1. By the end of the comic, how might Maya describe the identity “Chinese American”?

• Would Maya’s idea of “Chinese American” be different at any earlier points of the comic (ie: ch.4)?

• How might her understanding, awareness, or acceptance of Chinese American ethnic identity have changed from the beginning to the end of the comic?

2. To what degree does Maya choose to be “Chinese American” in this comic?  How, why, at what points?  To what degree is “Chinese American” identity ascribed to her?

3. Premise: every (speaking) character in this comic is Chinese American.  In what ways do Maya’s interactions with these characters shape her idea of Chinese American identity?

4. Multiple images in “The Auntie” can be interpreted as a juxtaposition of ethnic symbols.  Select one pair of symbols (ie: ch.5) and explain how they contrast with one another.

• Try to locate the source, in place, time, meaning, and practice rather than calling it, “Chinese tradition” or “European / American tradition”

For Question 1:

By the end of the comic, Maya may describe the identity “Chinese American” as those who lives in America, have the same living habits with American while still have faith in and respect traditional Chinese culture. In the comic, we observe that just like normal American girls would do, Maya also loves fashion and dates with a boy in a coffee house (4). Meanwhile, she doesn’t totally reject Auntie Haicheng and poses attitude toward Auntie. In fact, throughout the comic, Maya is getting familiar with Auntie. Instead of being afraid of the spirit, Maya shows respect to Auntie Haicheng and try getting along with her.

Maya’s idea of “Chinese American” changes throughout the comic. In chapter 1, the abrupt appearing of Auntie Haicheng horrified her, indicating Maya was totally unaware of the traditional Chinese custom. By contrast, her parents are quite familiar with the spirit and criticize Maya for her rule behavior. At first, Maya’s attitude toward the “Chinese American” identity is unfamiliar and shows afraid. As the story process, she communicates with Auntie more while her fear decreases. In chapter 3, Maya keeps listening to Auntie’s suggestion (or maybe complaint) and talk back to her. From this scene, we can see that Maya is not so horrified as she presented in chapter 1. She becomes more clam and confident when communicating with Auntie. In the last two chapter, Maya is totally not afraid of Auntie or other spirits anymore which her familiarity and acceptance to the “Chinese American” identity.

2. In the comic, Maya represent her “Chinese American” identity as an integrated one which identify both the Chinese and American identities. In the comic, we can see Maya’s living style is same as a typical American: picking dress she like in “18 Eternal” and dating with a boy in coffee house instead of a more Chinese style tea house. However, she also identifies the Chinese identity. In chapter VI, Auntie is presented with a bunch of chrysanthemums. This kind of flower has a meaning of remember and respect in traditional Chinese culture. We can see that Maya identifies her “Chinese American” as a bicultural ethnic identity.

I think there are two factors that ascribed to Maya’s identification of “Chinese American” identity which are individual factors and interactive factors. In chapter IV, Maya said that she “left California to move back home and take care of my[her] parents”. This behavior is more commonly seen in Chinese people rather than in American people. Due to some Chinese moral standard, younger generations have the oblige to treat their elder parents. Based on this fact, we can say that Maya’s identification of “Chinese American” is partly attributed to herself. The interactive factor refers to her parents and people who she has met has also attributed to her formation of this identity. For example, Maya was totally freaked out the first time she saw Auntie Haicheng, a spirit. However, when she tried to warn her parents, her parents act the opposite as she did. They are not just familiar with Auntie but also blame Maya for her impolite behavior. At that time, Maya may realize that there’s something different between she and her family. To be more specific, the difference is her family’s realization of themselves as the ethnic group members while Maya is excluded at that time. This is a potential motivation for Maya to try to understand, aware and accept the idea of her “Chinese American” identity.