

W131/ Reading, Writing, Inquiry
Bishop Dwenger High School

Fall 2022
Assignment

For your assignment, you will read three essays and complete corresponding questions. Your responses should be thoughtful and thorough. Some responses will require a personal reflection, and other responses will be a reaction to the essay. You should support your response with textual evidence when necessary. A typed copy of your responses are due on the first day of class for the semester. Please save an electronic copy to submit as well. I hope to have Canvas set up to use for submissions.

If you have any questions regarding the assignment, please contact Mrs. Brady at ebrady@bishopdwenger.com

Harold Taw, “Finding Prosperity by Feeding Monkeys”

1. Personal: Many people have unique traditions, like Taw’s tradition of feeding monkeys every year on this birthday. List some traditions that are unique to your family, to another group you belong to, or to you alone—for instance, a holiday celebration, a vacation activity, a way of decompressing after a stressful week.
2. Meaning: Why is Taw’s birthday ritual so important to him? Consider not just its literal meaning but also its *symbolic one*.
3. Writing Strategy: What is the effect of Taw’s opening paragraph? Why do you think he begins the first two sentences with the phrase “I could say”? (think of the uncertainty with the term “could”)
4. Writing Strategy: Paragraph 8 contains several brief accounts of a problems Taw has faced in carrying out his tradition over the years. What do these anecdotes contribute to the essay?

Sandra Cisneros, “Only Daughter”

1. Personal: Cisneros’s father thinks of success primarily in terms of financial reward. Do you agree? Consider the meaning of *success* focusing on these questions. Whom in your life do you consider to be successful, and why? Where do your ideas of success come from—your parents, your friends, your schooling, the media?
2. Meaning: What do you take to be Cisneros’s main purpose in this essay?
3. Writing Strategy: Does Cisneros seem to be writing mainly for other Mexican Americans or for a wider audience? Cite passages from the essay to support your answer.
4. Language: What are the contrasting ideas in Cisneros’s paired phrases “the only daughter” and “only a daughter”? (paragraph 3)

Amy Tan, “Fish Cheeks”

1. Personal: Do you sympathize with the shame Tan feels because of her family’s differences from their non-Chinese guests? Or do you think she should have been more proud to share her family’s customs? Think of an occasion when, for whatever reason, you were acutely aware of being different. How did you react? Did you try to hide your difference in order to fit in, or did you reveal or celebrate your uniqueness?
2. Meaning: Why does Tan’s mother go out of her way to prepare a disturbingly traditional Chinese dinner for her daughter and guests? What one sentence best sums up the lesson Tan was not able to understand until years later?
3. Writing Strategy: How does Tan draw the reader into her story right from the beginning?
4. Language: In which paragraph does Tan use strong verbs most effectively? What are some the verbs, and what is the effect?