

Name _____ Date _____

British Literature
W.H. Auden's "The Unknown Citizen"

I. Read and annotate "The Unknown Citizen"

- Write brief summaries as you read
- Interpret figurative meanings
- Write comments, connections and/or questions as you read

II. After you read, answer the following questions on a separate piece of paper following **response to literature guidelines** given in class. Please include **textual evidence** in your responses.

Discussion Questions:

1. Who do you think is the speaker of this poem? Why?
2. What is the tone of the poem?
3. What do you think about this man? Do you find him honorable and patriotic for living in his country, following all the rules, and being the ideal government's citizen or do you find it dishonorable that he lived simply as an ordinary man?
4. Was this man free? Happy?
5. What would you want your epitaph to say?

Rubric

Poem is thoroughly annotated, demonstrating careful reading and analysis ____/5

Responses are complete and include the question as a statement ____/5

Responses clearly indicate that you understood the selection ____/5

Quotes and or/examples from the text are used to support your answers ____/5

Grammar and spelling are correct, with few or minimal errors ____/5

Total _____/25

The Unknown Citizen
W. H. Auden, 1907 - 1973

(To JS/07 M 378
This Marble Monument
Is Erected by the State)

He was found by the Bureau of Statistics to be
One against whom there was no official complaint,
And all the reports on his conduct agree
That, in the modern sense of an old-fashioned word, he was a saint,
For in everything he did he served the Greater Community.
Except for the War till the day he retired
He worked in a factory and never got fired,
But satisfied his employers, Fudge Motors Inc.
Yet he wasn't a scab or odd in his views,
For his Union reports that he paid his dues,
(Our report on his Union shows it was sound)
And our Social Psychology workers found
That he was popular with his mates and liked a drink.
The Press are convinced that he bought a paper every day
And that his reactions to advertisements were normal in every way.
Policies taken out in his name prove that he was fully insured,
And his Health-card shows he was once in hospital but left it cured.
Both Producers Research and High-Grade Living declare
He was fully sensible to the advantages of the Instalment Plan
And had everything necessary to the Modern Man,
A phonograph, a radio, a car and a frigidaire.
Our researchers into Public Opinion are content
That he held the proper opinions for the time of year;
When there was peace, he was for peace: when there was war, he went.
He was married and added five children to the population,
Which our Eugenist says was the right number for a parent of his generation.
And our teachers report that he never interfered with their education.
Was he free? Was he happy? The question is absurd:
Had anything been wrong, we should certainly have heard.

