“The Latehomecomer” questions

1. Notice Yang’s hopes for the future in lines 154–162. Reread lines 154–158. What does Yang’s statement that she and her sister “wanted to make the life journeys of our family worth something” suggest about their views of their roles in the Hmong community?
2. Reread lines 169-172. In a memoir, authors often compare themselves to others. While Yang has always compared herself to her older sister Dawb, she begins to recognize her connection to a high school English teacher. What Yang means when she says that in comparison to her sister she “was lost.”
3. Reread lines 167–174. Write the words that describe what Yang was like before she started high school. Then list the words that describe the ways in which Yang changed after she began high school.
4. In this part of the memoir, Yang compares Shakespeare’s classic love story to her own experiences and observations. Reread lines 199–216 to find language that shows her parents persevering through hardships. Why does Yang believe that her parents are a better example of love than Romeo and Juliet?
5. Read the explanatory footnote that follows line 285. Connect the Hmong’s role in the Vietnam conflict to their subsequent lives as refugees. Reread lines 275–285. What is the impact of Yang’s metaphor about the lives lost during the Vietnam War?
6. Immigrants wishing to become citizens of the United States must take a test. They must demonstrate the ability to read, write, and speak English, as well as have an understanding of important events in U.S. history. In some cases, the immigrants are granted a waiver to take the test in a language other than English. Reread lines 293–296 to note the imagery Yang uses to describe her aunt and uncle’s studying. What impression of them does Yang create?
7. Reread lines 359–384 to identify words and phrases that help them to imagine what Yang is experiencing. What is the impact of similes such as “felt like needles were twisting their way into my chest”? Yang is comparing her illness to the history of the Hmong people. What does Yang’s use of the word murky in line 429 suggests about the origins of the Hmong people.
8. A symbol is an object that stands for something beyond itself. Explain that the bracelet Grandma gives Yang becomes a symbol of the protection and healing that Grandma has not been able to provide. Reread lines 437–451 to note Grandma’s explanation of why she chose the elephant bracelet. How does Yang emphasize her own weakness in comparison to the powerful protection of the elephants?
9. Reread lines 437–45 and list the following in a complete sentence using MLA citation.

• the words that describe the bracelet.

• the words that describe the bracelet’s purpose.

• the words that describe the elephants.

1. Reread lines 463-467. Yang compares her improving health to the weakening and eventual breaking of her bracelet. How can you know that the bracelet continues to be a symbol to Yang, even after she begins to feel better?