Synopsis

*Luz Bones* is a collection of forty-six formal poems, including sonnets, triolets, and other rhymed poems that run chronologically to tell the narratives of real people through time and history. Among them are the famous—such as Martin Luther, Hans Christian Andersen, John James Audubon, the original Siamese twins, Chang and Eng Bunker, and Mae West, as well as the more obscure such as Annie C., and H. L., who relate the joy, sadness, and terror of their “near-death” experiences and their aftermath.

Author Bio

Myrna Stone is the author of five books of poetry, including *In the Present Tense: Portraits of My Father*, a Finalist for the 2014 Ohioana Book Award in Poetry, and *The Casanova Chronicles*, a Finalist for the 2011 Ohioana Book Award in Poetry. Her poems have been published in over fifty journals, including *Poetry, The Massachusetts Review, The Southwest Review, Boulevard, New Orleans Review, Quarterly West, Nimrod*, and *River Styx*, as well as in nine anthologies.

Study Questions

Comprehensive Section

1. *Luz Bones* takes its readers on a journey through time and space with the voices of multiple figures like Martin Luther, Hans Christian Andersen and Mae West, among others. What is the common element that connects these diverse narratives? What does that say about the universality of narratives?

2. *Luz Bones* begins with an epigraph from Thich Nhat Hanh. How does this epigraph contextualize the poems that follow it? How does it impact your experience as a reader?

3. The poems “Luz Bones” and “To My Parents in the Hereafter” frame the numbered sections of the book. Why do you think Stone chose these poems as the Prologue and Epilogue of the book? How do they relate to each other and the poems that connect them?

4. In the first and title poem of the collection, Stone invites her readers into an “earthen door.” Where does that door lead you? How has that journey impacted you?

5. Stone uses a variety of poetic forms in *Luz Bones*, such as sonnets and triolets. What other poetic techniques does she use? How does her use of form and technique contribute to your understanding of the poems?

6. How do the poems in *Luz Bones* view disfigured, diseased and broken bodies? What influence do those bodies have on their owners’ lives? Do these bodies also function as symbols
and if so, what is their symbolic significance?

7. What is the importance of family, friends and
significant others in this book? What role do
these companions play in terms of pain, suffering
and loss?

Section 1: Cast About As Vapor
1. In the poem “Lucy Bakewell Announces Her
Imminent Marriage to John James Audubon in
a Letter to Her Kinswoman, Miss Gifford,” Stone
talks of the “conscious/life of the body.” In what
other ways does Luz Bones deal with the life, or
lack thereof, of the body?

2. Characterize John James Audubon based
on the poems from pg. 16-25. How does the
multiplicity of perspectives impact how you
perceive the character? Does your opinion of
him change as you make your way through the
poems?

3. Compare and contrast the ideas of friendship
and loyalty as represented in “Joseph Mason,
Audubon’s Former Background Artist, Speaks
to Their Mutual Friends on Loyalty” and “Upon
Taking Delivery of Audubon’s First Published Bird
Prints, Joseph Mason Sees, Then Shares with His
Son, a Bitter Truth.” What does this change in
opinion over time suggest?

Section 2: The Siamese Twins Narratives
1. What is your vision of motherhood as
represented in the first three poems of this section
(pg. 29-34)? What kind of a mother is Nok Thai?
Are her decisions justified?

2. How is the theme of profit motive and greed
explored in “Captain Abel Coffin on How He and
His Partner, Robert Hunter, Have Managed the
Twins on Tour”?

3. In the poem “I, Chang-Eng” (pg. 37-38), the
twins look forward to a time when they “shall
accede/only to one another’s wishes.” Discuss
how the twins’ understanding of agency and
identity is impacted by the conjoined nature of
their bodies.

Section 3: As Present Now As Ever
1. In the poem “In a Letter to His Cousin, Banker
Moritz Melchior Speaks of His Wife, Dorothea,
and Her Devotion to Hans Christian Andersen,”

Stone reminds us, “Selfless love, Iris,/ is rare,
and rarer still if it survives us.” What are the
other forms of selfless love in Luz Bones? What is
the significance of selfless love in the book as a
whole?

2. The poem “Dorothea Melchior to Her
Daughter on Andersen’s Impact a Dozen Years
After His Death” deals with the lasting impact
of an artist even after death. In what ways is
mortality challenged in the narrative arcs of Luz
Bones? What is the significance of the different
forms of life after death? How do the poems in
this section explore the themes of witness? What
is the relationship between silence and credibility
in these poems?