

Name: _____ Class: _____

Amphibians

By Joseph O. Legaspi
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Joseph O. Legaspi is a poet who was born and raised in the Philippines. When Legaspi was 12, he immigrated to Los Angeles with his family. In this poem, a speaker compares immigrants to amphibians. As you read, take notes on the experiences that amphibians and immigrants share.

[1] Amphibians live in both.

Immigrants leave their land,
hardening in the sea.

Out of water.

[5] In Greek, *amphibian* means
"on both sides of life."

Terra and *aqua*. Shoreline.
In fresh water:



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amphibians lay

[10] shell-less eggs;
immigrants give birth
to Americans.

Tadpoles, polliwogs
metamorphose:¹ gills

[15] in early stages. On land,

amphibians develop lungs.
Immigrants develop lungs.

Through damp skin
amphibians oxygenate.²

[20] Immigrants toil³
and sleep breathlessly.

Skin forms glands.
Eyes form eyelids.

1. to change into a different physical form
2. to supply with oxygen
3. **Toil (verb):** to work extremely hard

Amphibians seek land; immigrants, other lands.

[25] Their colors brighten, camouflage.⁴

They've been known to fall
out of the sky.

Fully at home in the rain.

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4. **Camouflage** (*noun*): a disguise that allows someone or something to blend in with their surroundings

Text-Dependent Questions

Directions: For the following questions, choose the best answer or respond in complete sentences.

1. PART A: Which statement identifies the main theme of the poem?
 - A. Immigrants are forced to adapt to their surroundings when they move to a new country.
 - B. Amphibians are strong animals because of their ability to live on land and in water.
 - C. Immigrants struggle to be accepted in the new countries that they make their homes.
 - D. Amphibians and immigrants are better off once they go through a transformation.

2. PART B: Which detail from the poem best supports the answer to Part A?
 - A. "In Greek, amphibian means / 'on both sides of life.'" (Lines 5-6)
 - B. "Terra and aqua. Shoreline. / In fresh water" (Lines 7-8)
 - C. "Immigrants toil / and sleep breathlessly." (Lines 20-21)
 - D. "Their colors brighten, camouflage." (Line 25)

3. How do lines 13-17 develop the speaker's ideas about immigrants in the poem?
 - A. They highlight how easily immigrants can move from one home to another.
 - B. They reveal how out of place immigrants can feel in a new land.
 - C. They emphasize the process that immigrants have to go through to adjust to a new land.
 - D. They prove that some immigrants can't adapt to life in a new land.

4. What does the water in the poem represent in the lives and experiences of immigrants?
