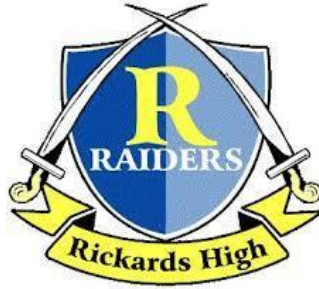


## James S. Rickards High School Summer Reading

**Attention: Parents and Students!**



**WHO:** ALL James S. Rickards High School Students.

**WHAT:** The following information outlines the assignments we have given to our students for the 2021 James S. Rickards School-Wide Summer Reading Program. While specific courses such as Advanced Placement (AP) or International Baccalaureate (IB) may have additional summer assignments that will need to be completed before the beginning of the 2021-2022 school year, we want to develop a program that encourages a culture of reading and an expectation of academic dedication for all students. Therefore, we are asking you to read the attached information and participate in our summer reading activity. The assignment composed for this year focuses on having students fine-tuning their reading skills by answering text-based questions on grade-level, themed texts. Students are expected to complete each assignment by themselves, only using the power of their brain. If a student is caught plagiarizing, they will receive a 0%.

- Students are to use the active reading skills/strategies they have learned throughout the year to navigate the text.
- Students are to then answer each text-based question based on their reading.

Students can use PDF Candy (found in ClassLink) to annotate, highlight the text and/or correct answers, and insert text boxes to complete responses.

If that option is not viable, students can create a new Word document that includes the answers for each text. Be sure to include the title of the text and then proceed with typing your answers to ensure proper labeling and therefore, grading.

**WHEN:** While the expectation is that students will select the best choice to each question, write original answers to the short responses and submit them as a course requirement by the end of the first week of school following our return, we also want to encourage parents and groups of students to use the text and suggested novel readings as a point of discussion with each other so that we can all share in the experience of these texts. Activities centered upon the reading skills within these texts will take place within the first few weeks of Language Arts instruction in the fall.

**CONTACT INFO:** If you have any questions regarding our JSRHS Summer Reading Program, please feel free to contact Ms. O'Reilly or Ms. Cotton, JSRHS ELA Department Chair and Reading Coach ([oreillys@leonschools.net](mailto:oreillys@leonschools.net); [cottonta@leonschools.net](mailto:cottonta@leonschools.net))

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Class: \_\_\_\_\_

# The Unspoken History Behind a Surname

By Lolly Bowean  
2017

*When people ask Lolly Bowean about the origins of her surname, also known as her last name, they don't realize that they are also asking her to share her ancestors' history of enslavement. In this essay, Bowean details the history behind African American surnames and what her surname means to her. As you read, take notes on how Bowean feels when reminded about her ancestor's history of enslavement.*

[1] Only the truly curious even ask.

And when a Harvard student recently inquired about my name, she was clear that she wanted to know about my surname. She repeated it three times out loud and then began probing<sup>1</sup> for something deeper.

She didn't have to say it, but I knew she was trying to better understand my heritage and ethnic background. My last name is puzzling. And for some, it doesn't match my physical presence.

When I'm in the Boston region, people ask me if it's French, and I think they are trying to determine if my heritage is Haitian. Others will ask if it's Celtic, a question that would connect me to the Irish.



*"Hello My Name Is" by Travis Wise is licensed under CC BY 2.0.*

[5] The truth is, my last name was probably supposed to be Bowen, but somewhere in the past someone misspelled it, and the lives of my clan were forever changed.

This was a common occurrence. Some southern African Americans struggled with literacy after emancipation, and so names took on new spellings. In other cases, white officials didn't bother to document the correct spellings on public records, and the mistakes lived on.

I learned this when I tried to research the history of my last name.

In this country, there are hundreds of Bowens.

Yet my immediate relatives are the only people I have found with the "Bowean" last name.

[10] I explained this all to the young, curious student.

I went on to tell her that the Bowean surname came to my people through marriage.

1. **Probe (verb)** to seek to uncover information about someone or something

Before we were Boweans, we were Norwoods and Wakefields rooted in a small town in western North Carolina — near the mountains. Those names are connected back to England.

“Those are my people,” I told her.

“I know some Norwoods and some Wakefields from western North Carolina,” she piped up, almost instantly, with a giddy excitement. It seemed that for a moment she thought we had found common ground. I’m sure she thought that maybe we knew some of the same people.

[15] The next sentence she almost whispered: “But they’re white.”

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As we both stood in the silence, we didn’t speak about the legacy of American slavery.

Yet this is the moment when the baggage of race and what it means to be African American comes creeping into the most fleeting of encounters. It’s these unexpected confrontations with history that trigger what writer and social commentator James Baldwin called the “constant state of rage.”

I didn’t tell the student that during slavery, African Americans were assigned names by their owners and many times didn’t even have a surname, records show. I didn’t talk about how those residents were at times given the last name of their owner so that they could be identified as that white family’s property.

I also didn’t bother to talk about how even after the Thirteenth Amendment brought enslaved people a form of freedom, some chose the plantation name as their last name in order to reveal where they were from. Black people held on to these names for many reasons — one being the hope to reunite with other family members who would only be able to identify them by these familiar markers.

[20] These are the names that so many black Americans still wear.

The decision to stay bound to these names is deeply personal. I would never change my name — even if I married — mainly because it connects me to a fragmented people.

It is the name that binds us together. And I hold on to hope that my relatives, disconnected long ago, can locate me through that shared legacy.

\*\*\*

It is in these innocent moments that the troubling history of this country becomes real and the residue reveals itself as still present. I’ve never been ashamed that I am a descendant of people who were enslaved. Yet it is in these subtle moments that the trauma strikes me.

[25] I began to feel weighted as I stood staring at the college-aged woman, who had a classic, sophisticated Latin name that means purity. I felt the weariness of being pushed into an emotional space and frustrated from having to contemplate whether to delve deeper into a topic I didn’t expect during idle small talk.

Then I remembered that this history is one we don’t like to discuss anyway. We were only making small talk.

"There's probably a relationship between the two families," the African American one and the white one, I remember telling the student. "But I don't know exactly, specifically, what it is."

And then, to be polite, we left the rest unspoken and parted ways.

*Lolly Bowean is a reporter with the Chicago Tribune and a 2017 Nieman Fellow at Harvard University.*

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## Text-Dependent Questions

**Directions:** For the following questions, choose the best answer or respond in complete sentences.

1. PART A: Which statement expresses the central idea of the text?
  - A. Most African Americans have changed their surnames in order to reject any connections they might have to past slavery.
  - B. Discussing the origins of African Americans' surnames is a good way to bring attention to America's history of slavery.
  - C. Knowing the origins of people's surnames in America can better help us understand the nation's history.
  - D. African Americans have a complicated and, at times, painful history with their surnames which is not easy to discuss.
  
2. PART B: Which detail from the text best supports the answer to Part A?
  - A. "And when a Harvard student recently inquired about my name, she was clear that she wanted to know about my surname." (Paragraph 2)
  - B. "When I'm in the Boston region, people ask me if it's French, and I think they are trying to determine if my heritage is Haitian." (Paragraph 4)
  - C. "'I know some Norwoods and some Wakefields from western North Carolina,' she piped up, almost instantly, with a giddy excitement." (Paragraph 14)
  - D. "I felt the weariness of being pushed into an emotional space and frustrated from having to contemplate whether to delve deeper into a topic I didn't expect during idle small talk." (Paragraph 25)
  
3. How does paragraph 18 contribute to the development of ideas in the text?
  - A. It provides readers with information about the origins of the author's surname.
  - B. It helps readers understand the racist history of how African Americans got surnames.
  - C. It shows readers why the author of the text decided to reject her family's surname.
  - D. It proves that the author and the student's ancestors were connected through slavery.
  
4. What is the author's main purpose in the article?
  - A. to encourage people not to ask other people about the origins of their surname
  - B. to inform readers about the origins of people's surnames in America
  - C. to help readers understand her relationship with her surname as an African American
  - D. to explain to readers why she doesn't discuss her surname with people when they ask

5. How does the author develop the idea that it's difficult for her to discuss her surname with white or non-African American people?

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## Discussion Questions

**Directions:** Brainstorm your answers to the following questions in the space provided. Be prepared to share your original ideas in a class discussion.

1. In the text, the author discusses how the history of slavery can still be felt today through African Americans' surnames. Do you think there are other ways that we continue to be reminded of America's history of slavery today? If so, in what ways?
2. The author's surname is important to her because of what it reveals about her identity. What does your surname mean to you? What does it reveal about your identity?
3. In what ways are the surnames of African Americans who were descendants of slaves a product of racism? How does Lolly Bowean's surname cause people to treat her differently today? How would you feel if people asked probing questions about your family history?

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Class: \_\_\_\_\_

# Marigolds

By Eugenia Collier  
1969

*Eugenia Collier (b.1928) is an African American writer of stories, plays, essays, and criticism. In this short story, a woman remembers an important moment from her childhood. **Skills Focus:** In this lesson, you'll practice analyzing how complex characters develop by coming to an important realization. This means paying attention to how they perceive others and the world around them. As you read, take note of the details that show Lizabeth coming to new realizations over the course of the story.*

[1] When I think of the hometown of my youth, all that I seem to remember is dust — the brown, crumbly dust of late summer — arid, sterile<sup>1</sup> dust that gets into the eyes and makes them water, gets into the throat and between the toes of bare brown feet. I don't know why I should remember only the dust. Surely there must have been lush green lawns and paved streets under leafy shade trees somewhere in town; but memory is an abstract<sup>2</sup> painting — it does not present things as they are, but rather as they feel. And so, when I think of that time and that place, I remember only the dry September of the dirt roads and grassless yards of the shantytown where I lived. And one other thing I remember, another incongruity<sup>3</sup> of memory — a brilliant splash of sunny yellow against the dust — Miss Lottie's marigolds.



*"Untitled" by \_Alicja\_ is licensed under CC0.*

Whenever the memory of those marigolds flashes across my mind, a strange nostalgia<sup>4</sup> comes with it and remains long after the picture has faded. I feel again the chaotic emotions of adolescence, illusive as smoke, yet as real as the potted geranium before me now. Joy and rage and wild animal gladness and shame become tangled together in the multicolored skein of fourteen-going-on-fifteen as I recall that devastating moment when I was suddenly more woman than child, years ago in Miss Lottie's yard. I think of those marigolds at the strangest times; I remember them vividly now as I desperately pass away the time.

1. **Sterile** (*adjective*) poor in quality; lifeless
2. **Abstract** (*adjective*) dealing with ideas or feelings instead of concrete objects
3. **Incongruent** (*adjective*) opposite or not the same; out of place
4. **Nostalgia** (*noun*) a longing for the past

I suppose that **futile** waiting was the sorrowful background music of our impoverished little community when I was young. The Depression<sup>5</sup> that gripped the nation was no new thing to us, for the black workers of rural Maryland had always been depressed. I don't know what it was that we were waiting for; certainly not for the prosperity<sup>6</sup> that was "just around the corner," for those were white folks' words, which we never believed. Nor did we wait for hard work and thrift to pay off in shining success, as the American Dream promised, for we knew better than that, too. Perhaps we waited for a miracle, amorphous<sup>7</sup> in concept but necessary if one were to have the grit to rise before dawn each day and labor in the white man's vineyard until after dark, or to wander about in the September dust offering one's sweat in return for some meager share of bread. But God was chary<sup>8</sup> with miracles in those days, and so we waited — and waited.

We children, of course, were only vaguely aware of the extent of our poverty. Having no radios, few newspapers, and no magazines, we were somewhat unaware of the world outside our community. Nowadays we would be called culturally deprived<sup>9</sup> and people would write books and hold conferences about us. In those days everybody we knew was just as hungry and ill clad as we were. Poverty was the cage in which we all were trapped, and our hatred of it was still the vague, undirected restlessness of the zoo-bred flamingo who knows that nature created him to fly free.

- [5] As I think of those days I feel most poignantly the tag end of summer, the bright, dry times when we began to have a sense of shortening days and the imminence<sup>10</sup> of the cold.

By the time I was fourteen, my brother Joey and I were the only children left at our house, the older ones having left home for early marriage or the lure of the city, and the two babies having been sent to relatives who might care for them better than we. Joey was three years younger than I, and a boy, and therefore vastly inferior. Each morning our mother and father trudged wearily down the dirt road and around the bend, she to her domestic job, he to his daily unsuccessful quest<sup>11</sup> for work. After our few chores around the tumbledown shanty, Joey and I were free to run wild in the sun with other children similarly situated.

For the most part, those days are ill-defined in my memory, running together and combining like a fresh watercolor painting left out in the rain. I remember squatting in the road drawing a picture in the dust, a picture which Joey gleefully erased with one sweep of his dirty foot. I remember fishing for minnows in a muddy creek and watching sadly as they eluded<sup>12</sup> my cupped hands, while Joey laughed uproariously. And I remember, that year, a strange restlessness of body and of spirit, a feeling that something old and familiar was ending, and something unknown and therefore terrifying was beginning.

One day returns to me with special clarity for some reason, perhaps because it was the beginning of the experience that in some inexplicable<sup>13</sup> way marked the end of **innocence**. I was loafing under the great oak tree in our yard, deep in some reverie<sup>14</sup> which I have now forgotten, except that it involved some secret, secret thoughts of one of the Harris boys across the yard. Joey and a bunch of kids were bored now with the old tire suspended from an oak limb, which had kept them entertained for a while.

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5. The Great Depression was a period of economic downturn that lasted from 1929-1939. Many Americans experienced unemployment and poverty during this time.
  6. **Prosperity** (*noun*) wealth or success
  7. **Amorphous** (*adjective*) without form or shape; vague
  8. cautious or hesitant to do something
  9. **Deprived** (*adjective*) poor or disadvantaged
  10. **Imminent** (*adjective*) about to happen
  11. **Quest** (*noun*) a long and difficult search for something
  12. **Elude** (*verb*) to escape
  13. **Inexplicable** (*adjective*) unable to be explained
  14. **Reverie** (*noun*) a daydream

"Hey, Lizabeth," Joey yelled. He never talked when he could yell. "Hey, Lizabeth, let's go somewhere."

[10] I came reluctantly from my private world. "Where you want to go? What you want to do?"

The truth was that we were becoming tired of the formlessness of our summer days. The idleness whose prospect had seemed so beautiful during the busy days of spring now had degenerated<sup>15</sup> to an almost desperate effort to fill up the empty midday hours.

"Let's go see can we find some locusts<sup>16</sup> on the hill," someone suggested.

Joey was scornful. "Ain't no more locusts there. Y'all got 'em all while they was still green."

The argument that followed was brief and not really worth the effort. Hunting locust trees wasn't fun anymore by now.

[15] "Tell you what," said Joey finally, his eyes sparkling. "Let's us go over to Miss Lottie's."

The idea caught on at once, for annoying Miss Lottie was always fun. I was still child enough to scamper along with the group over rickety fences and through bushes that tore our already raggedy clothes, back to where Miss Lottie lived. I think now that we must have made a tragicomic<sup>17</sup> spectacle, five or six kids of different ages, each of us clad in only one garment — the girls in faded dresses that were too long or too short, the boys in patchy pants, their sweaty brown chests gleaming in the hot sun. A little cloud of dust followed our thin legs and bare feet as we tramped over the barren land.

When Miss Lottie's house came into view we stopped, ostensibly to plan our strategy, but actually to reinforce our courage. Miss Lottie's house was the most ramshackle of all our ramshackle homes. The sun and rain had long since faded its rickety frame siding from white to a sullen gray. The boards themselves seemed to remain upright not from being nailed together but rather from leaning together, like a house that a child might have constructed from cards. A brisk wind might have blown it down, and the fact that it was still standing implied a kind of enchantment that was stronger than the elements. There it stood and as far as I know is standing yet — a gray, rotting thing with no porch, no shutters, no steps, set on a cramped lot with no grass, not even any weeds — a monument to decay.<sup>18</sup>

In front of the house in a squeaky rocking chair sat Miss Lottie's son, John Burke, completing the impression of decay. John Burke was what was known as queer-headed. Black and ageless, he sat rocking day in and day out in a mindless stupor,<sup>19</sup> lulled by the monotonous squeak-squawk of the chair. A battered hat atop his shaggy head shaded him from the sun. Usually John Burke was totally unaware of everything outside his quiet dream world. But if you disturbed him, if you intruded upon his fantasies, he would become enraged, strike out at you, and curse at you in some strange enchanted language which only he could understand. We children made a game of thinking of ways to disturb John Burke and then to elude his violent retribution.<sup>20</sup>

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15. **Degenerate** (*verb*) to worsen or decline

16. large grasshoppers

17. having both sad and funny characteristics

18. **Decay** (*noun*) the state of rotting or falling apart

19. **Stupor** (*noun*) daze; a lack of awareness

20. **Retribution** (*noun*) punishment or revenge

But our real fun and our real fear lay in Miss Lottie herself. Miss Lottie seemed to be at least a hundred years old. Her big frame still held traces of the tall, powerful woman she must have been in youth, although it was now bent and drawn. Her smooth skin was a dark reddish brown, and her face had Indian-like features and the stern stoicism<sup>21</sup> that one associates with Indian faces. Miss Lottie didn't like intruders either, especially children. She never left her yard, and nobody ever visited her. We never knew how she managed those necessities which depend on human interaction — how she ate, for example, or even whether she ate. When we were tiny children, we thought Miss Lottie was a witch and we made up tales that we half believed ourselves about her exploits.<sup>22</sup> We were far too sophisticated now, of course, to believe the witch nonsense. But old fears have a way of clinging like cobwebs, and so when we sighted the tumbledown shack, we had to stop to reinforce our nerves.

[20] "Look, there she is," I whispered, forgetting that Miss Lottie could not possibly have heard me from that distance. "She's fooling with them crazy flowers."

"Yeh, look at 'er."

Miss Lottie's marigolds were perhaps the strangest part of the picture. Certainly they did not fit in with the crumbling decay of the rest of her yard. Beyond the dusty brown yard, in front of the sorry gray house, rose suddenly and shockingly a dazzling strip of bright blossoms, clumped together in enormous mounds, warm and passionate and sun-golden. The old black witch-woman worked on them all summer, every summer, down on her creaky knees, weeding and cultivating and arranging, while the house crumbled and John Burke rocked. For some perverse reason, we children hated those marigolds. They interfered with the perfect ugliness of the place; they were too beautiful; they said too much that we could not understand; they did not make sense. There was something in the vigor with which the old woman destroyed the weeds that intimidated<sup>23</sup> us. It should have been a comical sight — the old woman with the man's hat on her cropped white head, leaning over the bright mounds, her big backside in the air — but it wasn't comical, it was something we could not name. We had to annoy her by whizzing a pebble into her flowers or by yelling a dirty word, then dancing away from her rage, reveling<sup>24</sup> in our youth and mocking her age. Actually, I think it was the flowers we wanted to destroy, but nobody had the nerve to try it, not even Joey, who was usually fool enough to try anything.

"Y'all git some stones," commanded Joey now and was met with instant giggling obedience as everyone except me began to gather pebbles from the dusty ground. "Come on, Lizabeth."

I just stood there peering through the bushes, torn between wanting to join the fun and feeling that it was all a bit silly.

[25] "You scared, Lizabeth?"

I cursed and spat on the ground — my favorite gesture of phony bravado.<sup>25</sup> "Y'all children get the stones, I'll show you how to use 'em."

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21. **Stoic** (*adjective*) not showing feelings or emotion

22. **Exploit** (*noun*) an adventure

23. **Intimidate** (*verb*) to frighten someone, especially to make them do something

24. **Revel** (*verb*) to get great pleasure from a situation or experience

25. a show of courage to impress someone

I said before that we children were not **consciously** aware of how thick were the bars of our cage. I wonder now, though, whether we were not more aware of it than I thought. Perhaps we had some dim notion of what we were, and how little chance we had of being anything else. Otherwise, why would we have been so preoccupied<sup>26</sup> with destruction? Anyway, the pebbles were collected quickly, and everybody looked at me to begin the fun.

"Come on, y'all."

We crept to the edge of the bushes that bordered the narrow road in front of Miss Lottie's place. She was working placidly, kneeling over the flowers, her dark hand plunged into the golden mound. Suddenly zing — an expertly aimed stone cut the head off one of the blossoms.

[30] "Who out there?" Miss Lottie's backside came down and her head came up as her sharp eyes searched the bushes. "You better git!"

We had crouched down out of sight in the bushes, where we stifled the giggles that insisted on coming. Miss Lottie gazed warily across the road for a moment, then cautiously returned to her weeding. Zing — Joey sent a pebble into the blooms, and another marigold was beheaded.

Miss Lottie was enraged now. She began struggling to her feet, leaning on a rickety cane and shouting. "Y'all git! Go on home!" Then the rest of the kids let loose with their pebbles, storming the flowers and laughing wildly and senselessly at Miss Lottie's impotent rage. She shook her stick at us and started shakily toward the road crying, "Git 'long! John Burke! John Burke, come help!"

Then I lost my head entirely, mad with the power of inciting<sup>27</sup> such rage, and ran out of the bushes in the storm of pebbles, straight toward Miss Lottie, chanting madly, "Old witch, fell in a ditch, picked up a penny and thought she was rich!" The children screamed with delight, dropped their pebbles, and joined the crazy dance, swarming around Miss Lottie like bees and chanting, "Old lady witch!" while she screamed curses at us. The madness lasted only a moment, for John Burke, startled at last, lurched out of his chair, and we dashed for the bushes just as Miss Lottie's cane went whizzing at my head.

I did not join the merriment when the kids gathered again under the oak in our bare yard. Suddenly I was ashamed, and I did not like being ashamed. The child in me sulked and said it was all in fun, but the woman in me flinched at the thought of the malicious<sup>28</sup> attack that I had led. The mood lasted all afternoon. When we ate the beans and rice that was supper that night, I did not notice my father's silence, for he was always silent these days, nor did I notice my mother's absence, for she always worked until well into evening. Joey and I had a particularly bitter argument after supper; his exuberance<sup>29</sup> got on my nerves. Finally I stretched out upon the pallet<sup>30</sup> in the room we shared and fell into a fitful doze.

[35] When I awoke, somewhere in the middle of the night, my mother had returned, and I vaguely listened to the conversation that was audible through the thin walls that separated our rooms. At first I heard no words, only voices. My mother's voice was like a cool, dark room in summer — peaceful, soothing, quiet. I loved to listen to it; it made things seem all right somehow. But my father's voice cut through hers, shattering the peace.

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26. **Preoccupied** (*adjective*) concerned about only one thing

27. **Incite** (*verb*) to encourage or stir up violent behavior

28. **Malicious** (*adjective*) destructive or cruel

29. **Exuberance** (*adjective*) the quality of being full of energy and cheerfulness

30. a straw mattress

"Twenty-two years, Maybelle, twenty-two years," he was saying, "and I got nothing for you, nothing, nothing."

"It's all right, honey, you'll get something. Everybody out of work now, you know that."

"It ain't right. Ain't no man ought to eat his woman's food year in and year out, and see his children running wild. Ain't nothing right about that."

"Honey, you took good care of us when you had it. Ain't nobody got nothing nowadays."

- [40] "I ain't talking about nobody else, I'm talking about me. God knows I try." My mother said something I could not hear, and my father cried out louder, "What must a man do, tell me that?"

"Look, we ain't starving. I git paid every week, and Mrs. Ellis is real nice about giving me things. She gonna let me have Mr. Ellis's old coat for you this winter — "

"D— Mr. Ellis's coat! And d— his money! You think I want white folks' leavings?"

"D—, Maybelle" — and suddenly he sobbed, loudly and painfully, and cried helplessly and hopelessly in the dark night. I had never heard a man cry before. I did not know men ever cried. I covered my ears with my hands but could not cut off the sound of my father's harsh, painful, despairing sobs. My father was a strong man who could whisk a child upon his shoulders and go singing through the house. My father whittled toys for us, and laughed so loud that the great oak seemed to laugh with him, and taught us how to fish and hunt rabbits. How could it be that my father was crying? But the sobs went on, unstifled, finally quieting until I could hear my mother's voice, deep and rich, humming softly as she used to hum to a frightened child.

The world had lost its boundary lines. My mother, who was small and soft, was now the strength of the family; my father, who was the rock on which the family had been built, was sobbing like the tiniest child. Everything was suddenly out of tune, like a broken accordion. Where did I fit into this crazy picture? I do not now remember my thoughts, only a feeling of great bewilderment and fear.

- [45] Long after the sobbing and humming had stopped, I lay on the pallet, still as stone with my hands over my ears, wishing that I too could cry and be comforted. The night was silent now except for the sound of the crickets and of Joey's soft breathing. But the room was too crowded with fear to allow me to sleep, and finally, feeling the terrible aloneness of 4 A.M., I decided to awaken Joey.

"Ouch! What's the matter with you? What you want?" he demanded disagreeably when I had pinched and slapped him awake.

"Come on, wake up."

"What for? Go 'way."

I was lost for a reasonable reply. I could not say, "I'm scared and I don't want to be alone," so I merely said, "I'm going out. If you want to come, come on."

- [50] The promise of adventure awoke him. "Going out now? Where to, Lizabeth? What you going to do?"

I was pulling my dress over my head. Until now I had not thought of going out. "Just come on," I replied tersely.

I was out the window and halfway down the road before Joey caught up with me.

"Wait, Lizabeth, where you going?"

I was running as if the Furies<sup>31</sup> were after me, as perhaps they were — running silently and furiously until I came to where I had half known I was headed: to Miss Lottie's yard.

- [55] The half-dawn light was more eerie than complete darkness, and in it the old house was like the ruin that my world had become — foul and crumbling, a grotesque caricature.<sup>32</sup> It looked haunted, but I was not afraid, because I was haunted too.

"Lizabeth, you lost your mind?" panted Joey.

I had indeed lost my mind, for all the smoldering emotions of that summer swelled in me and burst — the great need for my mother who was never there, the hopelessness of our poverty and degradation,<sup>33</sup> the bewilderment of being neither child nor woman and yet both at once, the fear unleashed by my father's tears. And these feelings combined in one great impulse toward destruction.

"Lizabeth!"

I leaped furiously into the mounds of marigolds and pulled madly, trampling and pulling and destroying the perfect yellow blooms. The fresh smell of early morning and of dew-soaked marigolds spurred me on as I went tearing and mangling and sobbing while Joey tugged my dress or my waist crying, "Lizabeth, stop, please stop!"

- [60] And then I was sitting in the ruined little garden among the uprooted and ruined flowers, crying and crying, and it was too late to undo what I had done. Joey was sitting beside me, silent and frightened, not knowing what to say. Then, "Lizabeth, look!"

I opened my swollen eyes and saw in front of me a pair of large, calloused feet; my gaze lifted to the swollen legs, the age-distorted body clad in a tight cotton nightdress, and then the shadowed Indian face surrounded by stubby white hair. And there was no rage in the face now, now that the garden was destroyed and there was nothing any longer to be protected.

"M-miss Lottie!" I scrambled to my feet and just stood there and stared at her, and that was the moment when childhood faded and womanhood began. That violent, crazy act was the last act of childhood. For as I gazed at the immobile face with the sad, weary eyes, I gazed upon a kind of reality which is hidden to childhood. The witch was no longer a witch but only a broken old woman who had dared to create beauty in the midst of ugliness and sterility. She had been born in squalor<sup>34</sup> and lived in it all her life. Now at the end of that life she had nothing except a falling-down hut, a wrecked body, and John Burke, the mindless son of her passion. Whatever verve<sup>35</sup> there was left in her, whatever was of love and beauty and joy that had not been squeezed out by life, had been there in the marigolds she had so tenderly cared for.

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31. In Greek mythology, the Furies are three goddesses characterized by wild and violent anger.

32. an exaggerated image of a person

33. **Degradation** (*noun*) loss of pride or self-respect

34. the state of being extremely dirty and unpleasant

35. energy or enthusiasm

Of course I could not express the things that I knew about Miss Lottie as I stood there awkward and ashamed. The years have put words to the things I knew in that moment, and as I look back upon it, I know that that moment marked the end of **innocence**. **Innocence** involves an unseeing acceptance of things at face value, an ignorance of the area below the surface. In that humiliating moment I looked beyond myself and into the depths of another person. This was the beginning of compassion,<sup>36</sup> and one cannot have both compassion and **innocence**.

The years have taken me worlds away from that time and that place, from the dust and squalor of our lives, and from the bright thing that I destroyed in a blind, childish striking out at God knows what. Miss Lottie died long ago and many years have passed since I last saw her hut, completely barren at last, for despite my wild **contrition** she never planted marigolds again. Yet, there are times when the image of those passionate yellow mounds returns with a painful poignancy. For one does not have to be ignorant and poor to find that his life is as barren as the dusty yards of our town. And I too have planted marigolds.

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36. **Compassion** (*noun*) understanding and concern for others

## Text-Dependent Questions

**Directions:** For the following questions, choose the best answer or respond in complete sentences.

1. Which excerpt best describes the way growing up in poverty affected Lizabeth?
  - A. "Perhaps we had some dim notion of what we were, and how little chance we had of being anything else. Otherwise, why would we have been so preoccupied with destruction?" (Paragraph 27)
  - B. "The world had lost its boundary lines... Everything was suddenly out of tune, like a broken accordion. Where did I fit into this crazy picture?" (Paragraph 44)
  - C. "The promise of adventure awoke him. 'Going out now? Where to, Lizabeth? What you going to do?'" (Paragraph 50)
  - D. "Of course I could not express the things that I knew about Miss Lottie as I stood there awkward and ashamed." (Paragraph 63)
2. How does overhearing the conversation between her father and her mother affect Lizabeth? (Paragraphs 43-45)
  - A. Lizabeth regrets asking her brother for help.
  - B. Lizabeth becomes angry at her father.
  - C. Lizabeth becomes confused and afraid.
  - D. Lizabeth regrets the way she has treated Miss Lottie.
3. What do the marigolds represent?
  - A. youth and getting older
  - B. achievement and patience
  - C. hope and beauty in the world
  - D. nature and humans coexisting
4. Why does Lizabeth destroy the marigolds? (Paragraphs 57-59)
  - A. because of Miss Lottie's disrespect toward her father and mother
  - B. because they are the only beautiful thing in the midst of the community's poverty
  - C. because of Miss Lottie's wealth as compared to the poverty in the community
  - D. because the other kids in the community dared her to do it and it helped her standing among the other children
5. In paragraph 62-63, what led to Lizabeth's revelation about what she had done?
  - A. remembering the events of that day with adult eyes
  - B. looking into Miss Lottie's eyes and seeing her in a new way
  - C. discussing it with her parents after Miss Lottie told them what she had done
  - D. watching Joey's face change from joy to sadness as he realized what she had done

6. What does Lizabeth realize about what it means to grow up?
- A. Growing up means fighting to overcome obstacles in life.
  - B. Growing up means accepting responsibility for your actions.
  - C. Growing up means learning important lessons from the past.
  - D. Growing up means understanding other people besides yourself.
7. Lizabeth called the act of destroying Miss Lottie's marigolds her "last act of childhood." Looking back, what does that event make Lizabeth realize about herself and about Miss Lottie? Use evidence from the text to support your response.

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## Discussion Questions

**Directions:** Brainstorm your answers to the following questions in the space provided. Be prepared to share your original ideas in a class discussion.

1. Many stories share the theme of coming of age and the loss of innocence. What does it mean to “come of age” or “lose your childhood innocence?” Is this realization a necessary step to become an adult?
2. At the end of the story, Elizabeth said Miss Lottie never planted more marigolds. Why do you think that was? Why do you think this detail stood out in Elizabeth’s mind after so much time had passed?
3. Have you ever destroyed something that could not be replaced? What did you feel: sadness, contrition, shame, or some other feeling? Were you able to make amends? If so, what did you do? If not, how do you feel about it now?
4. Have you ever destroyed something when acting out in anger? Why do people do that? Does it solve their problems or usually create more problems?

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Class: \_\_\_\_\_

## Immigrants in Our Own Land

By Jimmy Santiago Baca  
1979

*Jimmy Santiago Baca (b. 1952) is an American writer of Apache and Chicano descent. This poem describes the experiences of people who leave their homes in search of a better life. As you read, take notes on the speaker's attitude toward dreams.*

- [1] We are born with dreams in our hearts,  
looking for better days ahead.  
At the gates we are given new papers,  
our old clothes are taken
- [5] and we are given overalls like mechanics wear.  
We are given shots and doctors ask questions.  
Then we gather in another room  
where counselors orient<sup>1</sup> us to the new land  
we will now live in. We take tests.
- [10] Some of us were craftsmen in the old world,  
good with our hands and proud of our work.  
Others were good with their heads.  
They used common sense like scholars  
use glasses and books to reach the world.
- [15] But most of us didn't finish high school.
- The old men who have lived here stare at us,  
from deep disturbed eyes, sulking, retreated.  
We pass them as they stand around idle,  
leaning on shovels and rakes or against walls.
- [20] Our expectations are high: in the old world,  
they talked about rehabilitation,<sup>2</sup>  
about being able to finish school,  
and learning an extra good trade.  
But right away we are sent to work as dishwashers,
- [25] to work in fields for three cents an hour.  
The administration says this is temporary  
so we go about our business, blacks with blacks,  
poor whites with poor whites,  
chicanos and indians<sup>3</sup> by themselves.
- [30] The administration says this is right,  
no mixing of cultures, let them stay apart,



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1. to help someone become familiar with a new place or situation  
2. the process of bringing someone back to a healthy and independent condition after an illness, an injury, substance addiction, or time in prison  
3. Here, the terms "Chicanos" and "Indians" refer to Mexican American and Native American people.

like in the old neighborhoods we came from.

We came here to get away from false promises,  
from dictators in our neighborhoods,  
[35] who wore blue suits and broke our doors down  
when they wanted, arrested us when they felt like,  
swinging clubs and shooting guns as they pleased.  
But it's no different here. It's all concentrated.  
The doctors don't care, our bodies decay,  
[40] our minds deteriorate,<sup>4</sup> we learn nothing of value.  
Our lives don't get better, we go down quick.

My cell is crisscrossed with laundry lines,  
my T-shirts, boxer shorts, socks and pants are drying.  
Just like it used to be in my neighborhood:  
[45] from all the tenements<sup>5</sup> laundry hung window to window.  
Across the way Joey is sticking his hands  
through the bars to hand Felipe a cigarette,  
men are hollering back and forth cell to cell,  
saying their sinks don't work,  
[50] or somebody downstairs hollers angrily  
about a toilet overflowing,  
or that the heaters don't work.

I ask Coyote next door to shoot me over  
a little more soap to finish my laundry.  
[55] I look down and see new immigrants coming in,  
mattresses rolled up and on their shoulders,  
new haircuts and brogan boots,<sup>6</sup>  
looking around, each with a dream in their heart,  
thinking they'll get a chance to change their lives.

But in the end, some will just sit around  
talking about how good the old world was.  
Some of the younger ones will become gangsters.  
Some will die and others will go on living  
without a soul, a future, or a reason to live.  
[60] Some will make it out of here with hate in their eyes,  
but so very few make it out of here as human  
as they came in, they leave wondering what good they are now  
as they look at their hands so long away from their tools,  
as they look at themselves, so long gone from their families,  
[65] so long gone from life itself, so many things have changed.  
[70]

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4. to become worse over time

5. an apartment or similar residence

6. heavy, ankle-high boots

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## Text-Dependent Questions

**Directions:** For the following questions, choose the best answer or respond in complete sentences.

1. PART A: Which TWO sentences best describe main themes of the poem?
  - A. The cruel reality that many immigrants face can gradually rob them of their humanity.
  - B. Things are always changing, so people should make decisions without fear of change.
  - C. As people grow older, they must evaluate — and sometimes give up — their dreams.
  - D. People who wish to improve their own lives should heed the lessons of their elders.
  - E. Many people mistakenly believe that life will improve if they start over in a new place.
  - F. As long as they work hard, all immigrants who come to this country can enjoy success.
  
2. PART B: Which of the following TWO quotes best support the answer to Part A?
  - A. “The old men who have lived here stare at us / from deep disturbed eyes” (Lines 16-17)
  - B. “The administration says this is temporary / so we go about our business” (Lines 26-27)
  - C. “The doctors don’t care, our bodies decay” (Line 39)
  - D. “with a dream in their heart, / thinking they’ll get a chance to change their lives.” (Lines 58-59)
  - E. “others will go on living / without a soul, a future, or a reason to live.” (Lines 63-64)
  - F. “gone from life itself, so many things have changed.” (Line 70)
  
3. How does working in roles like dishwasher and field hand initially affect the speaker?
  - A. The speaker is satisfied at first with these opportunities to earn money.
  - B. The speaker feels disappointed but believes that things will quickly get better.
  - C. The speaker wishes to complain about this poor treatment to the administration.
  - D. The speaker feels upset but understands that everyone must start at the bottom.

4. What impact does the repetition of the word “some” in line 62, line 63, and line 65 have on the poem’s tone?
- A. It creates a curious tone, as the speaker wonders which path the immigrants will take in their lives.
  - B. It produces an informative tone, as the speaker recites a list of possible paths without displaying emotion.
  - C. It creates a resigned tone, as the speaker sees little hope in the future lives of the new immigrants.
  - D. It produces a cautionary tone, as the speaker warns young people of the consequences of giving up their dreams.

5. How does the speaker’s point of view evolve between stanza 2 and stanza 5?

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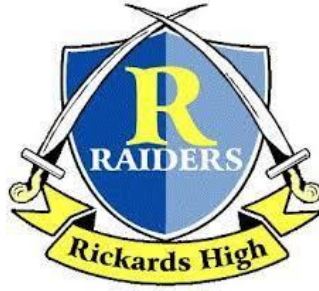
## Discussion Questions

**Directions:** Brainstorm your answers to the following questions in the space provided. Be prepared to share your original ideas in a class discussion.

1. In the poem, the immigrants end up doing tasks such as washing dishes and working in the fields, even though they may have previously been craftspeople or scholars. What happens to these identities by the end of the poem? In your opinion, can someone's identity be taken away? Why or why not? What might make it hard to hold on to one's identity?
2. In the last stanza of the poem, the speaker seems to suggest that the immigrants never had much of a chance to begin with. To what extent do the immigrants have control over their own lives? Thinking about your own life, in what ways do you have control over your future? In what ways do you feel that you don't necessarily have control?
3. The speaker of the poem expresses the desire to finish school. In the context of the poem, why is education important? Why might the pursuit of a better education motivate people to leave their homes? Would you ever consider going somewhere far away in order to get a better education or to attend college?

## James S. Rickards High School Summer Reading

**Attention: Parents and Students!**



### Summer Reading Recommended Novels

Reading for pleasure is a frequent expectation throughout the school year. In preparation for this, the English department encourages students to read high interest novels throughout the summer. The following is a list of suggested novels. Feel free to choose from this list or to find something else that suits your interests:

**WHAT:** While there is no specific assignment required as you read, we strongly recommend annotating the text in such a way that you will have quick access to important ideas, evidence, etc. To guide your summer reading, here are some ideas that may help to increase your enjoyment of the novel:

- ✓ Close-read a section of the book and analyze how the author promotes his purpose through strategies;
- ✓ Meditate on how your own life is similar or different than the character(s) in the novel;
- ✓ Think about whether you agree, disagree, or qualify some of the author's thoughts or claims- use your own set of knowledge, personal experience/observations, outside readings or research, etc.

### NOVELS

**Theme:** Untold History

*Between Shades of Gray* by Ruta Sepetys

*Stamped: Racism, Antiracism, and You* by Jason Reynolds and Ibram X. Kendi

*Clap When You Land* by Elizabeth Acevedo

*American Girl* by Tony Talbot

**CONTACT INFO:** If you have any questions regarding our JSRHS Summer Reading Program, please feel free to contact Ms. O'Reilly or Ms. Cotton, JSRHS ELA Department Chair and Reading Coach ([oreillys@leonschools.net](mailto:oreillys@leonschools.net); [cottonta@leonschools.net](mailto:cottonta@leonschools.net))