

## **Asian 204, Summer 2010**

### ***King of Trees: Discussion Questions***

Prepare the following questions for discussion in class on Tuesday 7/13 and Wednesday 7/14. Remember to mark specific passages or jot down page numbers relevant to your responses. Give special attention to Question #9, which will be the focus of our discussion on Wednesday.

#### Content

1. Who are the narrator and his companions? Where are they, and what job have they been sent to do?
2. Who is Knotty Xiao? What is his personal history? How would you characterize his relationship with the narrator? With the Team Leader, Li Li?
3. What is the central conflict in the narrative? Who are the parties in the conflict, and what is at stake for each of them?
4. What is the outcome of the conflict? What stages lead up to this outcome?

#### Narration

5. The narrative is presented by a first-person narrator, i.e. in the voice of an "I" who is also a character in the story. What is the narrator's standpoint towards the events? How directly does he express his thoughts and feelings?

#### Creating Meaning

6. Some of the works we have studied so far (which ones?) have explicit morals; that is, they spell out the message they are meant to convey. Does "The King of Trees" have an explicit moral? If so, what is it, and where is it expressed?
7. How does the narrator feel about the outcome of the conflict? Does he pronounce judgment on the characters and events of the tale? Does he make his feelings known in any other way?
8. What are the most prominent images in the story? What symbolic implications might they have?

#### Close Reading

9. Choose a single passage from the text--perhaps one or two paragraphs in length--that you find particularly memorable, significant, moving, puzzling, annoying, or amusing. Read it through several times. Mark words and

phrases that contribute to the passage's effect on you, including words and phrases that:

- communicate significant information;
- express an unusual perspective;
- connect the passage to other parts of the text (which ones?);
- suggest broader themes and issues (namely what?);
- convey strong emotions;
- present striking imagery;
- create the passage's tone.

Be prepared to talk about your chosen passage in class.