

Name: _____ Weekly ELA Homework
Use your 6 strategy boxes while you read the passage this week for homework. Answer the comprehension questions when finished.

Fiction or Nonfiction? How do you know?	1.	Questions 1. 2.
Author's Purpose P I E	Visualize	Connect 1. 2.

Deep Roots

By ReadWorks

Variety is the spice of life, they say.

I'm not actually sure who "they" are, but they're right. I go to a mundane school in a mundane suburb; I grew up with a lot of sameness. You don't even notice it—the fact that everything is pretty much the same—until you meet someone or something different, and then you want to know more. Or at least, I did.

My parents are both from America. Their parents are both from America, too. We don't have any interesting traditions or unusual customs; we don't even really go to church that often. My lunches are cold pizza or pasta salad. I wear jeans and t-shirts to school, except when it's cold, when I wear jeans and sweaters.

My best friend, though? She's different. I met Adrienne when we were in sixth grade. Until then, I'd never heard of Sukkot, or Friday sundown dinners, or bat mitzvahs. I'd heard of Hannukah, of course, but Adrienne was the first person I ever really *knew* who was Jewish.

She and her family were new in town that year, and when she showed up to class one day, I immediately liked her: she was wearing brown boots and a flower-printed skirt, and she participated in the class discussion of the book *Watership Down* without acting the tiniest bit nervous or shy. I asked her if she wanted to sit next to me at lunch, and we were friends basically from that moment forward.

The first time I asked her if she wanted to come over for dinner at my house was a Friday, a few weeks after we met, and she turned me down.

"I have dinner with my family that night," she explained. "It's a tradition—we're Jewish, so we have a special dinner on Friday nights to celebrate the Sabbath."

"What's a Sabbath?" I remember asking.

"It's a special day of rest for us," Adrienne explained. "It's a time to pay respect and reflect. It's supposed to be a holy day."

And then, she asked me to join her at her house for their Shabbat dinner. So I went, and I got to light candles and listen to prayers, and I tried not to blush as I asked questions about why Adrienne's family didn't eat pork and what they called their place of worship (I guessed wrong when I said *church*). When I went home that night, I stayed up thinking about traditions, and I wished my family had some that weren't just putting up a Christmas tree once a year.

As Adrienne and I became better friends, I learned a lot more about what it's like to be Jewish. I even got to go to her sister's bat mitzvah in the spring, which is a special ceremony for twelve-year-old girls. That night, after the ceremony, I went home and asked my mom outright:

"Mom, what are we?"

"What?" she asked, kind of surprised. "What do you mean?"

"I mean, do we have a background, besides just American? Do we have any customs or ceremonies or anything? Anything that makes us...I don't know...stand out? Do we have a culture?"

It was a mouthful.

"Well, Sarah..." Mom began. "Is this all coming from learning about Adrienne's family?"

"Yeah, kind of. We just seem so...modern. And kind of bland."

"Hey, we're not bland!" Mom had been sneaking ice cream from the freezer when I walked in, and she flipped a chocolate chip at me.

"We don't have the same kinds of traditions as Adrienne, though," I said, picking the chocolate off of my shirt.

"No, but we have other things. They might not seem too obvious to you, because you grew up with them—but that's probably how Adrienne feels about her family's traditions, too," Mom said. "Think about it. Both of my parents—your grandparents—come from Polish families. We might not speak Polish, but your great-grandmother did. She moved here when she was nineteen."

Mom sat down, and kept talking.

"My grandmother was an incredible cook, for starters. And if you're looking for culture in our family, I'll point out to you that the horseradish spread and sauerkraut I make from time to time come from things I grew up with, in a Polish household."

"I hate horseradish," I said.

"Okay, fine—but you don't hate *chrusciki* or *kolaczki*, do you? Those cookies are both Polish, and we have those every year for Easter and Christmas."

"Yeah, but that's all food, Mom."

"Well, we're not very active in the church, but your grandparents and great-grandparents had a lot of traditions around Christian holidays like Easter and Christmas," Mom said. "When Grandma and Grandpa got married, for example, they had to share a slice of

bread with salt on it, and a glass of wine. Those items were symbols meant to wish them a life free from famine or thirst, although sometimes things got...well, salty!"

I started to laugh.

"Also, you grumble when you get too many jelly beans and not enough 'stuff' in your Easter basket, but Easter baskets used to be all food, no toys," Mom continued. "Nowadays it's just more common to put candy and little gifts in there. But when I was a kid, my mother tucked a butter lamb in with my basket every year."

"Like the one we have on our Easter table!" I said. "I love those! I didn't know those were Polish."

"Yes! And you know what else you've inherited from your family?" Mom put her hand on my head and yanked my ponytail. "Your name."

"My name?"

"Yes—your namesake is your great-grandmother. Her name was Salomeja, and the American version of that is Sarah."

"Why didn't you just name me Salomeja?" I asked.

"We wanted to give you a modern twist," Mom said, smiling.

"*Sarah*" isn't all that interesting a name, I thought, as I went upstairs that night. But it somehow made a difference that I knew that I was named for an ancestor. Mom had pointed out all of the little, interesting things about our family, the things that kept us tied to a culture. My family might not have a special dinner every week, but I went to bed that night feeling a lot more connected to my roots.

Name: _____ Date: _____

1. What does Sarah think her family doesn't have at the beginning of the story?

2. Sarah learns about Jewish traditions and customs from her best friend, Adrienne. What does Sarah start to wonder about as a result of this?

3. Read the following sentence from the text.

"Mom had pointed out all of the little, interesting things about our family, the things that kept us tied to a culture."

What can be concluded about Sarah's conversation with her mom based on this information?

4. What is one reason why Sarah initially feels that her family doesn't have a culture?

5. What is the main idea of this story?

6. Read the sentences and answer the question.

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What does the word "tradition" mean as used in the text?

7. What word or phrase best completes the sentence?

Sarah asks her mom whether her family has a background and a culture. _____,
Sarah's mom tells Sarah about her family's past and their different traditions.
