Adrienne Rich Questions

Aunt Jennifer’s Tigers

1. Describe the picture sewn on the screen.
2. Explore the contrasts between Aunt Jennifer and the needlework she creates. How does line 10 sum up her life? What “ordeals” can you infer? What is implied by line 7?
3. Scan the poem, locating anapestic substitutions. How do these create a “prancing” rhythm? How does the rhythm support the contrasts you explored for question 2?
4. Anapestic and iambic feet may create “rising” rhythms, while dactylic and trochaic may contribute to “falling” rhythms, both patterns subtly reinforcing emotional meanings. But sometimes individual words themselves may have rising or falling rhythms. Consider the rhythmic contributions of the following words: “Jennifer’s”, “fluttering”, and “ivory”.

Diving into the Wreck

1. Define the following words: assiduous, floss, crenellated, haunters, vermeil
2. What does them poem tell us about the speaker? Why is she contrasted with Jacques Cousteau in line 9?
3. Does them poem function as an allegory? Why or why not?
4. What is the nature of the “wreck” into which the poet-speaker dives? What is the purpose of her quest? Why does she take with her a book of myths, a camera, and a knife?
5. Why does the speaker refer to herself as both a “mermaid” and a “merman”? How does the line: “I am she: I am he” (77) help elucidate the themes of the poem?
6. Technically considered, line 89 in the final stanza- “the one who find our way”- is grammatically incorrect. Why is this usage deliberate and appropriate in this context?

Storm Warnings

1. This poem suggests an analogy between natural and emotional weather. Identify the lines and phrases in which this analogy is implied.
2. In stanza three, what are the “elements” (16) that “clocks and weatherglasses cannot alter” (17)? What meaning is suggested by the pun on “shutters” (21)?
3. What do we learn about the speaker of the poem? What is her attitude toward the coming of the storm?
4. Why does the speaker use the first-person singular pronoun in the opening stanzas and then change to the first-person plural later in the poem?
5. Discuss the multiple meanings-natural, social, political, personal- of the poem’s final phrase, “troubled regions” (28).

Living in Sin

1. Explain the grammatical structure and meaning of the sentence in lines 4-7. What are the subject and verb? What style of life do its images induce the woman to move into the man’s “studio”?
2. What contrasting connotations, both positive and negative, are contained in the title phrase?
3. On what central contrast is the poem based? What is the central mood or emotion?
4. Discuss the various kinds of imagery and their function in conveying the experience of the poem.