

## SUGGESTED ANALYTICAL ASSESSMENTS

1. Read one or both reviews of *The Buddha in the Attic* (included in Print Resources). One review very positive; the other one mixed. Respond to the review(s) – do you agree or disagree with their statements? Use support from the text to back up your position.
2. Variation on #1 – Elizabeth Day’s review describes *The Buddha in the Attic* as “half poetry, half narration – short phrases, sparse description, so that the current of emotion running through each chapter is made more resonant by her restraint.” Do you agree or disagree with Day’s praise? Conduct your own literary critique of the book and use support from the text.
3. Read the article by Bhira Backus, “A Sikh Temple’s Century” (included in Print Resources). Backus’ article looks at another minority’s time in California, and is also written in response to a mass killing of American Sikhs living in Wisconsin. Compare and contrast Backus’ observations to Otsuka’s in *The Buddha in the Attic*. Has America’s approach towards immigrant culture changed in the last 100 years? Why or why not?
4. Variation on #3 – Backus’ article relies on her personal experience with her family, while Otsuka fictionalizes the larger events of an era--her family experienced that time, but she does not mention them specifically in her novel. Analyze their different styles of writing and the strengths and weaknesses of each. In the end, which do you find more effective?
5. Otsuka includes two Epigrams for the novel – one from the book of Ecclesiasticus, a Judeo-Christian text, and the other from Masahide, a seventeenth-century Japanese poet. How does each quote connect to the text, and how do they relate to each other?
6. *The Buddha in the Attic* gives the reader a window into Japanese immigrant culture of 100 years ago, but does not always explain the cultural references that are being made. Pick out a set number of places, names, ideas, or practices that are mentioned in the book and research their meanings. Share your findings to the class via an audio-visual presentation.

## SUGGESTED CREATIVE ASSESSMENTS

1. Return to the “we” writing you did on the first day of reading *The Buddha in the Attic*. Expand this piece into a longer work, telling the story of a group *you* belong to. Make sure to include the thoughts and words of specific people in italics, along with descriptions of their actions.
2. Alternate version of #1: Read the article “Tragedy of the Picture Brides,” which includes an interview with Julia Otsuka about writing the book. She did an incredible amount of research for the novel. Plan your *own* research project for a similar book. Pick a group of people whose lives you would like to share. What information will you need to make your book real?
3. The women “speak” in this book in italics – write a “found poem” by picking these phrases and organizing them as you see fit. Some themes you could write about: worry, pain, a mother’s love, curiosity...
4. The book gives brief scenes of many different women. Pick one of them and, starting with the details provided in the book, extend her tale into a longer personal story. What happened to her before and after the scene in *The Buddha in the Attic*?
5. Japanese internment ended at the end of WWII. Extend the book for one more chapter – what can be said when the Japanese return to their own homes? This could be written from either the perspective of the Japanese or their old neighbors (like the last chapter of the book.)