In Their Own Words: Seminar Prep #8

For Friday, read pages 62-107 in Picture Bride.

Read actively. As always, note your responses, insights, questions in the margins as you read. As you read, think about other texts we’ve read this quarter—how does this text connect to or contrast with earlier works we’ve read? Review questions one and two on the syllabus again. How does this novel relate to these questions? Think also about the insights that emerged from the readings we did for Monday—“A Woman-Centered Perspective on Asian American History,” “Magic Island,” and “The World of Our Grandmothers.”

Writing the seminar prep: Review your margin notes for this section of the novel. Choose one focused theme or thread that interests you in particular in this section.

By theme, we mean an idea or question or topic that comes up frequently throughout the text; themes usually relate to the human condition, and each new text sheds its own light or offers its own perspective on that theme. A text also develops its themes—our understanding of the theme grows more complex, more faceted, as a work progresses.

By focused theme, we mean narrowing down your theme, perhaps choosing fewer key words for your statement of the theme. This will help you focus even more tightly on all that the quotation reveals about the theme.

For instance, many of you wrote seminar prep. #7 about Calof as a remarkable example of a pioneer woman, naming her resilience, fortitude, initiative, stamina, inventiveness and more. Instead of blurring all these together into one larger theme about Calof as a strong woman, perhaps picking one thread to follow would yield more detailed and intimate examination of the text and more discoveries about that one focused theme. In what ways and moments does Calof demonstrate resilience and what nuances do we learn about this trait and its potential significance in pioneer women’s lives from reading Calof? Closely examining two different examples might reveal distinct sources of resilience, or distinct kinds of resilience, or distinct effects of her resilience on others, or...

1) Introduce the focused theme you’ve chosen to your readers in one sentence.

2) Select two passages that each relates to the theme and that each shows a new facet of the theme. In other words, your quoted passages should each add a distinct and new understanding of the theme.

3) Set up each quotation by briefly explaining its context. Where are we in the unfolding history/story? What topic or event is under discussion? Who is speaking to whom here? This set-up should be as concise as you can make it—one sentence, if possible.

3) Write down each quotation word for word and put the quotation in quotation marks. Cite the page # in parentheses at the end of the quotation (just the #, not “pg”.)
4) Explain how and why the contents of each quotation relate to the focused theme you selected and explain the distinct new light each sheds on the theme. Remember to revisit your wording of your theme to help you tie the quotation tightly back to the theme. Remember to attend closely to the exact content of each quotation as you unpack it—and not to what comes before or after it. Referring back to key phrases in the quotation can sometimes help you get even more precise as you unpack.

Think about the work we did together in class on Weds, 3/4, when we looked at earlier seminar preps together. See how this shared discussion can help you with this last prep.

Gentle Reminder: Seminar Preps. must be typed (word-processed) and double-spaced. Because seminar prep papers are meant to prepare you for seminar, late papers are not accepted!