

Workshop 3

Research and Discovery: Shirley Sterling and Laura Tohe

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Workshop 3 Reading

The Names

Lou Hon, Suzie, Cherry, Doughnut, Woody, Wabbit, Jackie,
Rena Mae, Zonnie, Sena, Verna, Grace, Seline, Carilene

“Virginia Spears,” the Algebra teacher calls roll

(Her name is Speans)

And Virgie winces and raises her hand.

“Here.” Soft voice.

She never corrects the teachers.

“Leonard T-sosie.”

(His name is Tsosie.) Silent first letter as in ptomaine,
Ptolemy.

Silent as in never asking questions.

Another hand from the back goes up. No voice.

“Mary Lou Yazy. Are you related to Thomas Yazyzy?”

Yazzie is a common Navajo name, like Smith or Jones.

She rhymes it with jazzy and snazzy.

Mary Lou with puzzled expression. “No.”

“Oh, I thought you might be. He’s quiet too.”

I start to tense up because I’m next

with my name that sticks out

like her sensible black high heeled lace-ups,

clap, clap, clap down the hall.

“Laura Toe.”

And I start to sink,

to dread hearing it on the bus tossed around

like kids playing keep-away.

Suddenly we are immigrants,

waiting for the names that obliterate the past.

Tohe, from T’óhii means Towards Water.

Tsosie. Ts’ósí means Slender.

And Yazzie, from Yázhí, means Beloved Little One/Son.

The teacher closes the book and

we are little checkmarks besides our names.

Roanhorse, Fasthorse, Bluehorse, Yellowhorse, Begay, Deswod, Niilwod,
Chee, ’Átsidí, Tapahonso, Háábaah, Hastiin Nééz.

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KWL Chart

What do I know (or think I know)?

What do I want (or need) to know?

What have I learned?