Who Can Claim Kaguya?

Read a Japanese tale through its competing ideas of duty and belonging.

9.CL.1 "Read, analyze, and evaluate complex literary and informational texts written from various cultural perspectives, with an emphasis on works originating outside the United States and the British Isles through 1599."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline two details that show human attachment, and circle two details that show how power or duty limits someone's choice. Use your marks to consider what the story values.

The Moon's Claim, an original retelling of *The Tale of the Bamboo Cutter* (Japan, tenth century)

1 A bamboo cutter split a shining stalk and found a child small enough to fit in his palm. He carried her home to his wife. More shining stalks yielded gold, and the girl grew with astonishing speed into a young woman called Princess Kaguya. Her parents used the gold to build a fine house, but the cutter still remembered the first stalk, its green walls lit from within. He had brought a daughter home from the grove. Could a house built with its gold persuade her to stay?

2 Five noblemen asked to marry Kaguya. Rather than accept their titles as proof of devotion, she demanded five treasures no ordinary traveler could bring back. One man presented a bowl he claimed belonged to the Buddha; another displayed a branch supposedly taken from a jeweled tree. Their claims collapsed when the objects failed her tests or their makers exposed the fraud. Even the emperor sought Kaguya, and even he could not command her heart. To the suitors, a dazzling object might purchase a bride; Kaguya treated their displays of rank as no answer to her wishes.

3 When the full moon rose, Kaguya told her parents that she had come from the Moon and must return there. The cutter barred the gates and the emperor sent guards, yet the visitors from the Moon passed every defense. Kaguya left a letter for the emperor. Once she put on the visitors' feather robe, her grief for the people on Earth vanished, and she rose toward the sky. The emperor read her letter but refused the elixir of immortality she had left him. What use was endless life without her? He ordered both letter and elixir burned atop a mountain close to heaven.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How does the cutter's question about the house change the meaning of the gold found in the bamboo?

2. What do the suitors' failed treasures suggest about the story's view of rank and marriage? Use one detail as evidence.

3. The cutter bars the gates, and the emperor sends guards. What do these actions reveal about the limits of human power in the story?

4. How does the emperor's decision to burn the elixir challenge the idea that immortality is a reward?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write a 5- to 6-sentence first-person reflection by a Moon visitor after Kaguya leaves Earth. Use two specific details from the retelling to show how the visitor might view duty differently from Kaguya's human family, then judge whether the visitor's view is fair.

ANSWER KEY

Who Can Claim Kaguya?

GRADE 9 · 9.CL.1

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline two details that show human attachment, and circle two details that show how power or duty limits someone's choice. Use your marks to consider what the story values. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How does the cutter's question about the house change the meaning of the gold found in the bamboo?	**The gold gives the family a fine house, but the cutter doubts that wealth can make Kaguya stay. It cannot secure the bond he values.**
2	What do the suitors' failed treasures suggest about the story's view of rank and marriage? Use one detail as evidence.	**Rank and impressive gifts do not give the suitors a right to marry Kaguya. For example, the jeweled branch is exposed as a fraud.**
3	The cutter bars the gates, and the emperor sends guards. What do these actions reveal about the limits of human power in the story?	**Both try to keep Kaguya on Earth, but the Moon visitors pass their defenses. Neither parental authority nor imperial power can stop her departure.**
4	How does the emperor's decision to burn the elixir challenge the idea that immortality is a reward?	**He refuses endless life because Kaguya is gone. His decision suggests that life without someone he loves is worth less to him than immortality.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

We came for Kaguya when the full moon rose, though her father barred the gates. He called those gates protection, but we had come to bring her back where she belonged. I watched her leave a letter for the emperor, a sign that her life on Earth mattered to her. Once she wore the feather robe, her grief disappeared, and I wondered what our duty had cost her. Her father could not keep her by force, any more than the emperor could keep her with guards. Bringing her home was our duty, but I cannot call the loss of her memories fair.

Accept interpretations supported by details in the retelling, including readings that question the Moon visitors' authority. For the Moon visitor reflection, check for first person, 5 to 6 sentences, two accurate details, a contrast in perspectives, and a judgment.