104 Class #4

Character: Jewett, “The White Heron”; Tan, “Two Kinds”

“A White Heron”

1. How does the rural setting for this story help shape Sylvia’s values? For example, why does she feel that “she never had been alive at all before she came to live on the farm”?

2. How do Sylvia’s mother and grandmother describe her? How does Sylvia describe herself?

3. How does Sylvia react when she hears the hunter’s whistle? Why does Jewett switch to the present tense here? Does she switch from past to present tense elsewhere?

4. What does Sylvia have in common with the hunter? What does she have in common with the heron? How does Sylvia’s relationship with the heron contrast with the young man’s?

5. What is Sylvia’s dilemma? What factors determine her course of action?

6. What is the significance of Sylvia’s climb to the top of the pine tree? What does she see up there that she has never seen before?

7. Analyze the last paragraph. What has Sylvia gained, and what has she lost? What has she preserved?

Tan, “Two Kinds”

1. What major characteristics about the narrator, Jing-Mei, are brought out in the story?

2. What is the setting of this story—where does it take place, and during what decade? Is this important to the story? In other words, how would the story be different if it were set in, say, Moscow, Idaho?

3. What advantages does the narrator have over other children in San Francisco? What disadvantages does she suffer?

4. Characterize the mother. Is she sympathetic? Why does the narrator's mother want her to excel at something?

5. How typical is Tan's story of the mother-daughter conflict?

Is the narrator right to ask her mother, "Why don't you like

me the way I am? I'm *not* a genius"?

Is the mother right to say, "Who ask you to be genius?. . . Only

ask you be your best. For you sake"?

6. The narrator says she doesn't try to learn the piano because she was determined "not to be anybody different." Does this sound believable? Why does Jing-Mei resist all efforts to develop her talents?

7. What does the ending mean? In what way are "Pleading Child" and "Perfectly Contented" two halves of the same song?

8. At the story’s end, how does Jing-Mei feel about her mother?

9. What’s this story about? What’s the subject?