

Questions on Heaven by Cathy Song:

1. What is the speaker's current situation? What sense of the speaker's family history can you glean from the poem? How would you tell the story of this family?
2. What's the significance or effect of the poem's not telling this story straight-forwardly but moving back and forth between past and present, between various times and characters?
3. In what sense might the son's dream of a Chinese heaven create a conflict for the speaker, and how would you describe that conflict? Might different characters in this poem - the speaker, her sons, her parents and her grandfather - represent different worldviews? If so, how would you characterize them and how or why might they be in conflict? Is the conflict resolved in the poem? If so, how so?