**Identifying Questions Worth Answering**

**Materials:**

* Excerpt from *The* *Words We Live By: Your Annotated Guide to the Constitution*
* “An Athlete of God”
* Identifying Questions Worth Answering: *The* *Words We Live By: Your Annotated Guide to the Constitution*
* Identifying Questions Worth Answering: “An Athlete of God”

**Directions:**

1. Refer to your copies of *The* *Words We Live By: Your Annotated Guide to the Constitution* and “An Athlete of God.”
2. Review “Identifying Questions Worth Answering” and discuss the coding guides (the key to label the questions)with participants at your table.
3. Reread the excerpt from *The* *Words We Live By: Your Annotated Guide to the Constitution* and evaluate a couple of the questions together at the table.
4. Then with a partner, finish evaluating all of the remaining questions, noting any questions or confusions to bring up in the debrief discussion with participants at your table.
5. In addition, decide what is the enduring understanding (or essential idea) of the excerpt.
6. During the debrief discussion, share your answers with other participants at your table and discuss any points of agreement and/or disagreement.
7. Repeat the process using Martha Graham’s “An Athlete of God.”

**Identifying Questions Worth Answering**

***The Words We Live By: Your Annotated Guide to the Constitution***

**Use the following key to label the questions below. Questions can receive more than one mark/fulfill more than one category.**

**Y/N:** Would a student have to read the essay to answer this question?

**D:** Does a reader have to dig **deep** to answer this question?

**V:** Does the question ask about a **vocabulary** word in the essay?

**E:** Is this a truly **excellent** question? (If it’s NOT worth spending class time and student attention on, ~~cross it out~~ and work with a partner to revise it and make it worthwhile).

| **Y/N** | **D** | **V** | **E** | **Questions and Tasks:** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  |  |  |  | What is (and isn’t) the meaning of “popular sovereignty”? |
|  |  |  |  | Why does Monk claim that popular sovereignty is the form of government in America? |
|  |  |  |  | What other forms of governments are possible? |
|  |  |  |  | Is Lucy Stone confused when she asks, “Which ‘We the People’?” |
|  |  |  |  | Why does Monk ask this question, “Which ‘We the People’ has ‘troubled the nation’”? |
|  |  |  |  | What other groups are there in the United States that have not been included as part of “we the people”? |
|  |  |  |  | What does the phrase “founding fathers” mean? |
|  |  |  |  | Who were the most famous and important of the founding fathers? |
|  |  |  |  | Why does Marshall think the founding fathers could not have imagined a female or black Supreme Court justice? |
|  |  |  |  | Having discussed the meaning of Marshall’s quote, ask students to put his ideas into their own words in a brief two- to three-sentence paraphrase, carefully considering sentence structure as they do so. |
|  |  |  |  | What evidence is there in paragraph three regarding Marshall’s claim about the “evolving nature of the constitution”? |
|  |  |  |  | What other rights should be given to 18-year-olds along with the right to vote and serve in the army? |
|  |  |  |  | How does Thurgood Marshall’s presence on the Supreme Court illustrate the evolution of the Constitution? |

After you’ve read *The* *Words We Live By: Your Annotated Guide to the Constitution* and discussed it with your partner, together decide what is the enduring understanding (or essential idea) of the excerpt. Jot it down here.

**Identifying Questions Worth Answering**

**“An Athlete of God”**

**Use the following key to label the questions below. Questions can receive more than one mark/fulfill more than one category.**

**Y/N:** Would a student have to read the essay to answer this question?

**D:** Does a reader have to dig **deep** to answer this question?

**V:** Does the question ask about a **vocabulary** word in the essay?

**E:** Is this a truly **excellent** question? (If it’s NOT worth spending class time and student attention on, ~~cross it out~~ and work with a partner to revise it and make it worthwhile).

| **Y/N** | **D** | **V** | **E** | **Questions and Tasks:** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  |  |  |  | Do you know who Martha Graham was? |
|  |  |  |  | Is there value in practicing something to the point of perfection? Explain. |
|  |  |  |  | What does Graham mean by this sentence: “Practice is a means of inviting the perfection desired.”? (It may help to put the sentence into your own words.) |
|  |  |  |  | Have you ever practiced anything to the point of frustration and utter exhaustion? |
|  |  |  |  | What does Graham mean by “satisfaction of spirit”? |
|  |  |  |  | From what you know of modern dance and dancers’ training, do you agree that they are the people most connected to their own bodies? Explain why. |
|  |  |  |  | What evidence does Graham offer that dance is so close to life itself? |
|  |  |  |  | A barometer measures air pressure, a key to understanding weather patterns. What does Graham argue is equivalent to the barometer in her art? |
|  |  |  |  | Do you agree with Graham about the mind, body, and spirit all being connected? |
|  |  |  |  | Trace how Graham develops her sense of the kind of faith Abraham had when she said he “staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief.” |
|  |  |  |  | What would be an example of the “high wire of circumstance” in a person’s life? |
|  |  |  |  | What is the connection between the “smile” of the acrobat and the choice not to fall? How are these parts of the essay important to her ideas about practicing deliberately and in the face of obstacles for a very long time? |

After you’ve read “An Athlete of God”and discussed it with your partner, together decide what is the enduring understanding or essential idea she presents. Understand that this is NOT easy in any case, and perhaps even tougher with this essay. Jot your idea down here.