foreshadow the events of May 9th 2004?
2. The narration of this story seems fairly reasonable, and the narrator describes herself as feeling “sane.” The reader is aware, however, that the events taking place are displaying entirely the opposite. How does this opposition color the story? In what ways does it hinder comprehension or force the reader to ‘look twice’?
3. The narrator talks about other characters sending her pain or talking to her. Analyze how these introductions assist in contextualizing the narrator’s life for the reader.
4. A facet of this text is perception- the narrator says she “was delivering babies, healing Rosalinda, and winning the World Series. What’s so unusual about that?” And much of the narration follows suit, as if these things make complete sense. Evaluate how each character perceives these goings-on differently, and how those perceptions are taken into the first person narration provided here. Might the reader be missing pertinent information? If so, how might that affect the story?
5. Consider the relationship between the narrator and her husband Amby. Why might “the sight of him make [her] want to throw up?” He is the only other character found consistently from the beginning to the end of the story and the reader is exposed to many of his actions. Describe his personality given the evidence found in the narration.
6. At the end of the story it appears that perhaps the entire work has been an explanation to Bob. How does that explain this text more fully?
7. When Bob appears in the story, Amby is asked to leave. Then, if the above assumption is correct, this story comes to light. How might it be that Amby’s presence or absence affects the narrator?
8. What conclusions can the reader draw about the narrator’s condition? Use textual evidence to theorize about what might be ailing her.

The dysfunctional vs. the normal
Exercise as a coping mechanism
Voices
Hospitalization

“Family Portrait, Guam, 1979” by Katherine Lien Chariott (page 134)

1. The author employs a particular style of writing in this piece, in which the speaker decides to address her family directly, or perhaps it would be more appropriate to say she’s addressing their perceived entities. How does this “you” tone help to distinguish between the physical personifications of these family members and the way they are represented in the speaker’s mind?
2. Why does the speaker assert that these people are *not* the family members they seem to be?
3. Analyze how the speaker uses the frame of each family member to also describe places, explore time, and tell stories.
4. Identify how health and problems with it seem to touch the lives of each family member.

5. When the speaker turns to address herself, she alludes to her body that she was too young “to hate, or to hide.” What does this say about her image of herself?
6. It is revealed at the end of the story that the speaker is in her childhood home, looking at old pictures. She addresses someone, as evident through the phrases “when you left us” and “You crossed that line”. Who is the “you” in this circumstance? What does this last paragraph reveal about her relationship with this you?

Memories of the past

Change

Personality and self

Family characterization

Reminiscing

Death and loss

POETRY

“I Tell My Mother What I Read About Sky Burial” by Jill McDonough (page 19)

1. What does this interaction tell us about the relationship between the daughter and her mother?
2. Do you think there is an underlying anger or pain that runs throughout the poem?
3. What is the purpose of describing the violent imagery of sky burial? How does it change the overall tone?
4. Why do you think the daughter tells her mother about sky burials?

Death
Traditional Cultural practices
Perspective

“Clinica Hispana” by Hillary Kobernick (page 20)

1. How does the language barrier between the doctor and her patient serve not just as a physical obstacle to overcome, but a metaphorical one?
2. Discuss the implied cultural boundaries that this poem assigns to both Katherine and the doctor.
3. How would this poem sound different if it was written from Katherine’s perspective? What unique details would be conveyed?

Cultural distance
Medical advising
Guilt

“Wound Healing” by Pepper Trail (page 35)

1. How do shapes play into the narrator’s thoughts about death?
2. Why are spiders so important to the narrator? Why does he fantasize about killing them using so many different methods?
3. How does the characterization of narrator’s mother change throughout the poem? How does her presence develop?

Gender reassignment
Surgery and healing
Body confidence

“To be awake” by Mary Ellen Ballard (page 36)

1. How does the sense of movement in this poem, both within the content and the format and spacing, add to the interpretation by the reader?
2. Discuss location/setting in its two applications in this poem—spiritual location and natural, physical descriptions. How are they different? What do they contribute to the piece?
3. How do the underlying themes of spirituality and religion work in parallel to the theme of nature?
4. How are death and fog—typically images of loss and an obscuring of clarity, driving the speaker of the poem?

Spirituality
Soul
Relationship with nature

“The Missionary’s Wife (1824)” by Janet Chalmers (page 52)

1. Given the first two stanzas, what events took place that led the missionary’s wife to live the rest of her life as such?
2. What is the fate of the missionary’s wife?
3. Evaluate the reactions of the natives, according to the poem. How does this relate to a countless number of historical occurrences?

Religious journey
Perseverance
Life and death

“Why the Therapist Loves Ironing” by Gail Martin (page 64)

1. In the first stanza, the speaker says her daughter calls her impulse “colonial.” How does this description provide a sociocultural description for the speaker’s proclivities?
2. How does the form of this poem mirror the content?
3. The speaker claims that “Ironing’s the opposite of grave rubbing.” If grave rubbing is used to preserve genealogy, and the reader sees a portrait (however brief) of the speaker’s mother, what purpose does ironing serve for the speaker in this sense?
4. Brainstorm: why *does* the therapist love ironing?

Impulsive behavior
Superstition
Coping

“Intake” by Jacob L. Freedman (page 65)

1. In the first stanza of the poem, the speaker calls his psychiatrist a “witch” who uses “black magic.” What sort of image is created by these words? Knowing right from the beginning that the speaker has a psychiatrist makes him an interesting source for information, just from this selection of the piece; can we assume the speaker to be reliable? Why or why not?
2. When speaking of the paradox, the speaker says that whoever is being addressed *can* help him but the reader has no indication of whether this help is craved. Given all the text, do you think the speaker is willing to undergo treatment? Close read at least one stanza (or more if you choose) to support your argument.
3. Consider the form of the poem. Each stanza seems to provide different and not always connected ideas. How might this be being delivered? What is this poem, *really*?
4. Interpret the title of the poem- “Intake.” How does it connect to the style and form of the poem? To the tone?

Delusions
Psychiatric disability

“Edema” by Merrill Cole (page 78)

1. How does the title of this poem give meaning to each stanza?
2. There seems to be a focus on eyes and sight as a theme in this poem. How does this contribute to the reader’s understanding of the speaker’s desires and limitations?
3. Theorize: what could “those shadows that don’t belong to him” possibly be?

Darkness and sight
Medical limitations
Disadvantage

“100 Razor Blades” by Anna Carson DeWitt (page 91)

1. Consider the idea of using what one has been given in relation to both this work and to the implications for life itself. What does it mean for Dona Maira? For the babies? For us, as humans trying to make it in this world?
2. Evaluate the rationality behind reusing the blades against the advice of the health workers. Are the risks outweighed in these situations?
3. There is a comparison of birth to both magic and to science in this work. Explain how the narrator feels about both of these comparisons. Is either of them adequate? How so or why not?
4. What role does setting play in the last stanza?

Birth
Medical responsibility
Religion/hope

“The Rice-Eating Ceremony” by Sonia Sarkar (page 107)

1. The speaker in the poem describes him/herself as a baby. Evaluate this description and consider the adjectival use therein. How does this diction create a tone for the poem?
2. The ceremony being described is clearly an important cultural piece. What sorts of implications are being made about the outcome of this ceremony?
3. The last line of the poem states that “Rubies in America shine just a shade too brightly.” Determine what possible meanings this could have about America as a society, and how other cultures view America.

Pediatric sickness
Fate
Cultural outsourcing

“Teaching the Riff in Being Tuned to the Rez Blues” by Tanaya Winder (page 108)

1. The author uses “Mamas” to refer to, it seems, all mothers. Evaluate if the claims made in this poem could pose universal ideas in terms of motherhood. Why or why not?
2. The narrator states that “life is making and creating” and says that babies can learn that through listening to this music. What connections are made between this style of music and the world that these babies will grow up in?
3. Many references are made to Indians throughout the poem; how do these references color the work as a whole? What purpose do they serve?
4. Consider what the author thinks to be the “consequences of the American dream.” How does that relate to the references to Indians and to blues music?
5. In the final stanza, the narrator states that “we are whole notes unraveling.” Interpret this statement. Questions you may want to consider: Do we start out as whole notes? Is that what babies are to the narrator? Is the unraveling meant physically? Or is that a more figurative statement? Use textual evidence for your argument.

Predestined future
Life cycle
Cultural legacy
Pessimism

“Beautiful” by M. Miranda Maloney (page 119)

1. This poem, though broken up into two stanzas, isn’t broken up into any concrete sentences, opting to maintain a “stream of consciousness” style of voice. Why do you think the author chose to write the poem this way? What does it contribute to our understanding of the speaker’s emotion?
2. Does the speaker maintain any hope about her diagnosis? How does she use the word ‘beautiful’ to resist the doctor’s comments?

3. The author's portrayal of the doctor certainly isn't the most positive one; is this because the speaker is linking him with her unfortunate diagnosis?
4. How do the abstract and the reality of the situation rely on one another in this situation?
5. The speaker says she will never be what she was. What do you think this last line refers to?

Prognosis
Beauty and hope
Coming to terms with death

“Coal Act, 1969” by Dawn Potter (page 132)

1. This poem speaks of the fates of four miners; explain what happened to each as a result of their job.
2. This poem reads like a sub-sectional example of a political document. How does the tone affect the reading of this work? Does the form in which it is written make it more difficult to understand? If yes, how so?
3. Analyze the change in tone as the poem shifts to focus on “Employee 4.” Might authorial intent be related to this particular case?
4. Give a reader's reaction to this poem. Analyze the tone, its changes, and why you react the way you do given your own experiences. Relate back to specific pieces of the text where applicable.

Clinical analysis
Workplace injuries
Dehumanization
Mistrust of doctors

“Phosphorescence” by Zhu Jian (translated by Liang Yujing) (page 138)

1. This poem as displayed in the BLR is a translation; given the words provided by the translator, how do you think the message ‘translates’ as a universal one?
2. The narrator explains the light seen to be “a noble lamp” that is hiding, evaluate this description as being either accurate or misguided. What might be the cause of this lamp being lit after a person's death?
3. If taken literally, this poem was inspired by seeing flicker of light in a burial ground, and a friend's explanation. Theorize about a possible more abstract inspiration. How might the narrator come to these conclusions otherwise?

Remembrance of the dead
Respect and reverence
Values and life goals

“Terminal House” by Robert J. Levy (page 154)

1. It is quite obvious that the author uses a house as a personified metaphor in this story; what humanlike qualities are given to this house? How does this representation aid in the extension of the poem’s message?
2. Analyze the use of season and weather in the story, specifically taking a look at the references to winter and spring. What consequences do these references have in light of how we think about life or a lifespan?
3. Consider the seventh stanza, as the idea of gardening is presented by the author. How is this specific occurrence in the poem effective in alluding to illness? How does the house ‘respond’ to this family’s efforts?
4. The narrator of the story refers to the house as “a fifth member of our family.” In what ways are the characters treating the house in this way? What might be the cause of these actions? What prompts the narrator’s description of the house as a member of the family?
5. Further, hypothesize: what prompts this poem’s creation?
6. Interpret the author’s use of structured three-lined stanzas in conjunction with enjambment. What might the form be telling the reader? How might it further enforce the theme?
7. In the second stanza, the narrator says “It was like watching him die all over again-.” Using your appraisal of how this house is personified, explain how this statement is reinforced throughout the poem. How does the family, perhaps, take on the role of caregivers for the house? Consider why the family is so persistent with their care despite the house’s insistence on falling apart.

Acceptance of death

Routine

Setting and season

“On Sitting Next to an 80-Year-Old Widower at My Temple’s Shabbat Singles’ Table Last Friday Night” by Amelia B. Winkler (page 164)

1. This poem is constructed as an exchange of dialogue between the speaker and the 80 year old widower, as introduced in the title of the poem. There are three stanzas, two of which are given to the speaker. What is the significance of this?
2. The elderly woman references “Jerry”—is this the speaker? Or could this name be a reference to the woman’s deceased husband?
3. The speaker elaborates on a laundry list of health problems that he or she has. Think about how these problems have led the speaker to the singles’ table at the temple.
4. Why is the format of the poem such that there is only one or two words on each line, instead of writing the phrases out like complete sentences?

Medical struggle

Loneliness

Desperation

Unexpected companionship

“Weight Gain Sonnet” by Moira Egan (page 178)

1. Analyze the allusion of “Mirror, Mirror” in the second line. What might this allusion be to, and how does that relate to the idea of stereotypical/societally normative standards of body form or weight?
2. Why might the author have chosen to write this theme into a sonnet? What does this form say about control?
3. The narrator asks two questions in this poem, how does the incredulity displayed enhance the character as more human? Explain how this question lends the reader to understand the idea of time gone by, and how humans seem to have calendrically specific dementia when it comes to our bodies. Can you think of other examples of ailments/bodily changes that seem to ‘creep up’ on people?
4. Who might the narrator be addressing in this poem? The text itself is ambiguous; theorize about the receiver of this message- and how that affects the reason for it to be given.

Self-awareness of image
Body confidence
Aging
Cultural influence

“MRI” by Jackie Fox (page 179)

1. Analyze the depersonification of the narrator in this poem. What effect does it take, and how might it affect a reading of this poem?
2. Consider the word “wedged” and the connotation of something being where it should not. How does this interpretation influence a perception of the narrator’s position?
3. Evaluate the important and influence of sound words in this poem. Why does the heart distinctively *clang*? How would the piece be different if the sound imagery had been changed?
4. It could be said that the speaker is moving and clanging along with the machine. Can we infer any commentary on the speaker’s person from this connection?

Medical technology
Enclosure
Uncomfortableness

“Being Respectful of Other Cuisines” by Hal Sirowitz (page 180)

1. What does the one stanza format do for the poem as a whole? What might the format allow for the reader to determine?
2. How do particulars of the diction in this text form a tone? Assess the punctuation and line breaks to assist in determining the tone of the work as a whole.

3. How does an address of food allow for a mother's role to be adeptly fulfilled by the speaker in the poem?
4. The speaker talks of both politics and of religion and equates them to be possibly less important than cultivating an international palate. Evaluate the authorial intent insofar as a humorous approach to this topic and how effective it is.

International Concerns

Patriotism

Family Relationships

Nutrition