

Name: Date: Period:

**Close Reading Organizer - Part 3, Chapter 1: Rice Husband**

**Directions:** Read each summary entry and think about which themes listed in the Themes Key apply to it, then color

in those themes in the Theme Tracker. Next, write a few sentences of Analysis to explain how the themes you chose apply to each summary section.

**Themes Key**

Mother-Daughter Relationships

Storytelling and Tradition

Immigration, Language, and Mistranslation Fate and Autonomy

Sacrifice

Sexism and Power

**Summary**

**Theme Tracker**

**Your Analysis**

**Lena** believes that her mother **Ying-ying** has a mysterious ability to see things before they happen; however, her premonitions only predict bad things that will affect the family, not any way to stop them from happening. For example, Ying-ying predicted her husband **Clifford**’s fatal heart attack based on a dying house plant’s inability to get water up its roots. Now, as Lena picks up her mother for a weeklong visit with Lena and her husband, she wonders what Ying-ying will see in them.

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Driving back to their new house, **Lena**’s husband **Harold** gets annoyed by **Ying-ying**’s constant criticism of his driving. Lena is secretly glad that her mother reprimands his aggressive style, as Lena has always been too passive to complain.

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**Lena** shows **Ying-ying** around the new house, pointing out the architectural highlights, but her mother can “only see the bad parts.” Lena remembers when she was eight years old, and Ying-ying looked into

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**Summary**

**Theme Tracker**

**Your Analysis**

her rice bowl and predicted that Lena would marry a bad man, with one pock mark on his face for every kernel of uneaten rice she left.

At the time, **Lena** knew of a bully named Arnold, who was covered in acne marks. Every meal, Lena leaves rice behind, and her eight-year old mind becomes terrified that she’s fated to marry Arnold. She decides the solution is to not eat at all, in the hopes that it would cause Arnold so many health problems that he’d die before becoming her husband.

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By the time she’s thirteen, **Lena** has developed anorexia and has mostly forgotten about Arnold and her marital fate. One morning, her father reads in the newspaper that Arnold had died from an unusually severe measles. Lena is terrified, and thinks that **Ying-ying** can see through her and tell that she caused Arnold’s death. That night, Lena steals a gallon of strawberry ice cream and eats the entire container until she vomits.

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As an adult, **Lena** wonders if she really was fated to marry Arnold, and received her husband **Harold** in his place as punishment for defying fate. She and Harold meet while working in the same division of an architectural firm, focused on restaurant design and development. As they start dating, Lena insists on splitting the bill evenly in half whenever they go out, even though she orders very little food and he makes more money.

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**Lena** believes that she’s not good enough for **Harold**, who seems like the perfect man. **Rose**, however, tells her that such thoughts are commonplace among Chinese-American women, who are raised with Chinese

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**Summary**

**Theme Tracker**

**Your Analysis**

humility and don’t expect to be treated like they deserve.

Later in their relationship, **Lena** encourages **Harold** to start his own architectural business. She leaves her job at her initial firm to become an associate at his firm, at her own financial sacrifice. The initial years are difficult, and Lena gives Harold pep talks to keep him positive. During one such talk, Lena gives Harold the idea that turns his business into a huge success; Harold, however, does not give Lena any credit.

When she asks for a raise, he says it would look bad to promote his wife. They also continue to split all expenses evenly, even though Harold makes seven times more money.

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Back in the present day, **Ying-ying** finds a running total of domestic expenses that **Lena** and **Harold** will evenly split at the end of the month. Ying-ying sees ice cream as a shared expense, and asks why Lena pays for something that makes her ill (Lena has hated ice cream ever since her vomiting experience). Lena is unable to come up with a good reason. Harold finds out about her hatred of ice cream later that night and awkwardly offers to take it off the list, but the offer only angers Lena, who has started questioning the entire basis of their “equal marriage.”

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As they fight that night about whether their marriage exists around a balance sheet, **Lena** and **Harold** hear a crash from **Ying- ying**’s guest room. Lena goes to find her mother standing by a broken end-table. The end-table had been one of Harold’s first architectural creations, and Harold proudly displayed it, despite the table being poorly built. Ying-ying doesn’t apologize, but Lena still says she knew it would break eventually so it didn’t matter. Ying-ying then asks Lena

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**Summary**

**Theme Tracker**

**Your Analysis**

why she didn’t try to stop it from happening, and Lena doesn’t know how to answer “such a simple question.”