



ALL HEATHENS

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READER'S GUIDE

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. In the context of this book, how do you define the word “heathen”?
2. Catholicism is an important element in this collection. Why do you think the speaker feels disconnected from her religious upbringing?
3. Antonio Pigafetta is a character that appears in several poems. What role does he play in the collection? Why do you think the speaker considers him significant?
4. In “Lansing Sinulog Rehearsal, 2010”, the speaker suggests that Filipinos have a complicated relationship with their history. How does history manifest itself in the Sinulog celebration?
5. Repetition is a theme in the poem “With.” In what other poems is repetition an important feature?
6. The speaker apologizes in the first poem--“Momotaro in the Philippines”—and then later again in “Heathens.” Why does the speaker apologize? What is the speaker guilty of? Is her guilt justified?
7. What role does the speaker’s father play in this collection? How does this role contrast with the speaker’s mother?
8. Why is circumnavigation an important motif in this collection?



9. Does *All Heathens* have a resolution? If so, what is it?
10. If the speaker were a character in the narrative of Magellan’s Voyage (see “Lansing Sinulog”), who would she be?

WRITING EXERCISES

1. **ABECEDARIAN EXERCISE:** An abecedarian is a poem in which the first letter of each line follows sequentially through the alphabet. So, line 1 begins with an ‘A’, line 2 begins with a ‘B’, and so on. The last poem in the manuscript “Counterargument that Goes All the Way Around” is a double abecedarian that goes from A-Z and then, from Z-A. Write a poem that subverts or expands the abecedarian form. (Some ideas include a poem that begins in the middle of the alphabet or a poem that skips every other letter.)



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2. **EKPHRASIS EXERCISE:** Find a photo of a family member or friend. Write a poem describing the image and the feelings and memories it conjures.
3. **FAIRY TALE EXERCISE:** “Momotaro in the Philippines” and “A Country of Beautiful Women” incorporate elements from two specific fairy tale narratives: Momotaro, a hero from Japanese folklore, and Snow White, originally a 19th-century German fairy tale. Write a sonnet about a personal experience and bring in themes and characters from a specific fairy tale, folktale, or children’s story.