

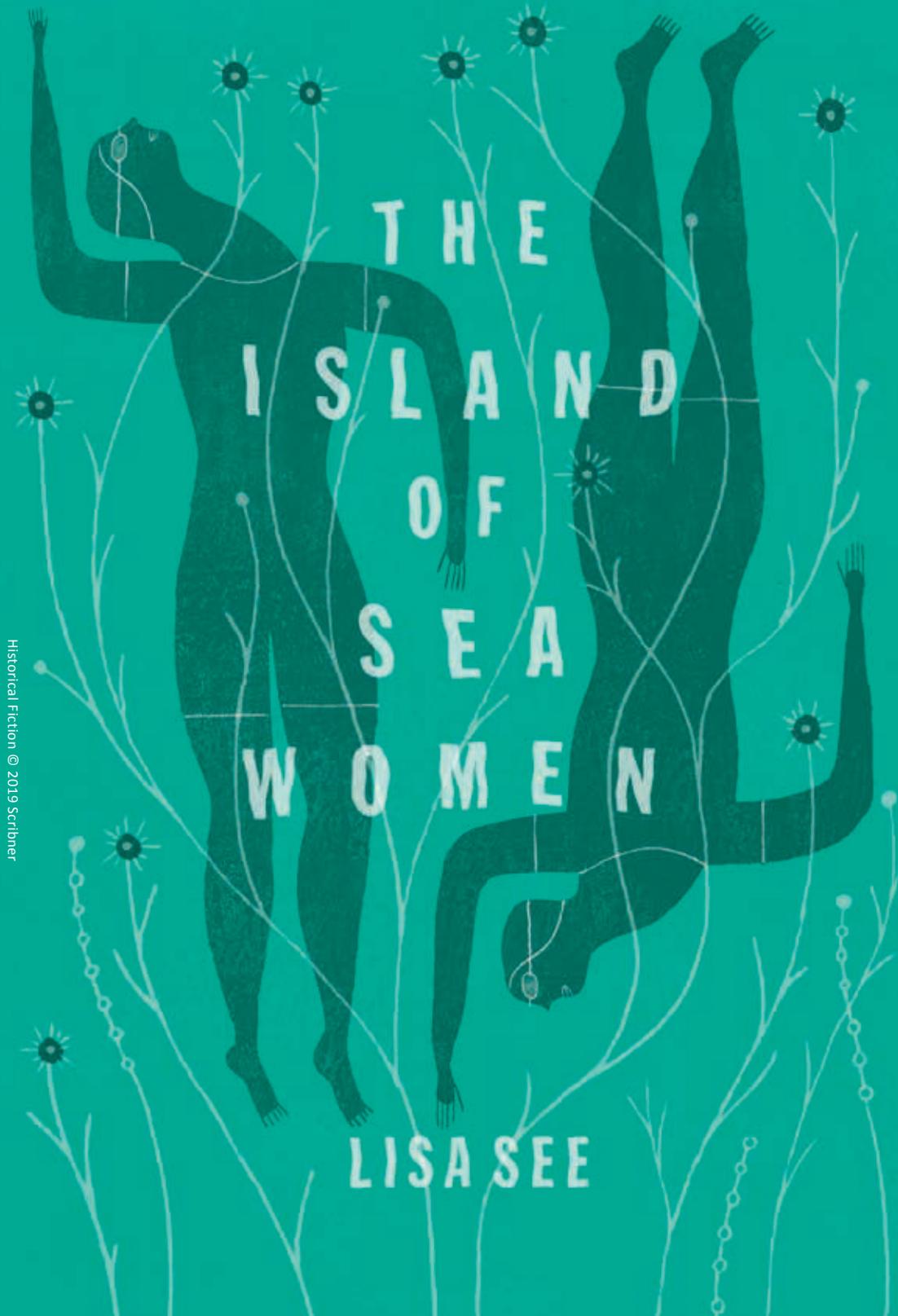


Maryland Humanities
108 West Centre Street
Baltimore, MD 21201

(410) 685-0095
www.mdhumanities.org

ONE MARYLAND ONE BOOK 2020

TEACHER'S GUIDE



Historical Fiction © 2019 Scribner

A PROGRAM OF



IN PARTNERSHIP WITH



LEAD SPONSORS



SPONSOR



ADDITIONAL SUPPORT FROM



WHAT IF EVERYONE READ THE SAME BOOK AT THE SAME TIME, THEN CAME TOGETHER TO TALK ABOUT IT?

When we read a great book, we can't wait to share the experience with others. That's one of the joys of reading. In this spirit, Maryland Humanities created One Maryland One Book to bring together diverse people in communities across the state through the shared experience of reading the same book.

Now in its thirteenth year, One Maryland One Book remains Maryland's only statewide community reading program. Each year, the selection process is guided by a common theme. The theme for 2020 is "Friendship."

The Maryland Center for the Book at Maryland Humanities partners with public libraries, high schools, colleges and universities, museums, bookstores, correctional facilities, and other organizations to bring book-centered discussions and other related events to communities across Maryland. But One Maryland One Book is not just about reading or literature; it is also about bringing people together for meaningful dialogue.

The book selected for 2020 is *The Island of Sea Women* by Lisa See.

GRAB YOUR COPY

Find a copy of *The Island of Sea Women* at your local library or bookstore and get reading! What if a copy of *The Island of Sea Women* finds you? If you're out and about, you might find copies of the book in unexpected places. Our Wandering Books can be found in a myriad of public spaces from bus stops to doctor's offices to coffee shops. If you find a copy, it's yours for a short time. Register the book online so we can see how far it travels (instructions are included inside the book). Read it, review it,

and then leave it somewhere for someone else to find and enjoy.

REACH OUT

Each year, nearly 20,000 Marylanders read the One Maryland One Book selection. How many of those people are your friends or family? Use the book to jumpstart a meaningful conversation in person or virtually with an old friend or to make a new one.

PULL UP A CHAIR

We invite you to join Maryland Humanities and thousands of other Marylanders at one of the many book discussions and related events happening around the state and online from mid-September to mid-November, including the author tour. To find One Maryland One Book programs your area, go to www.onemarylandonebook.org and click on Events.

For all the latest information, "like" or follow us:

 [facebook.com/MDCenterfortheBook](https://www.facebook.com/MDCenterfortheBook)

 [@MDHumanities](https://twitter.com/MDHumanities)

 [@MDHumanities](https://www.instagram.com/MDHumanities)

Be sure to check for the dates of Lisa See's appearances this fall.

After each One Maryland One Book program you attend, please visit omobfeedback.org and share your thoughts by taking our brief survey.

ONE MARYLAND ONE BOOK 2020 WELCOME LETTER



Thank you for joining Maryland Humanities for the thirteenth year of One Maryland One Book, our state's largest reading and discussion program. Since 2008, readers across Maryland have embraced our annual tradition of bringing people together through the reading of one book selected by members of Maryland's literary community. This year, we find ourselves in a world that looks very different than it has at any time in recent history. It has been a time of terrible loss for so many. What this loss has wrought is a coming together that is burgeoning and brings us hope, as we push towards a brighter future. One of the ways that we, and countless others, have found hope (and escape) in 2020 is through literature. Literature encourages us to reflect, brings us joy, pushes us to know ourselves better, and offers a window into the lives of those near and far.

Each year we explore the power of literature through discussions and events across the state. Whether in a friend's home for a book club, at libraries, in high school or university classrooms, at senior centers, or in correctional facilities, thousands of Marylanders connect in their communities to read our chosen book. Although many gatherings may take place virtually this year, this shared experience lies at the heart of One Maryland One Book. Whether you read with us every year or are new to the program, welcome!

The Island of Sea Women takes us into the lives of a close-knit community of strong and spirited Korean women, offering a glimpse of a past time through the rich culture of the haenyeo. Spanning decades and several wars, the story reveals insights into details rarely taught during our formal education—the personal impact decades of conflict has on the people who fight in wars and the people where those wars are fought. At its core, this is a book about friendship in all its joys and complications. Young-sook and Mi-ja faced great adversity, both in their lives and their bond. As you make your way through the story, you will find yourself examining the innate endurance of friendship and the role of forgiveness.

We encourage you to pick up a copy of *The Island of Sea Women* and join the conversation at one of our many public discussion programs across the state, whether in person or online. A program of the Maryland Center for the Book at Maryland Humanities, One Maryland One Book is made possible each year through the generosity of our sponsors and community partners. We greatly thank them for their support. Find out how you can get involved at www.onemarylandonebook.org.

Please join us!

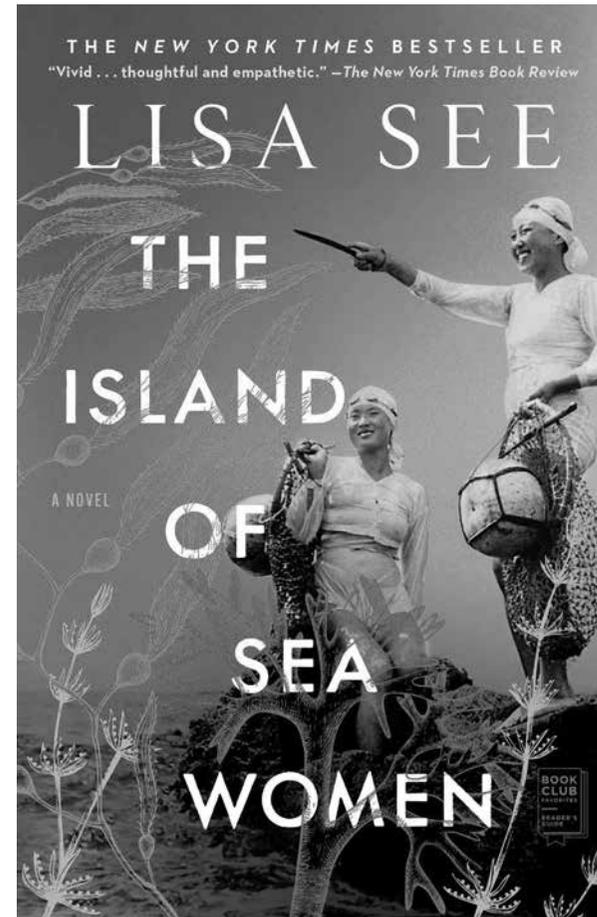
Cynthia Raposo, Board Chair
Aaron Heinsman, Acting Executive Director

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

LISA SEE—In her beloved *New York Times* bestsellers, which include *Snow Flower and the Secret Fan*, *Peony in Love*, *Shanghai Girls*, *Dreams of Joy*, *China Dolls*, and *The Tea Girl of Hummingbird Lane*, Lisa See brilliantly illuminates the immigrant experience and the indissoluble bonds between women. Her newest novel is a story of family secrets and female friendship on a remote Korean Island. *The Island of Sea Women* introduces readers to the fierce and unforgettable women divers of Jeju Island and the dramatic history that shaped their lives. Her first book, the national bestseller and *New York Times* Notable Book *On Gold Mountain: The One Hundred Year Odyssey of My Chinese-American Family*, traces the journey of her great-grandfather, Fong See, who overcame obstacles at every step to become the 100-year-old godfather of Los Angeles's Chinatown and the patriarch of a sprawling family. See was the *Publishers Weekly* West Coast correspondent for thirteen years, and her articles have appeared in *Vogue*, *Self*, and *More*. <http://www.lyceumagency.com/speakers/lisa-see/>



Photo Credit Patricia Williams



ABOUT THE BOOK

Set on the Korean Island of Jeju, *The Island of Sea Women* follows Mi-ja and Young-sook, two girls from very different backgrounds, as they begin working in the sea with their village's all-female diving collective. Over many decades—through the Japanese colonialism of the 1930s and 1940s, World War II, the Korean War, and the era of cell phones and wet suits for the women divers—Mi-ja and Young-sook develop the closest of bonds. Nevertheless, their differences are impossible to ignore: Mi-ja is the daughter of a Japanese collaborator, forever marking her, and Young-sook was born into a long line of haenyeo and will inherit her mother's position leading the divers. After hundreds of dives and years of friendship, forces outside their control will push their relationship to the breaking point.

This beautiful, thoughtful novel illuminates a unique and unforgettable culture, one where the women are in charge, engaging in dangerous physical work, and the men take care of the children. A classic Lisa See story—one of women's friendships and the larger forces that shape them—*The Island of Sea Women* introduces readers to the fierce female divers of Jeju Island and the dramatic history that shaped their lives.

MARYLAND STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION COMMON CORE STANDARDS

RH.11-12.1 Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources, connecting insights gained from specific details to an understanding of the text as a whole.

RH.11-12.2 Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary that makes clear the relationships among the key details and ideas.

RH.11-12.3 Analyze a complex set of ideas or sequence of events and explain how specific individuals, ideas, or events interact and develop over the course of the text.

RH.11-12.4 Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in the text, including figurative, connotative, and technical meanings; analyze how an author uses and refines the meaning of a key term or terms over the course of a text.

RH.11-12.7 Integrate and evaluate multiple sources of information presented in diverse formats and media (e.g., visually, quantitatively, as well as in words) in order to address a question or solve a problem.

RL.1 Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.

RL.2 Determine two or more central ideas of a text and analyze their development over the course of the text, including how they interact and build on one another to produce a complex analysis; provide an objective summary of the text.

RL.3 Analyze how the author unfolds an analysis or series of ideas or events, including the order in which the points are made, how they are introduced and developed, and the connections that are drawn between them.

RL.4 Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in the text, including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze the impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone, including words with multiple meanings or language that is particularly fresh, engaging, or beautiful. (Include Shakespeare as well as other authors.)

RL.6 Determine an author's point of view or purpose in a text and analyze how an author uses rhetoric to advance that point of view or purpose.

SL.11-12.1 Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grades 11–12 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

SL.11-12.1c Propel conversations by posing and responding to questions that probe reasoning and evidence; ensure a hearing for a full range of positions on a topic or issue; clarify, verify, or challenge ideas and conclusions; and promote divergent and creative perspectives.

SL.11-12.3 Evaluate a speaker's point of view, reasoning, and use of evidence and rhetoric, assessing the stance, premises, links among ideas, word choice, points of emphasis, and tone used.

SL.11-12.4 Present information, findings, and supporting evidence, conveying a clear and distinct perspective, such that listeners can follow the line of reasoning, alternative or opposing perspectives are addressed, and the organization, development, substance, and style are appropriate to purpose, audience, and a range of formal and informal tasks.

W.11-12.1 Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts, using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence.

W.11-12.2 Write informative/explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas, concepts, and information clearly and accurately through the effective selection, organization, and analysis of content.

W.11-12.4 Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

W.11-12.6 Use technology, including the Internet, to produce, publish, and update individual or shared writing products in response to ongoing feedback, including new arguments or information.

W.11-12.9 Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.

GENERAL THEMES:

friendship; the importance/role of family; traditional values; strength of women; family secrets; responsibilities; independence; sacrifices; blame; guilt; forgiveness; love; preservation of culture; social injustice; trust; hope; determination; acceptance; compassion; empathy

SPECIAL NOTE: Teachers and students should be aware that in some segments of the book you will find realistic depictions of the horrors and tragedies of war, including violence and death.

CHARACTER CHART

- **Kim Sun-Sil “Mother”:** Young-sook’s mother; chief of the Sut-dong collective when Young-sook starts diving
- **Grandmother:** Young-sook’s grandmother; former haenyeo; despises the Japanese who killed her parents
- **Kim Young-sook:** protagonist of the story that spans 60+ years of her life; she is practical, hard-working, always concerned for her family; Mi-ja’s best friend
- **Yang Jun-bu:** Young-sook’s husband; school teacher in Bukchon; Do-saeng’s son
- **Min-lee:** first daughter of Young-sook and Jun-bu; born June 1945
- **Sung-soo:** first son of Young-sook and Jun-bu; born June 1946
- **Kyung-soo:** second son of Young-sook and Jun-bu; born 1947
- **Joon-lee:** second daughter of Young-sook and Jun-bu; born 1949
- **Yang Yu-ri:** Jun-bu’s good-humored yet querulous sister who he is later responsible for; Do-saeng’s daughter
- **Han Mi-ja:** an orphan who suffers due to her late father’s collaboration with the Japanese during Korea’s occupation; Young-Sook’s best friend
- **Lee Sang-mun:** Mi-ja’s husband; son of a Japanese collaborator; comes from money; lives in Jeju City
- **Lee Yo-chan:** Mi-ja and Sang-mun’s only son; born June 1945
- **Yang Do-saeng:** mother of Jun-bu and Yu-ri; becomes chief of the Sut-dong collective after Sun-Sil dies; Young-sook’s mother-in-law
- **Kang Gu-ja:** haenyeo who dives with Young-sook and Mi-ja; leaves home to dive in Vladivostok; sister of Gu-sun; becomes chief of the collective after Do-saeng retires
- **Kang Gu-sun:** sister of Gu-ja; haenyeo who dives with Young-sook and Mi-ja; leaves home to dive in Vladivostok; mother of Wan-soon
- **Wan-soon:** daughter of Gu-sun; becomes best friends with Min-lee
- **Yang Gi-won:** the chief of the collective in Bukchon
- **Shaman Kim:** the spiritual leader and guide for the people of Jeju; secretly she performs funerals and rites for lost souls

BEFORE READING QUESTIONS

1. Can friendships last after they encounter betrayal? Defend your answer with real-world examples.
2. Does today's society have expectations that children should follow in their parents' footsteps, either personally or professionally? Explain your response with support.
3. What people in your life have had the most influence on shaping who you are today?
4. How do personal experiences in one's life influence how one approaches challenges? Explain your answer with support.
5. Is it possible to modernize the world around us without sacrificing important traditional values?
6. Are people's motivations to survive internal, external, or both? Explain.

BEFORE READING ACTIVITIES:

ACTIVITY 1: SETTING

- Use Google Maps to locate Jeju, an island in the Korean strait, south of the Korean Peninsula, "known for three abundances: wind, stones, and women" (3).
- Research current statistics and demographics of Jeju and the country of South Korea, such as current population, education, average income, technological advancements, life expectancy, etc.
- Utilize terrain maps to analyze the mountains (such as Mount Halla) and volcanoes of the island, while noting the geographic hardships the Jeju people have endured
- Watch the two videos for a visual image of Jeju, its traditions, and culture:
"Jeju Island New 7 Wonders":
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IC0KajZrDoc>
"Jeju Island Travel Guide + Attractions Map":
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u_Q7Dkl7Aik
- Based on what you have learned about the protagonist's country, can you imagine living there? Why or why not?

ACTIVITY 2: CULTURE OF JEJU HAENYEO AND VOCABULARY:

Watch the following videos in order to comprehend the "superhuman" job that the main characters of the novel do for a living. Then answer the following questions: According to the haenyeo, what are their responsibilities to their diving collective and to the ecological system of the sea?

- Why are they considered heroines in their culture?
- Why must haenyeos have fearless hearts?
- What is gradually happening to the haenyeo culture?

"Haenyeo 360 Video (Virtual Reality Experience)" (6:45 min):

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AIYiPKi_Q7k

"Culture of Jeju Haenyeo (women divers)" (9:01 min):

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lk7DQLMKBTE>

Before reading the novel, define the following terms related to Jeju divers. Readers will encounter these terms repeatedly throughout the text, and some are defined in the videos provided: haenyeo, olle, chokpari, bulteok, sumbitori, tewak, buoy, bitchang, hoe, sickle, abalone, oreum

*Quizlet is a useful tool for vocabulary enrichment with images and pronunciations: quizlet.com

ACTIVITY 3: APHORISMS

Aphorisms, or concise statements of a principle or truth, are interspersed throughout the text in order to define the values of the Jeju culture. As you read, make a list of all of the aphorisms stated in the text. Then, comment on any three aphorisms you find that reflect your beliefs and values. You may also illustrate the aphorisms creatively. For free online educational drawing and painting tools, go to:

<https://www.educatorstechnology.com/2012/07/15-free-awesome-drawing-and-painting.html>

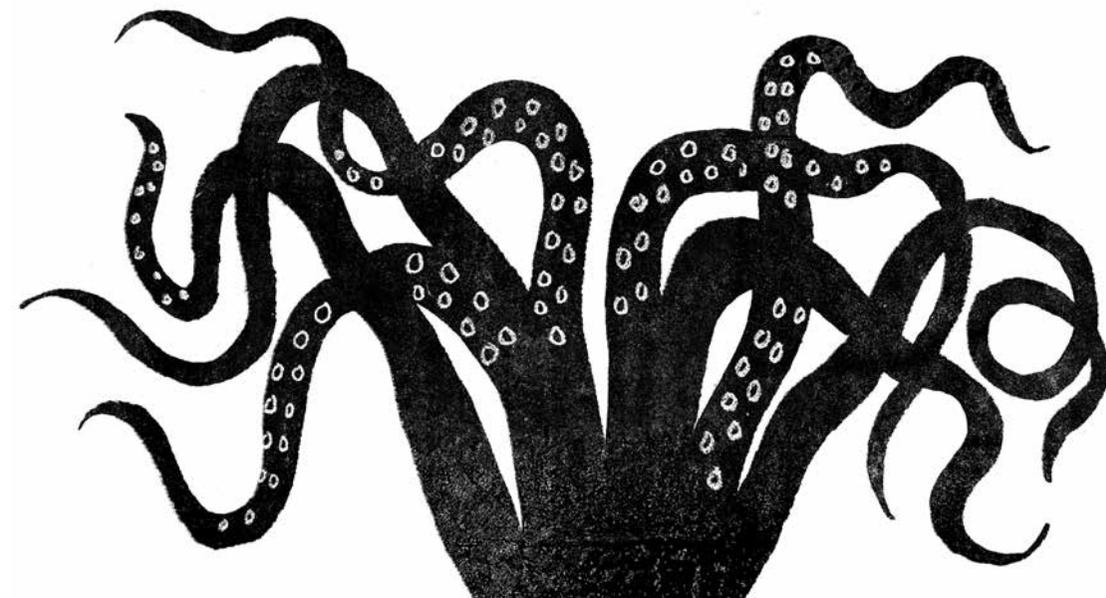
ACTIVITY 4: POLITICAL IMPACT OF COLONIALISM

Research how Japanese colonialism of the 1930s–1940s impacted the social, political, and economic aspects of the South Koreans and their island life.

ACTIVITY 5: SHAMANISM

Research the traditions and rituals of Shamanism. How might this system of beliefs help the haenyeo overcome their hardships of the dangerous water-work they practice? How might Shamanism bring comfort during tragedies? How might its romanticized view of nature and its ecological connectedness resonate with the people of Jeju?

For research: <http://www.jejuweekly.com/news/articleView.html?idxno=2926>



“Day 1: 2008” (pages 1–8)

1. What can be inferred about Young-sook’s attitude about the haenyeo being called “a cultural heritage treasure” (4) by the Korean government?
2. Describe the images that make Young-sook feel protected. Why are the similarities among those images significant?
3. When Young-sook is approached by several strangers she describes them as “scroung[ing],” “paw[ing],” (6) and “shark” like (7). What is the effect of this diction on the reader?
4. List specific examples of foreshadowing throughout the chapter and predict how they might be significant to the rest of the story.

“Swallowing Water Breath” (pages 11–33)

1. Describe what Young-sook’s life is like with her family. Why is her economic status significant information to be aware of in the first chapter?
2. What kind of person is Young-sook’s best friend, Mi-ja? (13-14). Is Mi-ja someone you would befriend? Why or why not?
3. What does Mother mean when she says to the women divers, “We harvest together, sort together, and sell together, because the sea itself is communal” (18)?
4. Mother explains the sumbisoro to the baby divers—the exhale after the dive that does not sound human—and says each haenyeo’s sumbisoro is unique. She also tells them “Our sumbisoro allows us first to serve our parents and then our children” (14). What does she mean by this? If the haenyeo work as one collective group, why is it significant that each diver has her own “special sound” ?
5. What secret brings Young-sook and Mi-ja closer? Why does Young-sook feel ashamed, and is she justified in feeling this way?
6. What do the stories of Grandmother Seolmundae offer to the women of Jeju?
7. What lesson do the baby divers learn from Yu-ri’s actions resulting in her current state?

“How Do We Fall in Love?” (pages 35–56)

1. Describe both Mi-ja and Young-sook using only three adjectives each. How is each girl’s nature alike and how are they different?
2. Reread the paragraph that begins “How do we fall in love?” (35–36). According to the author, what is the difference between how love and friendship are fostered?
3. What are the various reasons women were given the task of diving? What makes women more feasible as divers than men? What does this imply about the role of Jeju women in their community?
4. Briefly summarize the history of how Jeju became part of Korea. What do Grandmother, Mother, and the women in the diving collective want for Korea?
5. Analyze the effect of personification used in the following sentence: “Silence grabbed the men’s throats as they took in what she’d said and how she’d spoken” (54). Why did the Japanese soldiers react in this way?
6. Characterize how Young-sook sees her father thus far and discuss the significance of his role and responsibilities.

“Life Bubbles” (pages 57–71)

1. After Yu-ri’s accident, Young-sook discusses the tragedies of other divers, adding, “Whether from ghosts, guilt, or sorrow, a diver could easily be lulled into making a mistake” (58). Discuss how this comment relates back to the video, “Haenyeo: 360 Video,” presented prior to reading the novel. How does Young-sook’s sentiment compare to the worries of the haenyeo who is narrating the video? To watch the video again: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AIYiPKi_Q7k
2. What are the notable changes in Mother that Young-sook notices? Do these changing characteristics affect how Young-sook views Mother? Do they affect how the reader views Mother?
3. How do the haenyeo women view the men in their culture? What do the women expect and accept, and how does this add to the reader’s understanding of the overall attitude of the haenyeo?
4. How does Young-sook feel after her mother’s tragedy? Do you blame Young-sook for what happens to Mother? How does this tragedy affect Young-sook and Mi-ja’s relationship?
5. How does the Jeju culture honor death?
6. Is there some truth to Grandmother’s aphorism, “The ocean is better than your natal mother. The sea is forever” (71), or did she use it for comforting purposes only?

“Day 2: 2008” (pages 73–82)

1. Young-sook feels most comfortable when she is surrounded by nature, and for her, “life is better when she can live in harmony with nature—the wind, the tides, and the moon” (76), which reflects the Korean science of living in harmony with the natural world. Research how harmony in nature is essential for the prosperity and well-being of the Korean people. Possible sites: http://www.antiquealive.com/Blogs/Korean_Feng_Shui.html; <https://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/fpsyg.2018.02643/full>
2. List some specific details the author uses to reflect how life has taken a toll on the women divers (77). What effect do these details have on the reader? What is the purpose of incorporating them into this present-day chapter?
3. Explain how the cycle of harvesting is balanced and why it is significant to the story.
4. What mood is created through the description of Young-sook’s blackout from drowning? (79). Does this description create a mood that is different from what you would have expected during a drowning scene? Explain with details.
5. How does the tone change in the last paragraph of the chapter when Young-sook thinks back to Mi-ja being there to protect her? Why might this change be significant?



"Leaving-Home Water-Work" (pages 85–100)

1. What is Young-sook's message about complaining (85)? Do you think this attitude is unique to Young-sook, or common among the haenyeo? Support your response.
2. The reader learns that Young-sook's younger brother died from a fever when she was 16 years old and that his death directly impacted her remaining siblings with "grief and hopelessness" (86). Why do you think Young-sook never discusses her grief for her brother's death? How has the death of others impacted her thus far?
3. What was the purpose of including the interactions with the Americans when the haenyeo were diving in the waters in Vladivostok (90–91)?
4. How does the experience the girls had with Vlad and Alexi reflect their naiveté? What does the reader learn about each girl during that "adventure"?
5. Why does Gu-ja's insult hurt Mi-ja so deeply? If this incident were written from Mi-ja's point of view, what would she be thinking? Explain your response with support.
6. How do Mi-ja and Young-sook's experiences during "leaving-home water-work" in Vladivostok bring them closer?

"When Thoughts Turn to Weddings" (pages 101–120)

1. How has Jeju changed since the young women left the previous year? What do these changes reflect about the political atmosphere in July 1944?
2. Why do you suppose Mi-ja is as "pale as a jellyfish" (105) thirty minutes after meeting Lee Sang-mun? Why might she be so disinterested in and terse with Young-sook's questions?
3. Young-sook's father tells her that her brothers had been "conscripted" by the Japanese (109). Look up what the term means in the context of the political situation of South Korea at the time and discuss the significance to the plot.
4. Explain the following aphorism that Mi-ja shares: "When a woman gets married, she has the best food for three days. That must last her a lifetime" (111). How does this reflect a change in her attitude about marriage since they returned from leaving-home water-work?
5. Define the term "geomancer" found on page 115 and identify some of the core values of Korean society revealed by geomancy. How are these values similar or different from the core values of your own society?
6. What does Grandmother reveal about Mi-ja's experience with Sang-mun at the port? How does this impact Young-sook's way of thinking about Mi-ja?

"On the Sleeping Mat" (pages 121–142)

1. When Mi-ja comments on Young-sook's luck to be marrying someone she's known, Young-sook senses the "black dread" of Mi-ja's "coming circumstances" (123) that she doesn't understand. Why doesn't Young-sook ask her best friend about her internal struggles?
2. What are Young-sook's concerns about marrying Jun-bu? Are they reasonable concerns? Explain.
3. In what ways does Jun-bu reassure Young-sook on their wedding day that he will be a good husband?
4. In what ways do the wedding and death traditions in Jeju reflect the significance of the bonding ties to family?
5. How are contemporary beliefs versus traditional beliefs reflected through Jun-bu and Young-sook?
6. When Mi-ja expresses unhappiness about her marriage, Young-sook foreshadows the future by stating her regrets (137–138). Why is this a significant moment for both women? Are their actions congruent with who they have been thus far or have both women changed? Explain.

"A Golden Rope" (pages 143–154)

1. Traditional Korean culture is hierarchical, and the woman's role is one of maintaining harmony in the household and avoiding conflict. Her primary goal is to be a good daughter, wife, and mother, and she is expected to sacrifice herself for her family. Does Young-sook reflect these qualities? Do you think Do-saeng sees Young-sook as fulfilling her role in the family? Support your response with examples.
2. When the women return with their babies from Vladivostok, what do they learn about the war and Korea's allies? What is the atmosphere, and what do these events imply for the residents of Jeju?
3. Research the events of "8.15 Liberation Day" and how they impacted the people of Jeju.



“The Tail of a Skirt” (pages 155–167)

1. Why does Young-sook pray to Halmang Samseung to “plant a son” (157) in her versus a girl?
2. In an earlier chapter, Mother says to her collective, “You can’t blame our men for drinking. They have nothing to do and no purpose to push them through the day. They’re bored. And think how it must be for them to live in a household that depends on the tail of a skirt” (62). In this chapter, Jun-bu says, “I don’t want to be the kind of man to live in a household that depends on the tail of a skirt” (159). How do these two characters interpret the saying? How does this saying play out for various characters?
3. Analyze Gi-won’s statement regarding Jun-bu’s reaction to his wife’s pregnancy (162). Does her statement reflect traditional or nontraditional beliefs about the men in their culture? Explain.
4. What does Young-sook learn about Mi-ja’s father-in-law and husband? What beliefs about their culture prevent Mi-ja from moving to Bukchon? Should she give in to traditional beliefs to improve her situation?
5. Concentration camps came into existence in North Korea in the wake of the country’s liberation from Japanese colonial rule at the end of World War II. People who were considered “adversary class forces,” including landholders and Japanese collaborators like Sang-mun, were rounded up and detained in large facilities. In order to have a better understanding as to what might have happened to Sang-mun while he was detained, research how the prisoners were treated at these camps and what physical and mental torture they endured. Why do you think the author did not include these details in telling the story?

“Day 3: 2008” (pages 169–177)

1. Throughout the novel, the point of view changes from third person during Young-sook’s present-day experiences to first person during Young-sook’s past experiences. What impact does the change in the point of view have on the story? What impact does it have on the reader?
2. At 85 years old, Young-sook has lived through several governments controlling Korea and states that “governments come and go and that whoever and whatever comes next will eventually become rotten” (171). Do you agree or disagree with her observation? Use specific examples to support your position.
3. The author foreshadows events with negative images that “clutter the front of [Young-sook’s] mind, and she’s grateful in some way, because deeper, more persistent memories of screaming and begging keep floating into view,” and she even tries to relax by “slowly working her way up to her forehead, and back down again” (171). How does this imagery reflect her diving process? What is the author’s purpose for creating these images?
4. Analyze Young-sook’s statement that “The past is the present. The present is the future” (174).
5. What new information does the reader learn about Young-sook’s family? What do her children’s successes reflect about Young-sook as the matriarch of the family?

“The Shadow of a Nightmare” (pages 181–197)

1. How do Jun-bu and other people from Jeju view the United States Army Military Government in Korea? What is significant about the comment, “It was as if Americans didn’t understand what they’d inherited” (182)?
2. Analyze the importance of Mi-ja’s response to Young-sook’s question, “Are you happy?” (183). What is happening to their friendship? Why?
3. Many cultures superstitiously believe that things happen in sets of three, and this is no different from the people of Jeju (184). Humans are naturally pattern-seeking, and searching for and labeling triads can give people a sense of control. Do you believe this to be true about the Jeju culture, or are there other reasons for their superstitions? Use specific examples for proof.
4. What was the South Korean Labor Party protesting? What incident created more upheaval for the protestors? What tone is set through Sang-mun’s actions immediately after the incident?
5. How do the newspapers incite fear and anger in the citizens of South Korea? What influences how the citizens interpret the news? Provide other examples from history when governments used the media to control their citizens.

“The Ring of Fire” (pages 199–215)

1. Why does Jun-bu smile and shake his head at Young-sook’s plan for Min-lee’s future? Do you believe Young-sook is being “practical” and thinking “ahead” (200), or do you think Jun-bu is being practical about his child’s future in this situation? Explain.
2. How has the power in the community shifted from its existence for centuries? What is significant about this shift in power?
3. Describe the changes in Mi-ja when she visits Young-sook (207–209). Are Mi-ja’s attitude and appearance alarming or predictable? Explain your response.
4. Young-sook mentions that “The Americans may not have actively participated in the atrocities, but they did nothing to prevent them either” (213). Is the author making a correlation between the Americans’ behavior with the Koreans and Young-sook’s behavior with Mi-ja? Support your reasoning.



“Life-Giving Air” (pages 217–231)

1. What does the story of Kim Mandeok (174, 217) represent for the people of Jeju?
2. What can be inferred by the fact that Mi-ja is so shaken by the dead, bloody bodies, but Young-sook and Min-lee are not? What does this reflect about their experiences and living situations?
3. Young-sook wavers with her trust toward Mi-ja (222). What is significant about the moments when she trusts her? Explain with support from the text thus far.
4. Analyze the author’s purpose and effect of the image: “Above us, black crows circled” (225).
5. Analyze the significance of the last line of the chapter: “When I couldn’t hold it any longer, I sucked in not the quick death of seawater but instead unforgiving, unrelenting, life-giving air” (231). How does this quotation relate to a prevalent theme in the novel?
6. Although the readers get a first-hand description of the tragic Jeju 4.3 Incident, there is much more to the massacre that still lives in the hearts of the Jeju people today. The casualties are second only to the Korean War in modern Korean history, and in the tumultuous time following the liberation from Japanese colonial rule, the Jeju people suffered a terrible loss of life and property. Research the 4.3 Incident to prove or disprove the accuracy of the depiction of the event in this novel.

Possible Resources:

<http://thejeumassacre.com/col-james-a-casteel/?ckattempt=1>
https://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Jeju_Uprising
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2juevklD158>

“The Village of Widows” (pages 233–247)

1. What other historical atrocities are similar to the events that followed the 4.3 Incident (233–234)? What lessons can be learned about the repeated degradation of survivors in tragedies such as this?
2. Why does Min-lee stick to her mother “like an octopus on a rock” (234) rather than pull away because she is emotionally hurt?
3. What is the meaning of the aphorism: “You aren’t aware your clothes are getting wet in the rain” (234)? How can this truism about life apply to your personal experiences?
4. What various insights give Young-sook the will to live? Where has she learned her volition to survive?
5. What does the reader learn about this culture’s beliefs and traditions, even after repeated natural disasters strike Jeju?
6. Is there any validity in Mi-ja’s hurtful comments she makes to Young-sook? Does Mi-ja deserve a right to explain what happened at the 4.3 Incident? Is Mi-ja accurate in saying that Young-sook is “not the only victim” (247) who has suffered? Support your response.

“Big Eyes” (pages 249–253)

1. How did the Korean War, mentioned as the 6.25 War (249), impact the people of Jeju? How did it shape the modern world? If necessary, use the following links for research:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=32&v=OF_Ts_6oSi8&feature=emb_title
<https://www.history.com/news/8-things-you-should-know-about-the-korean-war>
<https://www.history.com/this-day-in-history/korean-war-begins>
2. What is the significance of the overall tone of the lyrics the haenyeo sing (250) before this dive? Watch a video of modern day haenyeo singing before a dive:
<https://www.dailymail.co.uk/video/travel/video-1189776/Haenyeo-Women-Sea-perform-song-dive.html>
“Jeju Haenyeo divers and their traditional work song ‘leodo Sana’”:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ddCD78_mE8k
3. Analyze how the structure of the following sentences reflects their purpose: “Imagine that for a moment. Day after day. Month after month. Seeing and smelling death...” (252).
4. How are Young-sook’s “big eyes” (253) a symbol of something more significant?

“Day 4: 2008” (pages 255–264)

1. Young-sook mentions all of her family members who have died, and although she misses them, death has become an integral part of every stage of her life. How is death viewed by Young-sook and the other women in the story? How is it feared?
2. In the 1970s, the Republic of Korea realized that the people could improve their own living conditions by cooperating with each other, and so they created the New Village Movement; however, Young-sook sees it as something that has diminished “much of the island’s charm” (258). Does her opinion remain true to her character throughout the story, or does she change in her older years? Explain using support. (See article for further explanation of the SMU)
“Saemaul Undong – The Republic of Korea’s New Village Movement, Part 1”:
<https://mclid.org/2016/03/29/saemaul-undong-the-republic-of-koreas-new-village-movement-part-1/>
3. The speaker at the commemoration for the Jeju April 3 Peace Park asks the crowd, “Should we blame the Americans? Even if they didn’t directly kill anyone, thousands of deaths occurred under their watch, but they do not take responsibility. And not once did they intervene to stop the bloodshed” (262). Should America be blamed for its disregard of Korean lives? How do comments such as these make you feel about America and its role in the massacre? See the articles below for more information about what has happened in recent years.
<https://www.nknews.org/2015/04/koreas-jeju-massacre-bringing-americas-role-to-light/>
https://www.upi.com/Top_News/World-News/2019/04/01/South-Korea-Jeju-Massacre-victims-seek-reparations-ahead-of-anniversary/6571554122095/
4. How do the rubbings illustrate the friendship between Mi-ja and Young-sook? What do they represent for Young-sook in her process of healing (264)?

“Years of Secrecy” (pages 267–285)

1. How does the annual “Welcome the Goddess” ceremony (267) bring comfort following such a time of tragedy in the haenyeo’s lives?
2. Describe Joon-Lee’s character traits. In what ways is she similar to her father? In what ways is she similar to her mother?
3. Analyze the significance of the following quotation in relation to the main female characters: “As a result, our island had become more closed off. It was as if Jeju had once again turned into an island of exiles, all of us wandering souls” (273).
4. How does the haenyeo’s view of men affect their reactions toward the scientists who have come to study the haenyeo?
5. Analyze how Young-sook’s mother’s aphorism is proven by the scientists’ studies: “Every woman who enters the sea carries a coffin on her back” (17). What realizations can be made about the dangerous work of the haenyeo?
6. Why do Joon-Lee’s wants and desires deeply hurt Young-sook? Is it an antiquated belief that education leads to the disregard of traditions? Explain.

“The Vast Unknowable Sea” (pages 287–307)

1. Is it fair that Young-sook holds Yo-chan responsible for the sins of his mother? Explain with support.
2. What does Young-sook’s reaction to Min-lee’s comment regarding sex reflect about her relationship with her daughters (292)?
3. Create a list of details that foreshadow the incident with Wan-soon to determine the overall tone (295–298). Then, go back and reread the incident when Yu-ri almost drowns (25–27). What is significant about the differences reflected in these incidents?
4. Why do the people of Jeju believe in fate, destiny, and fortune telling (298)? Are these ancient theories part of Shamanism, or do they represent something deeper that the culture’s spiritual beliefs do not offer?
5. How does Young-sook interpret her family’s thoughts as they speak to her through Shaman Kim? If this story shared Mi-ja’s point of view, how would she have reacted to those thoughts? Explain.
6. What is the opportunity Teacher Oh offers for Joon-lee and why does Young-sook distrust it (305–306)?
7. Analyze what is being compared in the following metaphor: “The house became the scab I could not stop picking” (307). How is the figurative language effective?

“Day 4 (continued) 2008” (pages 309–315)

1. Clara recites the following Buddhist saying to Young-sook: “To understand everything is to forgive” (314). Why hasn’t Young-sook been able to forgive throughout her life when other women in her family and community have learned to forgive?

“Born a Cow” (pages 319–333)

1. Why might women of the Jeju culture favor Shamanism over Confucianism? What are the differences between the two religions? How would Young-sook’s experiences have been different if she and her family practiced Confucianism throughout her life?

For more information on the two religions, see the following links:

<https://asiasociety.org/education/historical-and-modern-religions-korea>

https://www.researchgate.net/publication/335261479_A_Meeting_of_Extremes_The_Symbiosis_of_Confucians_and_Shamans

2. Discuss whether the role of men and women changed over the course of the first 30-years of the story. Are the haenyeo still respected for their matrifocal culture (328), or did they lose independence and power within the culture by 1968? Explain with support.
3. As Joon-lee draws attention to her mother’s clandestine trips to Mi-ja’s house, she recites the saying, “Deep roots remain tangled underground” (332). How is this aphorism consistent with many of the Jeju women’s experiences and relationships in their lives? Cite several examples for support.

“A Guest for One Hundred Years” (pages 335–354)

1. Describe how the American soldiers are portrayed (335–337). How does this depiction reflect the way other cultures regard people from the United States?
2. Do you agree or disagree with Young-sook’s comment, “Children these days wanted easy lives. They didn’t have the physical or emotional strength of their grandmother or great-grandmother” (340)? Can this be said of children in our society today? Explain with proof.
3. Does revealing Mi-ja’s point of view create empathy for her character? Does it create more or less empathy for Young-sook’s character? Explain.
4. How are Joon-lee’s letters—which are censored, ignored, and hidden—symbolic of something greater throughout the story?

“Day 4 (continued): 2008” (pages 355–365)

1. Young-sook remembers her mother-in-law’s aphorism: “If you try to live, you can live on well” (355). Do you think she has tried to “live on well,” or has she spent her life carrying the burdens of the past? Support using examples.
2. How does the story come full circle at the end with the repeated phrase, “A breath, a breath, a breath...” (365)? What life lessons can the reader learn about love and friendship based on Mi-ja and Young-sook’s friendship?

AFTER READING QUESTIONS

1. What is the significance of the titles of the five parts in this novel: “Friendship,” “Love,” “Fear,” “Blame,” and “Forgiveness”? If the last section (“Day 4 (continued): 2008”) had a Part VI, what would the title be and why?
2. Lisa See focuses her story on forgiveness, not only on a personal level but also on a cultural one. Who deserves forgiveness in this story? What does it take to give and receive forgiveness?
3. If you lived Young-sook’s life, would you have hardened your heart and clung to blame for the sake of self-preservation? Would you have made choices that led to forgiveness? Do you value the same things in relationships as Young-sook, or do you value different things? Support your response with specific examples.
4. Discuss the impact of the unequal balance of power between men and women within the Jeju society.
5. When the girls first meet, Young-sook tackles Mi-ja for stealing from her family garden. Despite this encounter and differences in their background, was their relationship still destined for destruction and conflict? Was their relationship defined by their culture?

AFTER READING ACTIVITIES

ACTIVITY 1: THE HAPPY HAENYEO PROJECT

The Happy Haenyeo Project was started by Y. Zin to help protect the culture of Jeju’s women divers and promote worldwide awareness. Since 2012, Y. Zin has been visiting Jeju Island every year to meet the island’s haenyeo and take pictures of their everyday lives while capturing the dynamic moments of these divers working under the sea. Create your own version of Y. Zin’s project that promotes awareness of a specific aspect of your culture’s identity and resilience. Generate a montage of photos that reflects what is most impressive about the individuals, including communal attributes among those who are part of the culture.

Watch the following videos related to The Happy Haenyeo Project for ideas:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zrkW6gKIQIY>

https://www.vice.com/en_us/article/3k7g3j/haenyeo-korean-elderly-female-free-divers-y-zin-kim

<http://www.panthalassa.org/the-sea-women-of-south-korea/>

ACTIVITY 2: ECOLITERACY FROM JEJU TO MARYLAND

Entrenched in the culture of the haenyeo are practices to protect the marine ecosystem. Regarded as the common property of all, the sea is the source of their livelihood. The haenyeo release shellfish seed to promote the growth of baby turban shells and clams to thrive in the ocean. They carefully watch how the marine life changes due to fluctuating sea temperatures and, therefore, contribute to the protection and enrichment of the marine ecosystem.

Write a proposal to your local school board that requires all students in your school to take a course titled “Marine Ecoliteracy,” which incorporates understanding the principles that govern the health of the Earth and its marine ecosystem. By the end of the course, students should be “ecoliterate” and use what they learned to promote sustainable human communities. The course should reflect cooperation, democracy, the equitable distribution of resources, and a sustainable relationship with nature.

Here are some resources to get you started:

<https://baltimoreecosystemstudy.org/>

<https://www.caryinstitute.org/science/research-projects/baltimore-ecosystem-study>

<https://bluewaterbaltimore.org/learn/ecoliteracy-programming/>

<https://www.umces.edu/imet>

Proposal-Writing Resource for Teachers and Students:

<https://classroom.synonym.com/teach-kids-write-proposal-7735080.html>

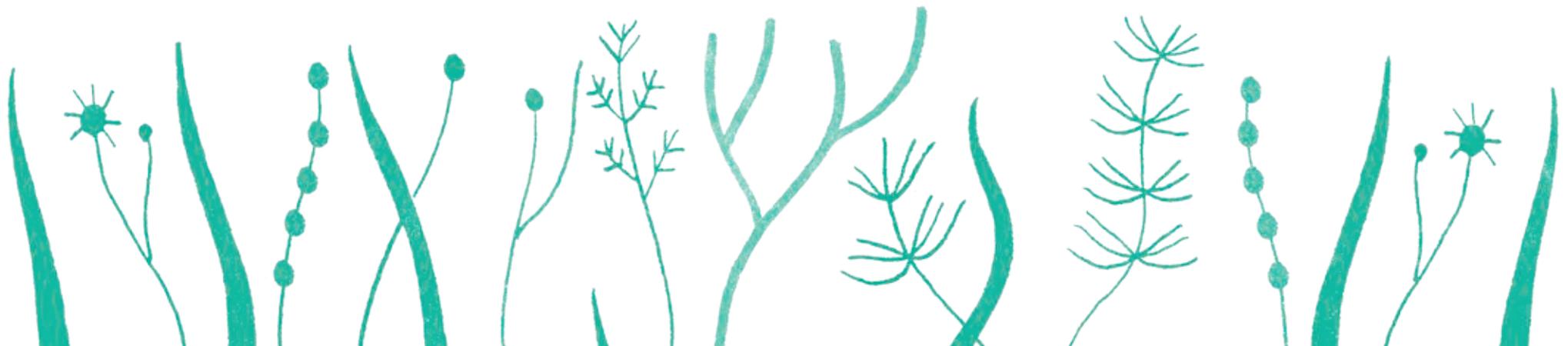
Environmental Volunteer Opportunities in Maryland:

https://mde.state.md.us/programs/Marylander/Pages/volunteer_opps.aspx

ACTIVITY 3: FORGIVENESS: “WANTING ‘YES’ AND GETTING ‘NO’”

Watch Fred Luskin’s video, “Wanting ‘Yes’ and Getting ‘No’” (5:16 min). One of Luskin’s main points is that “forgiveness is the lack of prejudice.” What does he mean by this? How can his message be applied to the various stages of Young-sook’s life? Provide specific examples from the text for support.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=22&v=qS6BL9AONNk&feature=emb_logo



ACTIVITY 4: RECONCILIATION

Read the article titled “South Korea Jeju Massacre Haunts the Memories of Survivors” by Elizabeth Shim from June 2019. Then discuss the following:

- What impact does a massacre such as the 4.3 Incident have on the families of the victims? The Jeju culture? South Korea as a whole?
- If the United States and past authoritarian South Korean governments don’t accept responsibility for their roles in the massacre, will the people of Jeju ever feel like the tragedy is reconciled? Do most humans need truth and justice to heal?
- Can this incident be compared to the 9/11 attacks on American soil? Although there is a 9/11 memorial, resources, compensation, services, and scholarships available for 9/11 victims and their families, many victims still suffer from mental health conditions, such as depression, anxiety, or PTSD.

https://www.upi.com/Top_News/World-News/2019/06/20/South-Korea-Jeju-Massacre-haunts-the-memories-of-survivors/1491561083862/

ACTIVITY 5: EXPLORING KOREAN ART

Take a virtual tour though the National Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art, Korea. Choose a piece of artwork that reflects any aspect of *The Island of Sea Women* and analyze it using the following questions:

- Who is the artist and what is the title of this piece of artwork?
- What’s going on in this artwork?
- What was your first reaction to this artwork? Why do you think you had the reaction?
- What connects this piece of artwork to a scene or character in the novel?
- What colors, lines, and shapes does this artist use to reflect ideas or themes that are prevalent in the novel?
- Does your opinion about the artwork change the longer you look at it? Why?
- Which area of the artwork is emphasized by the artist? Why? How does that area remind you of an aspect of the novel?

<https://artsandculture.google.com/partner/national-museum-of-modern-and-contemporary-art-korea>

More questions to ask when analyzing artwork:

<https://artclasscurator.com/82-questions-to-ask-about-a-work-of-art/>

The content and resources of this guide were created and compiled by Paige J. Schweitzer. Portions have been reprinted with permission from Scribner.

One Maryland One Book is sponsored by the Institute of Museum & Library Services via LSTA grant funds received from the Maryland State Library, as well as PNC Foundation and BGE. Additional support is provided by M&T Bank, the Citizens of Baltimore County, and an anonymous donor. One Maryland One Book is coordinated by the Maryland Center for the Book, a program of Maryland Humanities, in partnership with Enoch Pratt Free Library. Activities in Baltimore City are supported in part by the Creative Baltimore Fund and Mayor Bernard C. “Jack” Young.

Maryland Humanities is an educational nonprofit. Our mission is to create and support educational experiences in the humanities that inspire all Marylanders to embrace lifelong learning, exchange ideas openly, and enrich their communities. To learn more, visit www.mdhumanities.org.

