BEFORE Reading:

1. **Write a short paragraph** about a time when either you or someone you know was “Brave”. Be sure to include the **details to show where, when, who, what, and how things happened**.

DURING Reading:
Below is Joyce Sidman’s poem “Song of Bravery.” (We explain a few allusions in the poem.) **Read the poem a few times.** Then answer the questions on the next few pages.

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**Song of Bravery**
by Joyce Sidman

1 This one’s not a sure thing.
   I’m not bound to win.
3 I don’t think I’ll ace it this time.
   I won’t break a leg,
5 make my own luck,
 or reach the stars.
7 The sun is not shining on me today.
   The force is not strong.
9 Before the day is out,
   I’ll taste the grit of dust.

11 Maybe I didn’t do all I could.
   Or maybe I did
13 but there were others who did more.
   Maybe I’ll never know.

15 But here I go—
bones clicking quietly together,
blood flowing dutifully
from heart to hands and back again—
here I go, stepping out
through the door
of my own shadow:
into the glare of the arena
to face the lions.

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In ancient Rome, men sometimes fought with wild animals, including lions, for the entertainment of crowds. Some of these men were trained, professional fighters armed with weapons. Others were thrown into the ring with wild animals as punishment for a crime. (This barbaric practice was ended in the 4th century.)
AFTER Reading:
Answer the following questions. Note: To keep things simple, we use the pronouns her and she to refer to the speaker of the poem. But the speaker is not necessarily female.

1. Consider the following sayings:

“IT’s a sure thing.” “You’re bound to win.” “Aced it!” “Break a leg.”

“Make your own luck.” “Reach for the stars.”

a. What do all of these sayings above have in common or what is the meaning of these sayings in your own words?

b. How does the poet turn these familiar expressions around in the first stanza. (Hint: a negative word was included in these sayings)

Below is stanza 1:

1. This one’s not a sure thing.
2. I’m not bound to win.
3. I don’t think I’ll ace it this time
4. I won’t break a leg,

Write your answer here:

2. In line 7, the speaker says, “The sun is not shining on me today.” What does she mean?

Write the answer using your own words:

3. In lines 9-10, the speaker says, “Before the day is out, I’ll taste the grit of dust.”

Do you think she is literally or really expecting to get dirt in her mouth?

If not, what does she mean?
4. The **first two stanzas** are written in present and future tense: The speaker talks about how she is feeling in the moment and what she expects to happen.

(Stanza 1)

1 This one's not a sure thing.
   I'm not bound to win.
3 I don't think I'll ace it this time.
   I won't break a leg,
5 Make my own luck,
   or reach the stars.

(Stanza 2)

7 The sun is not shining on me today.
   The force is not strong.
9 Before the day is out,
   I'll taste the grid of dust

(stanza 3)

11 Maybe I didn't do all I could.
   Or maybe I did
13 but there were others who did more.
   Maybe I'll never know.

a. What verb tense or tenses does the speaker use in the third stanza (3)—past, present, future, or a combination?

b. What is the speaker talking about in this stanza (3) put the answer in your own words?

5. In lines 15-18, the speaker talks about her body: her **“bones clicking quietly together,/blood flowing dutifully/from heart to hands and back again.”**
Why do you think the poet chose to include these lines? (write the answer using your own words)

What do they help you understand about how the speaker is feeling? (write the answer using your own words)

6. What do you think the speaker means in lines 19-21 when she says that she steps out through the door of her own shadow?

   19 Here I go, Stepping out through the door
   21 Of my own shadow:

   (write the answer using your own words)

7. As explained in the annotation (on the left at the bottom of the page on page 1) of this activity, the last two lines of the poem are an allusion to a practice from ancient Roman times.

   21 Of my own shadow:
   23 into the glare of the arena
   23 to face the Lions

Do you think this poem is literally or really is about fighting lions in front of a crowd? Why or why not?
   (write the answer using your own words):

8. The poem is not literally or really about fighting lions, yet the speaker never reveals what the task ahead of her is.
Why might the poet have made this choice? (write the answer using your own words or opinion):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>9. Consider the poem’s title.</th>
<th>“Song of Bravery”</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. In your own words, what does it mean to be brave?</td>
<td>b. Do you think the title “Song of Bravery” fits this poem? Why or why not?</td>
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10 Comment on how well you feel you have understood the message of this poem. Give examples to support your response.  
(10 - I totally get it!  5 - I get some lines/stanzas  1 - I am lost)