

# My Name is Asher Lev

P/AP English II – Heritage High School  
Guiding Questions for Summer Reading

Use the following questions to help you interpret your independent summer reading assignment. These questions are designed to help you read actively and make connections between the texts to modern society and your own life.

Your answer to EACH of the following questions should:

- Reflect your best effort
- Be neatly hand-written on separate sheet(s) of paper
- Be written in well-developed paragraph format with complete sentences (NOT bulleted)
- Be supported by minimum TWO pieces of especially apt and relevant text evidence
  - Document your evidence using correct MLA parenthetical documentation.
  - For example: “My name is Asher Lev, the Asher Lev, about whom you have read in newspapers and magazines” (Potok 3).

The due date for this assignment is: \_\_\_\_\_.

**A *motif* is a recurring image, sound, action or other figure that has a symbolic significance and contributes toward the development of theme. Numerous motifs appear frequently throughout the novel, including the Mythic Ancestor, unfinished business, and the living room window.**

1. When does the Mythic Ancestor “appear to” Asher? Describe three specific instances. What is the appearing of the Mythic Ancestor supposed to help the reader understand about Asher/Asher’s development?
2. Who is concerned with “unfinished business”? Describe three specific examples. What is this concern with unfinished business supposed to help the reader understand about each character’s development?
3. Who does Potok set near the living room window, and for what purpose? Describe three specific instances. What does each character look for at the living room window? What does each character actually see?

**Asher Lev is searching for his identity. His internal conflict centers on how to reconcile his artistic gift with his family’s religious beliefs. Potok narrates at the beginning of the novel:**

***As a matter of fact, observant Jews did not paint at all – in the way that I am painting. So strong words are being written and spoken about me, myths are being generated: I am a traitor, an apostate, a self-hater, an inflicter of shame upon my family, my friends, my people... Well, I am none of these things. And yet, in all honesty, I confess that my accusers are not altogether wrong: I am indeed, in some way, all of these things.***

4. How does Asher reconcile his passion for art with his parents’ expectations? Is this type of struggle unique to Asher, or is it a common conflict faced by many children? Explain.

5. How does conflict drive plot and character development throughout the novel? Describe one example EACH of man vs. society, man vs. nature, and man vs. man.

6. As you turn the final page, rethink title. What is significant about the novel’s title? Consider the motifs you’ve tracked throughout your reading and Potok’s message.