

Pearl S. Buck: “On Discovering America” Reading Questions

Student Name _____ Date _____

American author Pearl S. Buck spent most of her life in China. She returned to America in 1934, “an immigrant among immigrants...in my native land.” Read Pearl S. Buck’s essay, “[On Discovering America](#).” Answer the questions below, referring to the essay and the [American Immigration Policy](#) handout as needed. Be prepared to discuss your answers in class.

- http://xroads.virginia.edu/~MA01/Davis/survey/articles/faces/faces_jun37_1.html
1. In Buck’s view, why do people immigrate to America?
 2. How does Buck define an “American”? How does her definition change as she immerses herself in American society?
 3. What is the fundamental characteristic of Americans? Why does Buck believe this is a good quality?
 4. Buck struggled to find an American literature that defines who we are as a nation. Give some examples of literary works you think define American culture.
 5. Give some examples of how Americans define themselves, according to Buck.

6. What, according to Buck, are the roots of racism in America? How does she believe this can be overcome?

7. Why does Buck call her essay, "On Discovering America"? In what ways is she like an explorer discovering a new land?

8. Why does Buck believe it will take 5,000 years to create a "pure American"? What will this American be like?

9. Explain Buck's argument for continuing to allow immigrants into this country. Do you agree or disagree? Why or why not?

10. What qualities does Buck believe an immigrant must possess in order to gain entrance to America? How might one assess whether an immigrant has these qualities?

11. What are the immigration policies of the early 21st century? How does your locality address immigration issues?