

**LEGACIES**

**Light Candle**

*Born alone into a human world, a world of people, we grow and learn. Gradually, we become that world, those people, passing on something of ourselves, tending together life's flame.*

**Check-in**

**Opening Reading:**

*Those Winter Sundays* by Robert Hayden

Sundays too my father got up early and put his clothes on in the blueblack cold, then with cracked hands that ached from labor in the weekday weather made banked fires blaze. No one ever thanked him.

I'd wake and hear the cold splintering, breaking. When the rooms were warm, he'd call, and slowly I would rise and dress, fearing the chronic angers of that house,

Speaking indifferently to him who had driven out the cold and polished my good shoes as well. What did I know, what did I know of love's austere and lonely offices?

In Worcester, Massachusetts, I went with Aunt Consuelo to keep her dentist's appointment and sat and waited for her in the dentist's waiting room.

It was winter. It got dark early. The waiting room was full of grown-up people, arctics and overcoats, lamps and magazines. My aunt was inside what seemed like a long time and while I waited I read the *National Geographic* .....

Suddenly, from inside, came an *oh!* of pain —Aunt Consuelo's voice— not very loud or long. ....What took me completely by surprise was that it was *me*: my voice, in my mouth. Without thinking at all I was my foolish aunt, .....

I said to myself: three days and you'll be seven years old. I was saying it to stop the sensation of falling off the round, turning world into cold, blue-black space. But I felt: you are an *I*, you are an *Elizabeth*, you are one of *them*. *Why* should you be one, too? .....

Why should I be my aunt, or me, or anyone? What similarities— boots, hands, the family voice .....

held us all together or made us all just one?

How—I didn't know any  
word for it—how “unlikely” . . .  
How had I come to be here,  
like them . . . .

.....

The waiting room was bright  
and too hot. It was sliding  
beneath a big black wave,  
another, and another.

Then I was back in it.  
The War was on. Outside,  
in Worcester, Massachusetts,  
were night and slush and cold,  
and it was still the fifth of February, 1918.

### Questions and reflective silence

1. We all receive legacies that connect us—in good ways and bad—to our parents, to those who raised us, to our communities, to the books we read and the music we heard, to the buildings we've lived in and the furniture we've lived with, to the stores and ads that have surrounded us, to the natural world. What are some of the legacies we have each received—important and unimportant, good and bad?
2. In what ways do these legacies make us who we are?
3. What do we find ourselves actually passing along to others?
4. What would we just as soon not pass along? . What would we like our legacies to be?

**R**

**eflective Silence~**

**- Discussing the Questions~**

## **Business**

### **Check-out**

### **Closing reading**

The not-quite-three-year-old grins, throws his arms up, and—in the language he's miraculously absorbed—shouts, “We're all here” as his parents and four grandparents gather at the table.

Also at the table, unseen, are the great-grandparents, the bosses, the teachers, the peasants, the black sheep, the neighbors, the aunts and uncles, the friends—mothers and fathers and children back and back and back. We are all here.