this essay, what could Houston have done to get your interest—apart from changing the *subject* of the essay?

2. Cite three passages that illustrate Houston's voice, the sense of personality that comes through her writing. Describe her voice in one word, such as *self-centered, engaging, naive, philosophical,* or *sensible.*

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION AND WRITING

1. Compare Houston's ability to adjust to her two cultures with Rodriguez's experiences with the gringo world. Which writer compromises most comfortably with both worlds? Cite specific passages to support your conclusion.
2. In her essay, Houston says, "I felt a great reluctance to tell him [her husband] what I wanted or what needed to be done in the home. I was inwardly furious that I was being put into the position of having to *tell* him what to do. I felt my femaleness, in the Japanese sense, was being degraded. I did not want to be the authority." Is being angry about having to tell someone what you want a universal emotion? Interview several classmates and see if they—regardless of sex or cultural background—have experienced Houston's frustration.
3. Write an autobiographical essay about you and your family, describing how female and male *expectations and roles* differed. Or describe how your *values* contrasted with those of your parents. Focus on several specific incidents illustrating differing roles or values and showing how you adjusted to those differences.

Drowning 1954

GARRISON KEILLOR

(1942–)

PREREADING JOURNAL ENTRY

Recall a time when you were afraid of some place, activity, or person. Think of something that frightened you over a period of time, something that invaded even your dreams. Describe how it began, how it affected you, and how you overcame it—or at least outgrew it.

Garrison Keillor is best known for his "Prairie Home Companion" broadcasts which, at the height of their popularity in the 1980s, were carried by hundreds of public radio stations across the country. The centerpiece for the radio variety show was always Keillor's monologue, without notes or script, about the latest news from Lake Wobegon, a fictitious place in Minnesota "where all the women are strong, all the men are good-looking, and all the children are above average." Keillor has written articles and stories for the New Yorker *and the* Atlantic Monthly, *and has published a collection of stories,* Happy to Be Here *(1982) and* Lake Wobegon Days *(1985).*

In "Drowning 1954," from Happy to Be Here, *Keillor describes his nightmares about drowning: "I was dragged deeper and deeper, with my body bursting and my arms and legs flailing against nothing, down and down, until I shot back to the surface and lay in my dark bedroom exhausted, trying to make myself stay awake." As you read his essay, look for a second fear that Keillor encounters, an anxiety just as alarming as his fear of drowning.*

When I was twelve, my cousin Roger drowned in Lake 1
Independence, and my mother enrolled me in a swimming class at the Y.M.C.A. on La Salle Avenue in downtown