

2015

English 9 Unit Three Ancillary Selections



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8/1/2015

Phenomenal Woman

By Maya Angelou

Pretty women wonder where my secret lies.
I'm not cute or built to suit a fashion model's size
But when I start to tell them,
They think I'm telling lies.
I say,
It's in the reach of my arms,
The span of my hips,
The stride of my step,
The curl of my lips.
I'm a woman
Phenomenally.
Phenomenal woman,
That's me.

I walk into a room
Just as cool as you please,
And to a man,
The fellows stand or
Fall down on their knees.
Then they swarm around me,
A hive of honey bees.
I say,
It's the fire in my eyes,
And the flash of my teeth,
The swing in my waist,
And the joy in my feet.
I'm a woman
Phenomenally.
Phenomenal woman,
That's me.

Men themselves have wondered
What they see in me.
They try so much
But they can't touch

My inner mystery.
When I try to show them,
They say they still can't see.
I say,
It's in the arch of my back,
The sun of my smile,
The ride of my breasts,
The grace of my style.
I'm a woman
Phenomenally.
Phenomenal woman,
That's me.

Now you understand
Just why my head's not bowed.
I don't shout or jump about
Or have to talk real loud.
When you see me passing,
It ought to make you proud.
I say,
It's in the click of my heels,
The bend of my hair,
the palm of my hand,
The need for my care.
'Cause I'm a woman
Phenomenally.
Phenomenal woman,
That's me.

Worth

By Marilyn Nelson
For Ruben Ahoueya

Today in America people were bought and sold:
five hundred for a "likely Negro wench."
If someone at auction is worth her weight in gold,
how much would she be worth by pound? By ounce?
If I owned an unimaginable quantity of wealth,
could I buy an iota of myself?
How would I know which part belonged to me?
If I owned part, could I set my part free?
It must be worth something—maybe a lot—
that my great-grandfather, they say, killed a lion.
They say he was black, with muscles as hard as iron,
that he wore a necklace of the claws of the lion he'd fought.
How much do I hear, for his majesty in my blood?
I auction myself. And I make the highest bid.

alternate names for black boys

By Danez Smith

1. smoke above the burning bush
2. archnemesiis of summer night
3. first son of soil
4. coal awaiting spark & wind
5. guilty until proven dead
6. oil heavy starlight
7. monster until proven ghost
8. gone
9. phoenix who forgets to un-ash
10. going, going, gone
11. gods of shovels & black veils
12. what once passed for kindling
13. fireworks at dawn
14. brilliant, shadow hued coral
15. (I thought to leave this blank
but who am I to name us nothing?)
16. prayer who learned to bite & sprint
17. a mother's joy & clutched breath

Mrs. God
By Joshua Corey

God and Mrs. God in watercolor blue skirt desolate.
— David Schubert

I am not a woman, I
am a man. Made in His image.
I keep the house, a gray Cape Cod,
and broom it well. I wear a skirt to be
comfortable. I build the fire.
When my husband comes home I don't pester Him with questions.
He knows where to find His slippers and His pipe.
Out our kitchen back door I see the prophets freight-hopping
the long bad Western in ancient English
that no one need read to know. Everyone speaks his part:
the women keep their heads down

while the men are losing theirs. Children?
How often I've prayed for a child, which means
slipping meaning looks to my husband as we rock
together on the porch of an evening, drinking lemonade
and playing Scrabble. If He lets me win
it's a sign. I haven't won yet.
But the neighbor children come and go
and take the pies cooling on the windowsill
without thanks. Sometimes terrible things
happen to them — some man
spills the blood
cradled so carefully in every hand. I accept
no blame. The pies were there to leave alone,
or not. God says nothing
but taps out His pipe, stands, with a hand
to ease His aching back. Time for bed.
Our bed is a rolling ocean that I tread alone
just a head bobbing above the ash-colored waves
while the moon waits for me and everything
to drown, to know again the peace
the moon knows, the silence interrupted by astronauts,

little green men, the spectacle a mother
can't help but make of herself. God
comes to bed
and I clutch a spar, a barrel, an oar,
and ride out the night with it. When He fucks me
still He doesn't speak, for speech is creation
but I rock with him, I roll inside
what cannot be comprehended, in force. I forget
that I'm a man, I forget the wild sea, I let slip
my grasp and the colors I have
that cover me. Once I dreamed
of the morning: we left the house together
in identical sober suits, we stood in the street
and beheld the sad little town, wreathed in black crepe
for its children. As though the morning
could show me His face. He coughed.
And when I awoke
in our ordinary bed, streaked by sun through leaded windows, I held
my baby to my breast and watched the roof beam
and whispered to her, It's all right,
we are safe only and always
from our dreams

To the Man Who Shouted "I Like Pork Fried Rice" at Me on the Street
By Franny Choi

you want to eat me
out. right. what does it taste like
you want to eat me right out
of these jeans & into something
a little cheaper. more digestible.
more bite-sized. more thank you

come: i am greasy
for you. i slick my hair with msg
every morning. i'm bad for you.
got some red-light district between
your teeth. what does it
taste like: a takeout box
between my legs.
plastic bag lady. flimsy white fork
to snap in half. dispose of me.

taste like dried squid. lips puffy
with salt. lips brimming
with foreign so call me
pork. curly-tailed obscenity
been playing in the mud. dirty meat.
worms in your stomach. give you

a fever. dead meat. butchered girl
chopped up & cradled
in styrofoam. you candid cannibal.
you want me bite-sized
no eyes clogging your throat.

but i've been watching
from the slaughterhouse. ever since
you named me edible. tossed in
a cookie at the end. lucky man.
go & take what's yours.
name yourself archaeologist but

listen carefully
to the squelches in
your teeth & hear my sow squeal
scream murder between
molars. watch salt awaken
writhe, synapse.
watch me kick
back to life. watch me tentacles
& teeth. watch me
resurrected electric.

what does it taste like: revenge
squirming alive in your mouth
strangling you quiet
from the inside out.