What’s Really in a Name?
by Joan Burditt

Patsy seemed like a movie star before she really became one. She was my sister’s friend, and her presence made me hide behind the plants in the living room. I didn’t want to talk to her. I just wanted to watch her. She was only in the sixth grade, but she had an air of sophistication that I had never experienced in my seven years.

After we all grew up, Patsy moved to New York and then to Los Angeles. I began to see her on television. Then I saw her in movies. At the end of one movie, I searched the closing credits for her name, but it wasn’t there. So I called my sister and said, “I can’t believe they left Patsy’s name off the credits.” My sister said, “They didn’t. She changed her name.” I hung up the phone feeling confused. To me Patsy would always be Patsy. Why would she need a new name?

Patsy had given herself a pseudonym. Although it sounds like a bad disease, it’s not. A pseudonym is a made-up name. (Pseudo comes from a Greek word that means “fake.”) For writers a pseudonym is also called a pen name. William Sydney Porter, the famous short story writer, called himself O. Henry. Mark Twain’s name was really Samuel Clemens.

People have all sorts of reasons for using synonyms. It is easy to see why William Sydney Porter had one. He spent more than three years in jail for stealing money from a bank where he had worked. Although the evidence of his crime remains questionable, the damage to his reputation was done. As an ex-convict he might have had a hard time getting his books published. So he changed his name. One story is that the name O. Henry came from his cat. When he called the family cat, he yelled, “Oh, Henry.” Another story has it that he got it from his prison guard. The guard’s name was Orrin Henry.

Sometimes writers give themselves pen names because their publisher’s ask them to. It might have been hard to sell a shoot ‘em up western if your name was Archibald Lynn Joselyn. Change that name to Al Cody (think of Cody Wyoming, and Buffalo Bill Cody), however, and you’ve got a winner. The romance writer Elaine Carr is really a man named Charles Mason.

The main reason for taking a pseudonym is because it just sounds better. It’s more appealing and memorable. Which has a better ring- Charles Lutwidge Dodson or Lewis Carroll? Reginald Kenneth Dwight or Elton John? Ralph Lifshitz or Ralph Lauren?
| Question? | So why am I still troubled today that the beautiful and talented Patsy changed her name? I assumed that by adopting a new name, Patsy was trying to get rid of her past-her old friends, the neighborhood, even the scrawny seven-year-old kid who gazed at her from behind the plants.

Patsy, Norma Jean, Reginald-they probably all had good reasons for choosing new names. I hope when they changed their names, they held on tight to their roots. I agree with writer James Baldwin, who said, “Know from whence you came. If you know from whence you came, there are absolutely no limitations to where you can go.” |

| Main Idea Sentence: | ___________ | ___________ | 
| Picture: | ___________ | ___________ |
Informational Summary (non-analytical) Framework:

(1 paragraph only on separate sheet of paper, then on Google Docs and share with teacher)

Possible rhetorical verb to use:
- Informs
- Discusses
- Explains

In the _____________, titled, “________________,”

__________________________
(genre) ____________________
(title)

The author __________ the reader about______________

__________________________
(verb)

____________________________________
(The Big Idea)

First,________________________________________________

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Secondly,________________________________________________

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Third,________________________________________________

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Overall,______________________________________________

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Rubric:

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Main Idea ___/5
Transition Words ___/5
Significant Detail 1 ___/5
Significant Detail 2 ___/5
Significant Detail 3 ___/5
Concluding Sentence ___/5

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Total: ___/5