

## HELIE LEE'S BOOK SYNOPSIS

### STILL LIFE WITH RICE

A Young American Woman Discovers the Life and Legacy of Her Korean Grandmother.

In order to really understand who we are and where we came from, many people look to the past for answers. In this "compelling" memoir (*Kirkus Reviews*), Helie Lee does just that. Driven to discover her own true identity and recover her family's history, she explores the past of a woman very close to her – her Korean grandmother Hongyong Baek. In **STILL LIFE WITH RICE: A Young American Woman Discovers the Life and Legacy of Her Korean Grandmother** (Scribner; March 4, 1996; \$24.00), Lee illuminates that foreign yet intimate terrain navigated by today's Asian-American women. Writing in her grandmother's voice, Lee re-creates a culture that is both seductively exotic and strangely familiar.

Born in 1912 to aristocratic parents, Hongyong, like her two sisters and one brother, was supposed to follow a certain direction in life. Raised with the notion that a woman's role is to serve and never take, she and her sisters were to be obedient daughters, demure wives, and efficient keepers of the house. Yet, the pressure to be a positive role model fell on Hongyong as her youngest sister led a rebellious life and the middle sister was a cripple. Having been sold into marriage by her parents, Hongyong set off for the life she was to lead – that of a dutiful wife who produced bountiful children.

During the first Japanese invasion into Korea, Hongyong's life turned around. Panic-stricken, she escaped with her husband and children and moved to China in search of peace. There, Hongyong chose to explore the unknown. She became a successful entrepreneur in the restaurant business and partook in the world of opium smuggling. Later she opened her mind to Christianity and became adept at the healing art of *Chiryō*. Unfortunately, as the war took away the life of her son and she lost her husband to diphtheria, Hongyong decided to escape once again and, in 1972, fled to downtown Los Angeles where she reestablished her *Chiryō* practice.

STILL LIFE WITH RICE is a radiant story which explores issues that touch all of us: the complex nature of family relations, the impact of cultural and social upheaval on an individual, and the rapidly changing lives of women in this century.

### STILL LIFE WITH RICE

#### TEACHING GUIDE

## THE CREATIVE USE OF NONFICTION IN THE CLASSROOM: The Power Of Memoir And Autobiography

Created by Jennifer Tedford

Beverly Hills High School English Teacher & English Dept. Co-Chair

*What I find liberating about memoir and autobiography is their power to engage even the most resistant student. The backlash of presenting at conferences as a teacher from Beverly Hills High School is the misconception people have about our student population. True, we do not face the violence and socioeconomic concerns many districts face, but this does not mean all of our students are top achievers who come to us with no problems. We are a public school with its share of students who have a variety of concerns: cultural, EL, academic and emotional problems are a challenge to any public school. And yet, I still believe in the power of great literature to win over reluctant readers, finding great success in memoir and autobiography. Autobiography, as Elie Wiesel effectively describes it, is a testament, a true account of a real life. Even the least academic student can appreciate this truth.*

Jennifer Tedford

#### **Still Life With Rice – Analytical and Reflective Writing Options:**

- Dairy Entry:

In Helie Lee's *Still Life With Rice*, the narrator's life story illustrates her dynamic influence on those around her. Still, one wonders about the stories of her siblings: Baby Sister, Crippled Sister, and Older Brother.

In this assignment, you will have an opportunity to provide a fictional diary entry from the point of view of one of the secondary characters. Use your book to review what you know about your chosen character, and create a fictional diary entry, building on his or her life story. Aim to provide details from the Korean culture.

- Persuasive Essay:

In *Still Life With Rice*, Helie Lee illustrates the struggles women were faced with during the mid-20<sup>th</sup> Century. One can view Lee's grandmother as oppressed by male-dominated Korea, or one can see her grandmother as a dynamic role model, unique to her time. Consider the experiences of Lee's Grandmother and make a decision on how you view her.

In a standard essay, clearly state your position and support it with at least three key examples from the text. Use the persuasive essay model below to begin an outline. After I have checked your outline, begin a draft where you include quotations to support your good ideas. Remember the persuasive outline model:

- Thesis: (an "Although" statement)
- Opposing position: (Be comprehensive and fair)
- Your position: (Examples from the text)
- Your position: (examples from the text)
- Conclusion: (Refine your thesis and answer the "So what?" question by making a connection –modern society, history, or literature)
- Evaluation Essay:

Your final essay option for *Still Life With Rice* allows you to evaluate the memoir in terms of what you have learned. Consider the many discussions we have had about Korean cultural customs, the importance of one's ancestry, the strength of family, Korean history, and Korea today.

In a standard essay, choose three of the above events and discuss what you have learned from Helie Lee's book. Begin with a standards outline, have me check it, then start your draft.

- Thesis: (Readers learn many concepts...)
- 1<sup>st</sup> idea: (Examples from the text)
- 2<sup>nd</sup> idea: (Examples from the text)
- 3<sup>rd</sup> idea: (Examples from the text)
- Conclusion: (Re-phrase your thesis, and comment on current events in Korea today).

## *Marriage Customs -- Still Life With Rice*

Dear Seniors,

At some point in your lives, all of you will fall in love, and may even consider marriage. Your cultural background and personal preferences will undoubtedly influence your choices in what type of ceremony you will choose. Helie Lee's *Still Life With Rice* also addresses the issue of marriage. Helie's mother considers her "rotten fruit" at the beginning of the memoir. Later, Hongyong also uses this term in relation to her own marriageability.

In this assignment you will have an opportunity to explore the Korean concept of marriage as well as your own.

**Instructions:**

- Create a poster project that illustrates Korean and your own customs of marriage.
- Use a ½ size poster board.
- Create 3-5 visuals for Korean marriage. (Internet or hand-drawn)
- Include a minimum of 4 quotes from the book.
- Provide one paragraph minimum of discussion on Korean marriage customs.
- Create 3-5 visuals for your own culture's marriage customs.
- Provide 3-5 sentences of commentary for each visual.

**Suggestions:**

- Use color poster board (no neon please).
- Create borders behind your visuals and writing. You may use my construction paper.
- Type all writing, including your name/period/date on your poster.
- Provide page numbers for quotes.
- Create a title at the top of your poster.

**Evaluation:**

40 points + content (all requirements met)

40 Points + creativity (original design, creative display)

20 points + grammar (no spelling, punctuation, or usage errors)

**STILL LIFE WITH RICE: REFLECTIVE JOURNAL OPPORTUNITIES'**

- Parents often express their desire for their children to carry on family traditions faithfully. Sometimes these traditions are difficult to maintain in modern American society. Discuss an example of a family tradition, cultural or otherwise, that your parents insist you maintain.
- The stories we learn from our parents and grandparents often shape our own character and life choices. Reflect on a story or lesson you have learned from your (grand)parents that has impacted your life.
- Related to your "Marriage Customs" project, discuss your opinion of marriage traditions. How does gender play a role in society? Does your culture maintain traditions that are similar or different from mainstream American traditions? Provide your own concept of marriage and where you see yourself in a relationship in the next five years.
- The roles of men and women are clearly defined in 1940s Korea. Can you appreciate Korean gender roles? In what ways have gender roles changed by modern American standards? Discuss your opinion with examples from *Still Life*.
- Although the narrator begins her married life as a traditional married wife, she ultimately surprises her husband and even herself with her independent spirit and sharp entrepreneurial mind. Discuss your thoughts on the narrator's transition and your predictions for her future.
- Baby and Crippled Sister also have notable marriages. Discuss the irony of how each one's marriage turns out.
- The war is a dramatic section in Lee's memoir. Were you surprised by the toll it takes on the Lee family? Discuss with examples from the text.
- Students often comment on Dukwah, Agi, and Yong Woon as extraordinary characters in the story. Discuss your impressions of each child with examples from the text.
- In the end, the Lee family is separated for over forty years with no word of Yong Woon until a letter reaches the Lee family after Helie Lee's book is published. Discuss your opinion of recent events in North Korea and the impact of politics on families.
- Helie Lee undoubtedly learns more about her family and herself than she anticipated. Discuss what you found the most meaningful about the text and what you think Helie gained most from her journey and conversations with her grandmother, *Halmoni*.

**Still Life With Rice:** PowerPoint Presentation

**Objective:** Create a PowerPoint presentation that captures the plot, characterization, and theme of Still Life With Rice.

**Directions:**

1. Log on the computer using your name and password.
2. Click on Microsoft PowerPoint.
2. Create a minimum of 6 slides, 2 slides of each element of the memoir.
3. Create a 7<sup>th</sup> slide on which you evaluate the memoir as a whole.
4. Include several short quotes and commentary throughout your slides.
5. Extra credit can be earned by creating an additional current event slide and by creating links to other useful sites on Korean history or modern events.

**Lab Instructions and Materials:**

- Come to class first for instructions and attendance.
- At the lab, all materials, with the exception of your book and notes, must be placed against the wall near the door.
- No food or drinks allowed in the lab.
- We will clean up 5 minutes before the bell to ensure proper closing procedures of the lab: computers turned off, monitors left on sleep, chairs pushed in, and all materials removed.
- If we all work together to follow procedures, we will continue to enjoy the lab.

**Presentation:**

- We will access your PowerPoint document from my classroom computer, which has access to the television.
- Present key ideas that you created for each slide. Rather than simply reading your slides, provide a short discussion of your rationale for creating each slide in the manner that you did.

**Evaluation:**

"A" projects reflect:

Comprehensive coverage of the requirements; the student demonstrates solid analysis and evaluation of characterization and key themes of the memoir; quotations and commentary from the memoir reflect insight into significant concepts; visuals are original and appropriate; the student's presentation is fluid and meaningful without silly conduct or redundant summary.

"B" projects reflect:

Good coverage of the requirements; the student demonstrates some analysis and evaluation of characterization and key themes of the memoir; quotations and commentary from the memoir reflect some insight into significant concepts; visuals are appropriate; the student's presentation is fluid and meaningful without silly conduct or redundant summary.

"C" project reflect:

Some coverage of the requirements; the student demonstrates some analysis and evaluation of key ideas in the memoir; quotations and commentary from the memoir may need improvement; visuals are used; the student's project or presentation may need improvement in content or delivery.

Standard of Focus: Writing 2.6 – Deliver multimedia presentations that combine text, images, and draw information from many sources.

*Still Life With Rice:*

**Writing Situation:**

In *Still Life With Rice*, Helie Lee illustrates not only the very personal story of her family but also the larger social and political attitudes of the Korean culture. In this assignment you will have an opportunity to compare and contrast one social/political topic addressed in *Still Life With Rice* with a similar issue in your own culture.

**Instructions:** Write a comparison/contrast essay on a key topic from *Still Life With Rice*. Compare and contrast one of the following topics:

- Religion in *Still Life* versus religion in your culture
- Politics in *Still Life* versus current politics in your culture
- Marriage customs in *Still Life* versus marriage customs in your own culture
- Research your culture's religion, politics, or marriage customs. You could use your family history as a resource, a spiritual advisor (e.g., rabbi, minister, etc.), or valid news site on the Internet

- for political information.
- Choose areas of similarity and difference in *Still Life* and in your own culture.
- Organize your essay in one of the following ways:

**Example of Two Types of Compare/Contrast Organization: choose the format that works best for your paper.**

**Example Thesis:** Mom's Hamburger Haven is a much better restaurant than McPhony's because of its superior food, service, and atmosphere.

<p><i>Point by Point Format</i></p> <p>Point 1: Food</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mom's</li> <li>McPhony's</li> </ul> <p>Point 2: Service</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mom's</li> <li>McPhony's</li> </ul> <p>Point 3: Atmosphere</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mom's</li> <li>B. McPhony's</li> </ul>	<p><i>The Block Format</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mom's</li> <li>Food</li> <li>Service</li> <li>Atmosphere</li> <li>McPhony's</li> <li>Food</li> <li>Service</li> <li>Atmosphere</li> </ul>
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\* Aim to meet or exceed the following standard:

1.1 Writing: In writing, the student will establish a controlling impression or coherent thesis that conveys a clear and distinctive perspective on the subject and maintains a consistent tone and focus throughout the piece of writing.

Grade Scale:

A	The student clearly articulates a comparison/contrast thesis. Details are given with outstanding examples/quotes from the text. (5 paragraph min.). The student examines both the text and his/her culture. The conclusion reinforces the similarities and differences. The paper is free/almost free of spelling, usage, and punctuation errors.
B	The student articulates a comparison/contrast thesis. Details are given with appropriate examples/quotes from the text. (5 paragraph min.). The student examines both the text and his/her culture. The conclusion reinforces the similarities and differences. The paper is free almost free of spelling, usage, and punctuation errors. <b>B papers lack the focus, insight, or control of A papers.</b>
C	The student articulates a comparison/contrast thesis with some degree of control. Details are given with some or limited examples/quotes from the text. (4 paragraph min.). The student examines both the text and his/her culture, but may lack detail or insight. The conclusion somewhat reinforces similarities and differences. The paper may have spelling, usage, and punctuation errors.
D	An attempt is made toward the instructions of the assignment. The standard has not been adequately met. Errors in content, organization, or spelling/usage/punctuation.

### AUTOBIOGRAPHY AND MEMOIR PORTFOLIO Due March 25

- Analytical and Reflective Essay: Choose a minimum of two
- Secondary Character Diary Entry
- Compare/Contrast Essay
- Persuasive Essay
- Evaluation Essay
- Reflective Writing:
  - Autobiography/Memoir –a moment or an age
  - Creative fiction or poetry
- Revision:
  - You must revise at least two pieces of writing
- Projects:
  - Cultural Marriage Project
  - PowerPoint Project
  - Self-Evaluation:

W. Complete a reflective write-up on your gains over the course of the semester and your goals in writing for the year (favorite piece, strengths, weaknesses, questions, etc.)

Demonstrates The following:	Meets/Exceeds the requirements	Meets the requirements	Does not fulfill the requirements
Completeness:	I – IV are completed		Incomplete
Neatness/Layout:	A professional appearance with a portfolio cover, cover page, table of contents and all pieces	A neat appearance with a portfolio cover, cover page, table of contents and all pieces	Illegible handwriting/sloppy layout
Writing Domain Content:	Demonstrates a supreme understanding, application and analysis of each domain	Demonstrates a good understanding and application of the current domain	Lacks a complete understanding of the current domain.
Language Conventions	Each piece is a perfect final copy	Works have few errors	Works have numerous errors in usage, punctuation, and spelling
Self-evaluation	Completes the evaluation in depth and detail	Completes evaluation	Incomplete self-evaluation
Creative Use of Language	Samples and organization are unique	Contains several unique samples	Contains at least one unique sample

Comments: \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

Standard of Focus:

- (Writing): In writing, the student will establish a controlling impression or coherent thesis that conveys a clear and distinctive perspective on the subject and maintains a consistent tone and focus throughout the piece of writing.
- (Writing): Students enhance meaning in their writing by employing rhetorical devices.
- (Grammar): Students demonstrate control of grammar, paragraph and sentence structure, diction, syntax, and usage.

### STILL LIFE WITH RICE PORTFOLIO Due June 5

- Analytical and Reflective Essay: Choose a minimum of two
  - Secondary Character Diary Entry
  - Compare/Contrast Essay
  - Persuasive Essay
  - Evaluation Essay
- Reflective Writing:
  - Autobiography/Memoir –a moment or an age
  - Creative fiction or poetry
- Revision:
  - You must revise at least two pieces of writing
- Projects:
  - Cultural Marriage Project
  - PowerPoint Project
- Self-Evaluation:
  - Complete a reflective write-up on your gains over the course of the semester and your goals in writing for the year (favorite piece, strengths, weaknesses, questions, etc.)

Demonstrates The following:	Meets/Exceeds the requirements	Meets the requirements	Does not fulfill the requirements
Completeness:	I – IV are completed		Incomplete

Neatness/Layout:	A professional appearance with a portfolio cover, cover page, table of contents and all pieces	A neat appearance with a portfolio cover, cover page, table of contents and all pieces	Illegible handwriting/sloppy layout
Writing Domain Content:	Demonstrates a supreme understanding, application and analysis of each domain	Demonstrates a good understanding and application of the current domain	Lacks a complete understanding of the current domain.
Language Conventions	Each piece is a perfect final copy	Works have few errors	Works have numerous errors in usage, punctuation, and spelling
Self-evaluation	Completes the evaluation in depth and detail	Completes evaluation	Incomplete self-evaluation
Creative Use of Language	Samples and organization are unique	Contains several unique samples	Contains at least one unique sample

Comments: \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

Standard of Focus:

- (Writing): In writing, the student will establish a controlling impression or coherent thesis that conveys a clear and distinctive perspective on the subject and maintains a consistent tone and focus throughout the piece of writing.
- (Writing): Students enhance meaning in their writing by employing rhetorical devices.
- (Grammar): Students demonstrate control of grammar, paragraph and sentence structure, diction, syntax, and usage.