

English 8

“lesson of the moth” p. 618-620

“Identity” p. 621

Don Marquis “lesson of the moth” (1878-1937)

Don Marquis published novels and worked as a screenwriter, but he was mainly a newspaper writer. A daily column in the *New York Evening Sun* led Marquis to create a character called Archy the cockroach, who helped Marquis see life from a different perspective. “the lesson of the moth” is one of many poems Marquis wrote in the voice of Archy. Marquis pretended that Archy wrote his verses on a typewriter during the night. Marquis explained the lack of capitalization in the poems by saying that Archy never learned to use the shift key. Although Marquis’s poems are mainly remembered for their humor, they also allowed him to comment on society.

Julio Noboa “Identity” (1949-present)

Julio Noboa was born in the Bronx. He credits his Puerto Rican father and a high-school English teacher with encouraging him to write. Noboa wrote “Identity” when he was in the eighth grade. The poem was inspired by Noboa’s feelings after a breakup with a girlfriend, an experience that he says encouraged him to think “about what’s really important to me.” Noboa is now a college professor.

Directions: Read the author backgrounds above and the poems “the lesson of the moth” and “identity” on pages 618-621 of your Literature book. Then answer the questions provided.

1. According to “the lesson of the moth,” why do moths fly toward the light?
2. Create a sketch that shows the differences between the flower and the weed described in “identity.” Make sure your sketch reflects at least two specific details from the poem.
3. What does the speaker learn about himself in “the lesson of the moth”? Support your response with evidence from the poem.
4. In “the lesson of the moth,” how does the poet use stanzas to help you follow the conversation between the cockroach and the moth?
5. What kind of person does the speaker in “identity” want to be? What kind of person does he not want to be?

Name: _____

Period: _____

Due Date: _____

6. In “the lesson of the moth,” what is the moth’s attitude about the price of beauty? In “identity,” what is the speaker’s attitude about the price of beauty? Explain whether you think their views are more similar or more different.
7. How might “the lesson of the moth” have been different if the poet had been the speaker instead of archy?
8. Did it surprise you that “Identity” was written by an 8th grader like you? Why or why not?
9. Can you see the story of an 8th grader breaking up with his girlfriend in the poem? What lines remind you of that story?
10. Which poem do you relate more to? Why is that? Write some lines or phrases that relate the most to you from these poems.