

Name: Date: Period:

**Close Reading Organizer - Part 4, Chapter 1: Magpies**

**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**

**An-mei** connects to her daughter **Rose**’s divorce narrative by concluding her own mother’s story. Though Rose feels like she’s out of options, An-mei argues that Rose is making a choice by not speaking up. This reminds her of when her mother leaves again, following **Popo**’s death in “Scar.” An- mei cries at the impending abandonment, but **An-mei’s mother** tells her a story about a turtle who visited An-mei’s mother as a girl and ate her tears. The turtle warned her that if she kept crying, her life would always be sad. It then laid pearly eggs that immediately cracked open and released beautiful magpies. The turtle told An-mei’s mother that her tears didn’t wash away sorrow, but fed someone else’s joy.

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The next morning, **An-mei** wakes to her relatives screaming at **An-mei’s mother**, who’s kneeling pitifully in the dirt in front of the house. They refuse to let her take An- mei, yelling that she’s evil and An-mei will inherit all of her mother’s bad traits. An-mei calls out to her mother while running down

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**Summary**

**Theme Tracker**

**Your Analysis**

the stairs, and seeing her daughter’s love, An-mei’s mother straightens herself and takes An-mei with her, ignoring the relatives’ terrible judgement.

After a long train ride, they arrive at the opulent Western-style mansion of **Wu Tsing**, **An-mei’s mother**’s new husband. He is a very wealthy merchant, who collects wives on a whim. Wu Tsing and the other wives are away, and An-mei’s mother is treated kindly by the servants, who respect her despite her lowly status as the fourth wife.

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**An-mei**’s first few weeks in the new mansion are the happiest times in her whole life, as she connects with her mother. The peaceful bliss immediately changes when **Wu Tsing** returns with a new, incredibly young wife, who is nothing more than “decoration.” An-mei sees how shameful her mother’s position is, as Wu Tsing uses **An-mei’s mother**’s body for pleasure, then discards her for his girlish new conquest. 000001

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When winter arrives, **Wu Tsing**’s second and third wives return to the main house after spending the hotter months in their own houses with their children. **Second Wife** is clearly the dominant matriarch, and tries to win **An-mei** over with a beautiful strand of pearls. **An-mei’s mother** privately shatters the illusion by cracking a pearl in front of

An-mei, revealing that the pearls are actually glass. In exchange for the fake pearls, An-mei’s mother gives An-mei a beautiful sapphire ring so An-mei can “recognize what is true.” At the same time, An-mei notices that Second Wife has a baby boy, even though she’s obviously too old to bear children.

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**An-mei** learns more about **Second Wife**

from a servant who’s loyal to **An-mei’s**

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**Summary**

**Theme Tracker**

**Your Analysis**

**mother**. Second Wife gained power in the household by faking suicides over the years, scaring the very superstitious **Wu Tsing**.

Rather than be haunted one day by her angry ghost, Wu Tsing appeases Second Wife with anything she wants. One thing she can’t give him is children, but Second Wife craftily arranges young wives for Wu Tsing. In the case of An-mei’s mother, Second Wife maliciously tricked her. An- mei’s mother fell asleep at Second Wife’s summer house on the way to a monastery, still loyal to her deceased husband. Second Wife then let Wu Tsing into the bedroom to rape An-mei’s mother. As a widow, An-mei’s mother was not allowed to remarry, yet Second Wife announced to the community that An-mei’s mother had seduced Wu Tsing, and An-mei’s mother was cast off in disgrace. Soon after, she gave birth to a son, whom Second Wife immediately adopted as her own, ensuring her role as mother to Wu Tsing’s heir.

After learning the awful truth about **Second Wife**’s wickedness, **An-mei** starts noticing all of Second Wife’s attempts to hold power. The worst happens when **Wu Tsing** promises **An-mei’s mother** her own house for bearing him a son. Second Wife, filled with jealousy, fakes another suicide and makes Wu Tsing renege his promise. An- mei’s mother locks herself in her room, crying, as she has no choice but to accept it.

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Two days before the Lunar New Year, **An- mei’s mother** commits suicide by overdosing on opium. Though some think it was supposed to be faked like **Second Wife**’s attempts, An-mei’s mother previously told **An-mei** that she was going to “kill her own weak spirit so she could give [An-mei] a stronger one.” The timing of her suicide is perfect, because all debts must be settled before the new year, or vengeful

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**Summary**

**Theme Tracker**

**Your Analysis**

spirits will attack. Wu Tsing is so scared of An-mei’s mother’s ghost that he promises to raise An-mei as his most honored child and shun Second Wife for her actions. On that day, An-mei learns to shout and have her voice heard.