

Cycle 3 - Discussion Questions

Instructor Copy

In order to foster an environment where students feel comfortable asking questions and contributing to on-going conversations, certain works from the course texts will be selected for group discussions. Scaffolded questions will help lead students to thinking about how works connect to overarching themes of power, gender and honor. The following questions are suggestions for creating conversation between students and connections to their lives.

Ichiro Kikuchi

- In the line, “Because you are Mexican too, even though you are not a believer”, Juan implies that religion and culture go hand-in-hand. What do you think? Is culture so intertwined with religion that they are inseparable?
- How are Mexico and Japan physically described? What does this tell us about Juan? Does Juan belong to a place?
- Why does Juan lie to Nobuo’s parents? Why is it better for Nobuo to be known as someone who died bravely in combat instead of crying in a grave? What does this tell us about how masculinity is portrayed in Japan?
- What does honor mean in this story?
- How is Juan’s multi-cultural identity portrayed? Is it positive or negative?
- How is Juan similar/dissimilar to Americo Paredes? Why do you think Americo Paredes wrote this story?

George Washington Gomez

- How does Guálinto perceive violence? Is violence treated as a masculine trait?
- How does Guálinto talk to the women in his life? How does he think of them?
- When Guálinto plays, he often images extremely violent scenarios. Do the games we play as children normalize violent actions? How might games traditionally “for boys” impact their actions later in life?
- What does Guálinto view as “true masculinity”? What other perceptions of masculinity are in the text?
- How is multi-cultural identity portrayed?
- What does Feliciano think of honor? What does honor mean for the sediciosos?
- How is the idea of masculinity and being a “true man” manipulated and used to force young boys to commit violent acts?
- Is Guálinto destined to take revenge for his father?
- Is it possible for the Mexicanos and Americans to get along?

Macaria's Daughter

- Was Macaria's daughter destined to cheat based on the "sins" of her mother? Why does everyone act as if this was her fate from the start?
- What role does religion and the idea of predestination have in this short story?
- How do gender roles affect the way Marcela is treated? Would things be different if she was a man?
- How are honor and duty defined in this work?
- What would happen if Tony never killed his wife? How would his masculinity be perceived?
- Why don't the other women in the community fight for Marcela or protect her?

Sandra Cisneros

- Why doesn't anyone help Sally? How do poverty and gender roles affect autonomy?
- We've talked a lot about how Paredes defines a "true man" and masculine traits. Which traits do the women in these chapters value?
- Does Sally actually escape her situation?
- How do these chapters connect to Macaria's daughter?
 - How are Sally and Macaria different/similar?
 - What about Marcela? Is she compared to Sally?
 - Is Sally's fate "predestined" by the gender roles of the community?
- How is beauty talked about? Is beauty a commodity or a curse?
- When Esperanza tries to help Sally, she is mocked and treated like a child. She ends up leaving feeling as if the monkey Garden is no longer hers. She no longer has a "place". How is place perceived by the women in these chapters? How is it similar/different from Paredes' feelings towards belonging and place?