BEFORE YOU READ

About the Selection
*Tales of the Tikongs* is a selection of stories about the lives of people on the small island of Tiko in the South Pacific. The author, Epeli Hau'ofa, paints a picture of an island culture in the early stages of interaction with more developed societies. These stories show how societies adapt when new ideas, technologies, or values challenge older beliefs.

Reader’s Dictionary
Skylab: U.S. space station in orbit from 1973 to 1979
befitting: appropriate; suitable; proper

Guided Reading
Read how the people of Tiko and Americans are compared in this excerpt. Then answer the questions that follow.

*Tales of the Tikongs: “Blessed Are the Meek”*
by Epeli Hau'ofa

It is said that an American likes to walk tall even though he may be short, and that he occasionally takes a giant step or two for mankind even though mankind may not have asked him to. Good luck to him, says Manu, and may he live long, what with the energy crisis, rising unemployment, falling Skylabs, policing human rights, and carrying other heavy global responsibilities befitting a member of the Greatest Nation on Earth.

A Tikong, on the other hand, tends to walk short even though he may be tall, and will not take even a dwarfish step if he can help it. He normally lives too long on account of his love for energy conservation, which he achieves with enviable success simply by doing as little as possible or by doing nothing at all if he can. He does not have to police human rights even in his own village, since he’s never heard of such things. Moreover, he has no global responsibility, for he is a citizen of a tiny country, so small that mankind is advised not to look for it on a classroom globe for it will only search in vain. More often than not cartographers leave Tiko out of their charts altogether because they can’t be bothered looking for a dot sufficiently small to represent it faithfully and at the same time big enough to be seen without the aid of a microscope.

World Literature Reading
continued

✔️ Literary Response and Analysis

1. **Paraphrasing** How does a Tikong conserve energy?

2. **Analyzing** What does Manu mean when he states that an "American likes to walk tall even though he may be short"?

3. **Making Connections** How does the author equate the physical sizes of Tikong and America with the responsibilities of each country’s citizens?