Opening Questions

Are you now or have ever been a reader of comics or watcher of cartoons? Have you stopped? If so, when and why? If you continue to read comics or watch cartoons, explain why—what do you get out of them?

Answer the following questions as you read through the Chapter One excerpt.

1. Why does McCloud think people have failed to understand comics?

2. What is the metaphor that McCloud uses to represent the difference between form—or medium—and content?

3. What does *juxtaposed* mean?

4. Complete the following analogy:

   __________ does for comics what __________ does for film!

5. What is the final “dictionary” definition that McCloud develops for comics?
Understanding Comics: Chapter 2 Questions

1. What point do you think Rene Magritte’s painting “The Treachery of Images” is trying to make?

2. According to McCloud, what does icon mean?

3. What is a symbol? Provide an example of a symbol.

4. Give an example of an icon of the practical realm.

5. What kind of icons are pictures?

6. What does McCloud mean when he says that “words are totally abstract icons”?

7. McCloud speculates on several reasons why “our culture is so in thrall to the simplified reality of the cartoon.” One reason, he says, is “amplification through simplification.” Explain what he means. Do you agree with this reason?

8. Another reason he gives is the “universality of cartoon imagery.” Again, please explain what he means and then respond—do you agree with this reason for why we are so involved with cartoons or comics?
*Persepolis*  Read the Introduction and to page 46.

Name_________________________ Date_____

Introduction:

1. Complete the following: The word “Iran” derives from “________________,” which means “__________________.”

*Persepolis*

1. Why did Marji’s mother dye her hair?

2. What does Marji want to be when she grows up? Why? What does she tell her parents? Why do you think she tells them this?

3. Describe Iran’s “2500 years of tyranny and submission.” (See page 11.)

4. How did Reza Shah come to power? (See pages 19-21.)

5. Why do you think the woman whose husband died of cancer joined in the protests? Do you think she was right to do so? (See pages 31-32.)

6. In what way did Marji help Mehri, her family’s maid?
1. What was the political conviction of Siamak Jari and Mohsen Shakiba when they were imprisoned during the Shah’s rule?

2. Why was Marji proud of her uncle Anoosh?

3. Why were Marji’s friends and family leaving for the United States? Why was Marji’s father reluctant to go?

4. Starting with “The Trip” (p. 73), how is Marji drawn differently so that we know time has elapsed since the last chapter?

5. Explain the differences between the “Fundamentalist Woman” and the “Modern Woman” as well as between the “Fundamentalist Man” and the “Modern Man.” (See page 75.)

6. Why did the military pilots (who had previously been jailed) agree to lead the attack on Baghdad?
1. On page 102, the top panel depicts the young kids from poor neighborhoods exploding on the minefields of the war with Iraq. The bottom panel shows Marji at her first party, dressed in a sweater and a necklace her mother had made her. What similarities do you see between the figures of each panel? Why do you think the author juxtaposed (or placed side-by-side) these panels—what point is she trying to make?

2. On page 110, we see Marji and her grandmother pouring alcohol (a banned substance) down the toilet and spraying a deodorizer to hide the smell. What is strange or ironic in this scene?

3. Examine page 117. While do you think Marji is drawn smoking her first cigarette while she narrates how the new regime is growing more oppressive—what is the connection? Also, when she says, after trying the first cigarette, that now she is a grown-up, do you agree? Explain.

4. Examine page 120. Marji’s family arrives at the hospital where her uncle is staying after suffering his third heart attack. In the last four panels, what types of people does her family encounter? What do you think the family is feeling when they see these people? Why do you think the final three panels have no speech bubbles or narration captions?
1. Reread page 87. What does this page tell us about human nature?

2. Reread page 96, in which we read that "hitting yourself is one of the country’s rituals." What do you think is the author’s attitude toward this ritual? Explain.

3. During the war with Iraq, why were boys given keys? What were the keys supposed to open?

4. Why does Marji’s mother use masking tape and curtains to cover the windows of their home?

5. On page 108 Marji’s family is pulled over by men with guns who criticize them for being too Western (and immoral). On page 110 Marji’s father declares that the “faith [of the men with guns] has nothing to do with ideology.” Explain what you think he means.

6. On page 113 Marji calls her mother the “Guardian of the Revolution of this house.” What does she mean? In what ways is Marji still experiencing a “typical” adolescent life despite the extraordinary circumstances she is living in?

7. Why did Uncle Taher want a passport? What prevented him from getting the passport in time?
1. Do you think Marji’s father really likes Iron Maiden? Explain why he says he does to Marji.

2. How do they smuggle the posters back into Iran?

3. What is the purpose of the women’s branch of the Guardians of the Revolution? Why do they accost Marji on the street? How does Marji avoid being brought back to the committee (the HQ of the Guardians of the Revolution)? What might have happened to her there?

4. On page 137, what reason is given for Marji’s family’s not leaving Tehran despite the city being targeted by Iraqi “SCUD” missiles?

5. Why do you think the author left out a “text box” in the bottom left panel on page 142? Why is the next panel all black except for the “text box”?

6. How did the death of Neda Baba-Levy affect Marji’s behavior at school?

7. Why is Marji sent to school in Austria? How old is she at the time?

8. How do you interpret the final panel of Persepolis: The Story of a Childhood (on page 153)?