Discussion Questions:

1. DEMONS: In “Of Monsters and Mothers…” Melinda de Jesús notes that “Barry’s *aswang* is a ‘demon’ with multiple significations: it symbolizes her maternal history, the fractured female relationships in her family, and the replication of this troubling system through four generations: how grandmas, like the *aswang* herself, suck the life from their own daughters by bonding with and thus ‘stealing’ their granddaughters’ affection away from their own mothers” (10). Later in her essay, de Jesús goes on to discuss the demon of “girlness” (13-19). Examine the other demons referenced in Barry’s *One Hundred Demons!* (Head Lice and My First Boyfriend, Magic Lanterns, Common Scents, Dancing, etc.). What do these other demons “signify,” and do they also have “multiple significations”?

   For example: In the chapter “Common Scents,” the narrator, Lynda, begins to think about the variety of smells she notices when visiting other peoples’ homes. These scents are referred to as ranging from mysteriously wonderful to mysteriously bad. The demon of “common scents” in this chapter symbolizes racial/ethnic difference, Lynda’s experience of identity crisis and alienation that stems from her experience of being a white mestiza (a person with both European and Filipino ancestry), and the author’s critique of the American consumer culture’s marketing of products to mask natural odors. This chapter links assimilation with consumerism in order to forefront the intense cultural imperialism experienced both in the US and the Philippines (de Jesús, “Liminality” 230). Lynda experiences racism as a child when her friend’s mother (who hangs Christmas tree car fresheners all over her house) proceeds to explain to her which ethnic group smells the worst (Barry 56). While this neighbor knows that Lynda’s family is Filipino, as her daughter tells Lynda that her people’s smell makes her mother sick, the neighbor seems to feel that Lynda’s whiteness makes it okay to communicate her racist thoughts to her. Lynda goes on to note that when “natural” smells are combined with air fresheners, the smell sometimes becomes traumatic: “vanilla-spice diaper pail” and “piney woods pig’s blood stew breakdown” (Barry 59).

2. COLLAGE & SCRAPBOOK STYLE: In the excerpt from Hillary Chute’s chapter, she discusses the collage style of Barry’s text: “In this full color text, we see a piling on of commonly found, disposable, everyday objects…. Each chapter of *One Hundred Demons!* begins with a digital reproduction, a scan, of a two page multimedia collage, which preserves the three-dimensionality of the collage, what Barry terms its *bumpiness*” (110). What is the purpose of these collage intros to each chapter? How do they operate within the text? Chute does a close reading of the collage preface for the chapter on Resilience (116-117); choose another collage spread and do your own close reading. How does the collage relate to the chapter? What new information or insights does the reader gain from the collage page? Susan Kirtley, among others, discusses the scrapbook format of Barry’s work, noting that “scrapbooks shuffle and recombine the coordinates of time, space, location, voice, and memory. What could be more emblematic of the fractured narratives of modernity than the scrapbook?” (154). How does the private/public scrapbooking format function in the text? How does the form contribute to the experience of reading *One Hundred Demons*?
These collage intros/prefaces were created after the comics were completed and utilized as a way to introduce each chapter. The collages seem to be functioning as a different kind of art piece, a way for Barry as an artist to put herself into the comic. The collages consist of layers of scraps of fabric, of drawings, photographs, glitter paint, etc., and they evoke the same feelings of rupture and fragmentation of identity that the layout of the book does. For example: the collage spread on pages 86-87 that introduces the chapter “The Aswang” includes many elements that are explored in the chapter and provides the reader with a kind of summary and puzzle to interpret before they encounter the comics to follow. On page 86, there are several distinct images: three of them seem to be representations of the aswang (a kind of vampire/werewolf creature who is a human by day and a monster by night who sucks the blood/eats the flesh/steals babies out of their mothers’ wombs, depending upon which of the various versions of the folktale are consulted). In the upper left hand corner, the night-time aswang is depicted with just its upper body and wings. In the lower left hand corner, the aswang is depicted with the head of a dog, equipped with three eyes, pointy teeth, and a long tongue. On the right side of the page, another version of the aswang is shown; it appears birthing a child, with four arms, a long tongue, and vampire teeth. In the middle of the page, Lynda’s mother and grandmother are drawn arguing about the aswang. This drawing is central, and thus significant, this chapter is clearly about a very specific monster from Filipino folklore, but also about the dysfunctional and damaging relationships between the women in Lynda’s family. On page 86, the reader is asked to draw connections between the aswang and Lynda’s mother and grandmother as monsters. The monstrous behavior of the aswang (who steals children from their homes/mothers) is likened to the interactions between mothers and daughters in Lynda’s family. Like a scrapbook, One Hundred! Demons! rides the line between public and private. The collages function as another form of autobiography, and they create a sense of closeness between the reader and the narrator.

3. **TIME: How does time work in Barry’s One Hundred! Demons! ?** Utilizing Scott McCloud’s chapter “Blood in the Gutter” (70-72), examine the panel-to-panel (and chapter-to-chapter, and word-to-word) transitions in Barry’s text. Both Chute and Kirtley discuss and suggest interpretations of the changes in the lettering style and size in Barry’s One Hundred! Demons! What do you make of the lettering style Barry utilizes? How do time and space function between words in Barry’s text?

By looking at the spread on pages 214 and 215, we see a variety of lettering techniques used within the narrative boxes and the images themselves, with notable changes in lettering style as the narrator ages. In the furthest left panel we see a young, spikey-haired Lynda writing to the newspaper columnist Heloise. The text of the letter surrounds Lynda, and is stylistically childish: the letters are quivery and inconsistently spaced, the word “licorice” is misspelled and crossed out, and multiple underlines are used to emphasize “I love you!”. Although the style of lettering in this note to Heloise is distinct from the more adult, all caps lettering within the narrative box above it, the text is stylistically similar enough to suggest it’s been written by the same person, and the name Heloise, in both cases, includes the columnist’s trademark flower over the letter i, suggesting that although the adult Barry of the narrative box has aged, her admiration for Heloise remains. In the left panel on the opposite page, 215, we see an older, longer haired Lynda, once again situated at a desk and writing. This time, however, Lynda isn’t writing to a childhood idol but, rather, she’s “faking” the ability to “break a story down to find the symbolic meaning,” presumably for a school paper. The text of what she’s writing once again surrounds Lynda’s likeness, but this time the style of the text is a more controlled cursive, reflecting Lynda’s attempts to posture herself as “scholarly” and “mature” through a more rigid style.
4. IMAGE/TEXT: Tensuan asserts that “One! Hundred! Demons!: provides an ongoing critique of the forms of discursive violence that structure and modulate day-to-day life” (948-49) and goes on to say that the book can be viewed as “‘loiterature,’ a term coined and defined by literary critic Ross Chambers as ‘a genre which, in opposition to dominant forces of narrative, relies on techniques of digression, interruption, deferral, and episodicity’ which Chambers casts ‘as an oppositional comment on . . . the blindness, rigidity, and exclusionary formalism of disciplined and systematic modes of knowledge’ (298)” (951), culminating in a work that privileges “The perspectives of marginalized figures, bearers of ‘ignored and invalidated knowledges,’” (951) through what Harris describes as the “fluid interchange between image and text” (142). What evidence do you see—within Barry’s text, images, and the interplay between them—of a movement away from typical narrative and/or formal rigidity? In what ways does the work oppose (or enforce) the traditional hierarchies of society and of literature? Harris notes how McCloud “positions Barry towards the center but to the right [within his image/text pyramid], meaning that she occupies a zone where the demarcations between word and image are very permeable” which creates “a sense that we are viewing the familiar in an entirely new way” (133). An example of this is the way that “the permeable boundaries between image and text also extend to the body’s surface, which emits odorous vapors,” that are “communicated in quivering lines radiating from the malodorous source.” Harris cites McCloud’s explanation that “because the olfactory sense is an invisible one, its representational lines in comics are symbols, and ‘symbols are the basis of language!’ (McCloud 128),” concluding that “Barry’s utilization of such symbols—images which are also language—is another example of the boundary-crossing zone that she inhabits” (136) and that Barry “employs symbols to the hilt in her images, conveying a multisensory world.” Aside from scent, what else is communicated by Barry’s mix of symbol, image, and language? How might this mix allow a reader to more fully inhabit the narrator’s visceral world?

By embracing a more iconic, cartoonish style, Barry rejects traditional standards of “high art” and “high literature,” a breakdown of hierarchy we also see reflected in the interplay between her text and images. Text and image can move beyond their relegated boundaries to interact with one another, as they do in the left panel on page 180, where we see an image of Lynda’s dog, Ooola. Rather than providing simply an “objective” or “realistic” rendering of Ooola, Barry has chosen to imbue the image with her feelings for Ooola, using a mix of symbol and text. Hearts—a symbol we easily read as love—emanate from Oola’s smiling face, suggesting both the love Barry feels for Ooola and the love Ooola returns. The textual label “(Really ‘spoiled’)” that points to Ooola communicates what an image alone can not: by placing scare quotes around “spoiled” Barry calls into question the accuracy of the negatively-connotated term. If this dog (whose good-nature is communicated to us via symbolic motion lines and the textual “THUMP THUMP THUMP” of her wagging tail) is spoiled, then is spoiling a dog such a bad thing? Barry is able to allow readers to more completely occupy her (clearly biased) perspective of the dog through the interplay of language, symbol, and image, culminating in a panel that gives readers a richer understanding of Barry’s relationship to the dog and her own personal philosophy of dog-rearing. When we consider how this panel works within the larger context of One! Hundred! Demons! we realize how different Lynda’s philosophy of dog-rearing is from her own mother’s philosophy of child-rearing. Lynda’s “spoiling” of Oola is oppositional to Lynda’s own mother’s parenting strategy of distance and cruelty. Lynda’s adoption of a kinder “parenting” strategy can thus be taken as an act of dismantling the traditional child-parent hierarchy.
FEMINISM/HUMOR: In his piece “Lynda Barry’s Humor…” Özge Samanc states that women cartoonists often produce “humor by reacting to the whole prevailing system, both mainstream and underground, reacting to humor theories, and even the definition of womanhood” (183) which has a tendency to alienate male readers and further the perception of women as “the other.” Samnac attribute’s Barry’s comic success to the ability of her humor to be at once feminist but “not confine itself to only a female audience” (181). Barry does this by reflecting on experiences that are not strictly feminine, but relevant to the human condition as a whole; estranged parents, pets, loss of friends, etc. Samnac explains that “by blurring the prevailing system's visual conventions and by reflecting women's identity onto themes revolving around the human condition, Barry manages to address male audiences as well” (196). However, Samanac makes it clear that despite the text and its humor being inclusive, it is not androgynous, citing her use of domestic and traditionally feminine materials in her collages as an assertion of the femininity of the text. Samnac concludes that “Barry's success as a humorist proves that women can produce humor without 'othering' women, without contributing to prevailing stereotypes, without using the system's conventions that degrade women, and, lastly and most importantly, without being androgynous and representing women's identity as an invisible entity” (196). How can we read 100! Hundred! Demons! as an inclusive feminist text, one that underlines the importance of the female experience without alienating male readers. Further, how can we read this as a humanist text? Cite examples from the text that can be read both as feminist and humanist. 

If we take a look at the collage spread for the introduction of the “My Word Boyfriend” chapter, we see a lot of femininity. There is a lot of pink and yellow, hearts drawn everywhere, and flowers pasted on. The subject being a boyfriend, at first male readers may feel alienated from, but once we flip the page and begin to read the panels it is clear that this chapter is about so much more than a girl’s heartbreak. Our attention is directed towards “lice” and “cooties”, two things which any child who went to public school understands the significance of. Both lice and cooties are used as tools of alienation for children. If you had lice, you were literally separated and sent home, but if you were said to have cooties then you might as well have gone home because none of the kids would come near you. In this chapter Barry at once portrays specific feminist struggles, such as a condescending boyfriend in her life representing a patriarch to overcome (21, 23). While female readers can relate to the struggle, and the feminist point is very clear, the chapter is about so much more that male readers would not feel that they are being excluded from the experience. The jerk boyfriend ends up being tied up with a relationship to a cruel mother. Resentment towards a parent, insecurities developed because of the way one was raised, and the compulsion to repeat the past are human conditions felt by all in some capacity. This shift of focus on the last second to supressed feelings about an abusive mother (24), that male and female readers can feel a connection to makes for a humanist reading. In this way by having the boyfriend portray both the patriarch and the matriarch, Barry creates a text that is at once specifically feminist and inclusively humanist.

FEMINISM/COMPOSITION: Samnac also offers that Barry's stylistic choices in hand painting the writing and the childish cartoon like images is also a form of resistance to male comic conventions. Since comics are traditionally male-centered the conventions for them are in a sense patriarchal. According to Samnac “her apparently clumsy and childish aesthetic, together constitute a complete opposition to the professional aesthetic of mainstream comics established by male artists for the male-centered industry” (182) by reclaiming space in comics for women and redefining the conventions in which one can be a successful cartoonist “Barry not only blur the definition and significance of the professional aesthetic, but also offers a set of new possible
formal approaches and narration devices for comics.” These stylistic choices in telling her stories are deliberate rhetorical strategies on Barry’s behalf. Samnac quotes “Foss and Griffin define invitational rhetoric as [constituting] an invitation to the audience to enter the rhetor’s world and to see it as the rhetor does” (1995:5). In One Hundred Demons, Barry explicitly represents her self-development in the “autobifictionalography” (192). **How does this immersion in Lynda’s world within One Hundred Demons! affect our reading of the comic? Do we feel more connected to Lynda, her demons, and her feminism? Do we feel that the childlike paintings and “autobifictionalography” are successful in connecting us to Lynda and her causes, or do these techniques make us readers feel like the work is less credible and therefore estrange ourselves from the work?**

Despite it’s dark and deep topics, I find myself often second guessing Lynda and her demons. The “autobifictionalography” combined with the childlike creativity of the comic often leave me second guessing how seriously I am to take this work. As we enter Lynda’s work I always keep in mind that she has complete creative licence over her work. Parts of it are true, and parts of it are not. This is troubling to me when it comes to dark issues, I feel unsettled because I am not sure if I am being confided in or lied to in a sense. If the work were purely fiction or purely autobiographical then it would be easier to focus only on the content and ponder the issues brought up by Barry. However, there is something distracting about trying to decide whether what you are being told is true or not that takes something away from the focus of the demons Lynda faces.

**Bibliography of Resources:**


**Spread to Analyze:** 212-213