

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Class: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

SCORE/GRADE:

BIBLIOSCOPIC DIALOGUE: *Various Children's Stories*

On the lines below (or on a separate sheet), write an **interpretive question** about how the children's stories you have discussed contribute to a discussion of the idea of **memory** and summarize three (3) possible answers based on the details of the stories themselves. An interpretive question is an open-ended discussion question *to which there are several possible answers that can be supported by the texts*.

Interpretive Question:

According to \*the stories, what is the function of memory in the life of the individual and the community?

Answer #1:

In *All the Places to Love*, Patricia MacLachlan argues that **memory is the repository of human heritage**. The narrator associates family members with the places that they love; in this way, their personality and values survive in those physicalities. When we remember our ancestors and cherish their values, they survive in us. Patricia Polacco's *Keeping Quilt* suggests similar ideas. Grandma sews a quilt from the immigrant family's clothing so that future generations will remember their homeland and their people. Far from their country and families, these immigrants need an object to recall their reality. **Memory preserves relationship with the past.**

Answer #2:

In *Wilfrid Gordon McDonald Partridge*, Mem Fox suggests that, though memories are specific to the individual, man's common environment breeds recognition between the generations. **Memory, then, serves as the touchstone from age to age.** This is similar to MacLachlan's idea. The family presents the places to love as reminders of their values and personalities. Subsequent generations will preserve these connections through the family land. **The past, then, is preserved in the present through memory.** However, Fox goes beyond this idea to contemplate the essentially human nature of memory. Memory doesn't just connect us with our ancestors and create heritage;

**memory is what makes us human.** Though Wilfrid and Nancy are divided by age and share no family relation, they are united in experiences common to humanity. Their shared environment, the world, calls up that human connection and makes them friends.

Answer #3:

Jane Yolen explores the negative effects of memory, lamenting lost places in her *Letting Swift River Go*. The narrator, Sally Jane, revisits her childhood neighborhood by boat, peering through the flooded landscape of the Quabbin River to the drowned places of her past. She remembers the relationships and shared experiences she and her family created there, and she resents the water that shrouds them. **Though the memories themselves are good, they underscore the loss she experienced.** Consequently, the memories themselves taste bitter. **Memory, then, can cause grief and bitterness.** Yolen suggests that forgiveness and acceptance alone preserve the better part of memories. To retain the past, it is necessary to let it go.

Answer #4:

In each story, **memory is the source of the individual's identity.** Patricia MacLachlan's young Eli works to understand his own part in his family drama. What place is his to love and to share? He draws his sense of individualism from his family, even as their loves shape his own. Self is derived from a combination of family and personality. The past is the constant that secures the individual, empowering him to forge his future.

Jane Yolen accords memory a similar honor. Sally Jane's memories store the girl she was; though buried, the girl, like the places, remains. In order to retain each, however, she must loose her grip on the physical. Her memories survive in the abstract.

Patricia Polacco's narrator retains her Russian roots through the *Keeping Quilt*. Her identity as an American is informed by her immigrant ancestors. Their national customs become a part of the fabric of the narrator's life in modern America.

Mem Fox's Miss Nancy struggles with aging and memory loss. Those around her grieve her disorientation. With the loss of her memory, the loss of her "self" is at risk. Nancy's memories anchor her to experiences that made her who she is.

Other possible interpretive questions:

According to the stories, where is memory stored? What has matter to do with memory?

According to these authors, what is the cause of memory loss?

How do the physical senses affect memory or recall within the story?

According to the stories, what are the conditions of memory?

\*This series of interpretive questions applies to the following children's books:

*All the Places to Love*, by Patricia MacLachlan

*The Keeping Quilt*, by Patricia Polacco

*Wilfrid Gordon McDonald Partridge*, by Mem Fox

*Letting Swift River Go*, by Jane Yolen