

Something About America

by Maria Testa

Reading Guide

Pre-reading Journal Questions:

1. Generations ago, people from other countries believed that America had "streets paved of gold." Today, what is the "something about America" that draws immigrants to our country? Write a short paragraph explaining what modern-day immigrants hope to find in America.

OR

2. Read over the chapter titles listed as "Contents" at the beginning of the book. Select one chapter title and write a paragraph predicting what will happen in that chapter **OR** connecting the chapter title to something that has occurred in your life.

Mad at America (pp. viii – ix)

Write about your reaction to these opening two pages. What questions or connections do you have?



Map from CIA – The World Handbook

Kosova is the Albanian spelling of *Kosovo*, a region of the Balkan peninsula. This area of Europe experienced terrible fighting among its ethnic groups during the 1990s. The narrator and her family likely were ethnic Albanians who were expelled from *Kosova/Kosovo* by Serbs at that time.

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Lucky (pp. 11 – 12)

How does the fire, recalled here by the narrator, explain “the stuff” on the narrator’s neck and arms (p. 9)? How does it connect to her father “being forced to live in America” because of her (p. ix)?

One Small Sticker (Like a Neon Sign) (pp. 27 – 28)

What do you think motivated the father to put the flag sticker on his window on September 12, 2001?

Reality TV/Soccer (Only in America) (pp. 36 – 42)

Merriam-Webster defines a *hypocrite* as “a person who acts in contradiction to his or her stated beliefs or feelings.” Write about one or more ways that the narrator seems to suggest her father is a hypocrite.

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Why do you think the father can't admit he had fun at soccer practice?

A Dream Divided (pp. 52 – 53)

This chapter includes an *allusion* (literary reference) to Langston Hughes' poem "Harlem," printed on the following page.

How is the narrator's family living "a dream divided?"

Harlem

What happens to a dream deferred?

Does it dry up
like a raisin in the sun?
Or fester like a sore--
And then run?
Does it stink like rotten meat?
Or crust and sugar over--
like a syrupy sweet?

Maybe it just sags
like a heavy load.

Or does it explode?

--Langston Hughes

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The narrator ends her reflection on the poem by asking whether a dream divided might implode, or burst inward. How might this family implode, or self-destruct?



Confusion (pp. 59 – 60)

Map from CIA – The World Handbook

Somalia is a war-torn nation on Africa’s east coast. In 2003, the United States government began to bring 12,000 Somali Bantu, a persecuted ethnic minority, to our country in one of the largest resettlement programs ever.

In what ways would the arrival of a large number of African refugees “max out” the town of Lewiston?

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First Rally in the World (pp. 73 – 75)

“Everyone in America/ is a citizen of the world” (p. 74). What do you think the narrator means by this statement?

Lemonade (p.81)

“If you can’t find the welcome mat/when you arrive,/put one out yourself.”
How did the characters in the novel put out a welcome mat?

Post-Reading

How did the rally in Lewiston change the relationship between the narrator and her father?

What are some questions you would like to ask author Maria Testa about this story?
