

I SURVIVED

BOOK CLUB

Name: _____

I Survived The Great Molasses Flood, 1919



CRITICAL-THINKING QUESTIONS AND REFLECTION ASSIGNMENT

CRITICAL-THINKING QUESTIONS:

1. How did the 1908 earthquake in Italy change Carmen's life, in ways both terrible and positive?

2. What does Nonna mean when she says, "Trees don't grow overnight"? Why does she write this to Carmen?

3. How does thinking about the Great War—and what she knows about molasses—change the way Carmen sees the molasses tank?

4. Why does Carmen feel sometimes like her heart is crumbling apart?



5. When Carmen thinks she overhears the Grassos planning to send her back to Italy, why does she dash out of the apartment? What is she feeling, and why?

6. How does Carmen's experience in the tidal wave after the earthquake help her in the molasses flood?

CRITICAL-THINKING QUESTIONS AND REFLECTION ASSIGNMENT *(CONTINUED)*

7. How can you tell that Papa and Carmen had—and still have—a special bond? How does this bond help her?

8. How is the Grasso's real "secret plan" different from the one that Carmen imagined?

9. Explain how the molasses flood was a "human-made disaster."

10. How did the molasses flood change the United States?

ESSAY ASSIGNMENT: Answer the organizer questions on the next page to help you brainstorm a three-paragraph reflection about what it means to "belong." Then use the information from your organizer to write your reflection.

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CRITICAL-THINKING QUESTIONS AND REFLECTION ASSIGNMENT *(CONTINUED)*

TWO-PARAGRAPH ESSAY ORGANIZER FOR *I SURVIVED THE GREAT MOLASSES FLOOD, 1919*

First, answer the questions below to brainstorm ideas for your first paragraph:

What does the world “belong” mean to you?

Next, answer the following questions for your second paragraph:

1. Where do you feel like you belong? Why do you think this? _____

2. Where DON'T you feel like you belong? Why do you think this? _____

Next, answer the question below to help you write a third and final paragraph.

Is the idea of “belonging” positive or negative? Or is it both?

Now write your essay on the back of this page or on a computer, using your answers above.

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ANSWERS

CRITICAL-THINKING QUESTIONS:

1. The 1908 earthquake in Italy changed Carmen's by taking her mother from her and ruining her village. But it is also what led Carmen's father to bring Carmen to America, so she could go to school and have other opportunities.
2. Nonna is telling Carmen that it takes time to adjust to a new place and feel like you belong there. She writes this to Carmen because Carmen writes to her saying that she doesn't understand why her father brought her to the North End of Boston, which is filled with trash and rats.
3. Carmen remembers learning, before the war, that molasses is used to make bombs. Now, as she looks at the tank and thinks about all the people who died in the war because of new weapons, the molasses tank no longer seems fun. Instead, it seems like something she and Tony should get away from.
4. Carmen might be feeling like her heart is crumbling apart because she lost her father, after losing her mother several years before. She's also far away from her Nonna, who is still back in Italy.
5. Carmen leaves because doesn't want to cry in front of the Grassos. She's upset because she doesn't want to go back to Italy, which would mean leaving all the friends she's made. It would also mean giving up on Papa's dream for her, and her dream for herself of having both a family and a career.
6. Carmen remembers that her father found an old shutter for them to float on. She realizes that she and Tony need to grab onto a piece of the wreckage and pull themselves out of the molasses.
7. Even after he's gone, Carmen hears Papa's voice in her head trying to help her when she's in the molasses flood. She also hears his voice when she's worrying about being sent back to Italy. Because of their bond, she's able to figure out what he's telling her.
8. Carmen imagined that the Grassos were planning to send her back to Italy. But in reality, the secret plan was to bring Nonna from Italy to visit her.
9. The molasses flood was caused by people who made bad decisions, like placing the tank in the middle of Boston. Also, the company that built the tank didn't test it properly to make sure it was strong enough, and they didn't listen to warnings about it.
10. The molasses flood changed the United States by making buildings—and us—safer. Because of the flood, laws were made to protect against disaster. Now, companies that want to build anything—tanks, houses, factories—have to get a permit from the city and the plans have to be approved.

ESSAY ASSIGNMENT: Answers will vary.