**The Unknown Citizen – W.H. Auden**

**Background** - *This poem was written in 1939 when Auden moved from England to the United States. This poem is largely a commentary on his observations of American society. In another edition, this poem begins with the following epigraph:*

*“To JS/07 M 378  
This Marble Monument  
Is Erected by the State”*

*This means the poem is an ode to the unknown citizen (also known as JS/07 M 378).*

**After reading the poem, please respond to the following questions.**

1. In your words, describe the type of person JS/07 M 378 was.
2. What dystopian elements are present in the poem?
3. What is the mood/tone of the poem? What clues from the text lead you to this conclusion?
4. Look up the term “eugenics” :
   1. does this remind you of anything in history?
   2. How does this fit in as a dystopian quality?
   3. Does this make you look at the “state” differently? Explain.
5. Why do you think the state decides to erect the monument to recognize JS/07 M 378?
6. The unknown citizen has everything deemed necessary for the modern man – he has the coolest new gadgets like a Frigidaire and a record player.
   1. if the poem were written today, which of today’s “modern necessities” would you expect to find listed in the poem?
   2. Are these things really necessary?
   3. Are Americans (or people in general) overly occupied with their possessions?
   4. Does the government in the poem seem to think this is bad (*mad props to you if you can figure out how this relates to the “*[*Hello, smartphone.  So long, smarts.*](http://www.vnews.com/home/9301242-95/column-hello-smartphone-so-long-smarts)*” article from a recent media Monday*)? Explain.
   5. Do you think this is bad? Explain.
7. The last two lines are the most significant in the poem . . . why?
8. Is this poem still relevant today? Explain.