Honors English 10
Summer Homework Information
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Please read these introductory pages thoroughly to BEST understand your responsibilities before diving into the packet pages. DO NOT SKIM - there are solid suggestions and concrete directions here to help you with your tasks. Take time to recharge this summer, then attack this with a positive attitude and growth mindset!

COURSE DESCRIPTION: Welcome to Honors English 10! This is a course that examines texts written by American authors expressing a multitude of perspectives and narratives throughout the centuries. We will consider the values that are shared through these texts and analyze the ways Americans have established an identity in relationship to culture. This class will continue to develop critical reading, critical thinking, analytical discussion, and academic writing skills. **It is imperative that students have a strong foundation in the following areas:**

- Critical reading
- Active reading strategies, including annotations, to facilitate a greater understanding
- Peer discussion techniques
- Inquiry alongside thought-provoking creativity
- Developed essay structure
- Analytical writing
- Grammar and mechanics

ASSIGNMENT: You are required to **read, annotate, and respond to written reflection prompts** from short sample text selections taken from units we will be covering this year.

1. **Sign up for our Remind ASAP:** Text @lcnhon21 to 81010. Your first task is to message me your preferred name and pronouns, and tell me what you're MOST excited to do this summer to relax and recharge.
    - **Example message:** "Good morning, my name is Meg Luther and my pronouns are she/her/hers. I am most excited to go hiking this summer and spend peaceful moments outside in nature."

2. **Reading and Annotations:** Each reading selection in this packet must be **fully** annotated. Annotating is an active reading strategy that allows you to stop and develop this richer understanding of the text. As an active reader, you will be engaging and interacting with texts by making inferences, drawing conclusions, developing connections, predicting, questioning, visualizing, and considering an author's purpose.

   You must underline or highlight AND take notes in the margins. **I will provide an annotation example attached to these instructions that show what quality annotations look like.** The underlines or highlights do not replace the notes, but rather, they draw attention to the passage being discussed in your annotations. In short, these are NOTES that YOU add to the text that provide an enriched understanding. Annotations should provide analysis and critical commentary, not just your reactions to what you read.

Strong suggestions for annotating should include the following:

- Identification and brief characterization of the major character(s) and character interactions
- Identify and characterize the setting. What specific words or images from the text support this and how?
- Identify and characterize the time period. What specific words or images from the text support this and how?
- What major challenges must be overcome for the main character to be successful? Why?
- What are the major barriers to this success? How? Why?
- How and why do characters grow or change?
- What connections do you see to the time period, to characters, to conflict, to themes, or to other literary works? How? Why?
- Are there literary techniques? How and why are they used?
- Is there vocabulary that needs clarification? Clarify the vocabulary and discuss its use.

In essence, be a critical reader and discover the value of the text. What is the author doing? How is he/she accomplishing this? And why? Always ask yourself, "Why?" This will lead you to quality annotation. Please notice that none of these points ask you to summarize.

3. **Written Reflections:** Within this packet, you will find sample texts from units we will be covering throughout our year together in Honors. After thoroughly reading and annotating a unit text(s), your last task will be to draw deep connections through written responses. Each unit sample has a written reflection prompt you will respond to. Responses need to showcase **deep thought** and **conceptual connections**. There is no room for apathy and surface level work in Honors. You are more than capable of pushing limits, challenging your own thinking, and going beyond surface level responses. **The following are the readings and reflection prompts within the packet:**

- **PART 1:** ***Letter to Rev. Samson Occom*** and ***Letter to John Adams***
  - Prompt: Write a persuasive letter to someone in a position of authority that encourages them to take a specific action. The letter should be approximately one page in length.
- **PART 2:** ***I Hear America Singing, I Sit and Look Out,*** and ***Song of Myself***
  - Prompt: These poems are part of the unit titled "Spirit of the Individual." After reading all of the poems, write a CER (Claim, Evidence, Reasoning) paragraph (at least 6-7 sentences) that explores the theme of the unit. Be sure to use textual evidence from at least two of the poems.
    - *Claim = concise sentence that states your position or answers the prompt*
    - *Evidence = specific details or lines from the text (cite when necessary)*
    - *Reasoning = analysis of the evidence with meaningful connections to the claim*
- **PART 3:** ***The Life You Save May Be Your Own***
  - Prompt: In a well-developed paragraph (at least 6-7 sentences), explain the significance behind a character's name.
- **PART 4:** ***The Notorious Jumping Frog of Calaveras County***
  - Prompt: In this tall tale, the author is making subtle comments on some of the negative qualities of society and human behavior. Explain one of the observations the author is making about society and/or human nature and discuss your reaction. Your response should be formatted as a CER paragraph (see Part 2 for CER breakdown).

- **PART 5:** ***Acquainted with the Night, Mending Wall,*** and ***Out, Out—***
  - Prompt: Write a paragraph (at least 6-7 sentences) in which you identify and explain a similarity between two of the poems. Write a second paragraph in which you draw a conclusion about the author's values, belief system, or worldview.
- **PART 6:** ***Teenage Wasteland***
  - Prompt: Identify the protagonist of the story, and write a CER paragraph to defend your choice. Next, identify the antagonist of the story, and write another CER paragraph to defend your choice. You may choose the same person as protagonist and antagonist.
- **PART 7:** ***Straw into Gold: The Metamorphosis of the Everyday***
  - Prompt: Write a personal reflection that explains your goals for the next school year, the next five years, and the next ten years. Your response should be one paragraph (at least 6-7 sentences) in length.

Ask yourself the following as you respond to the prompts: Why is this important? How can I unpack this further? What connections and values might I be missing in my response? Am I answering the prompt in its entirety?

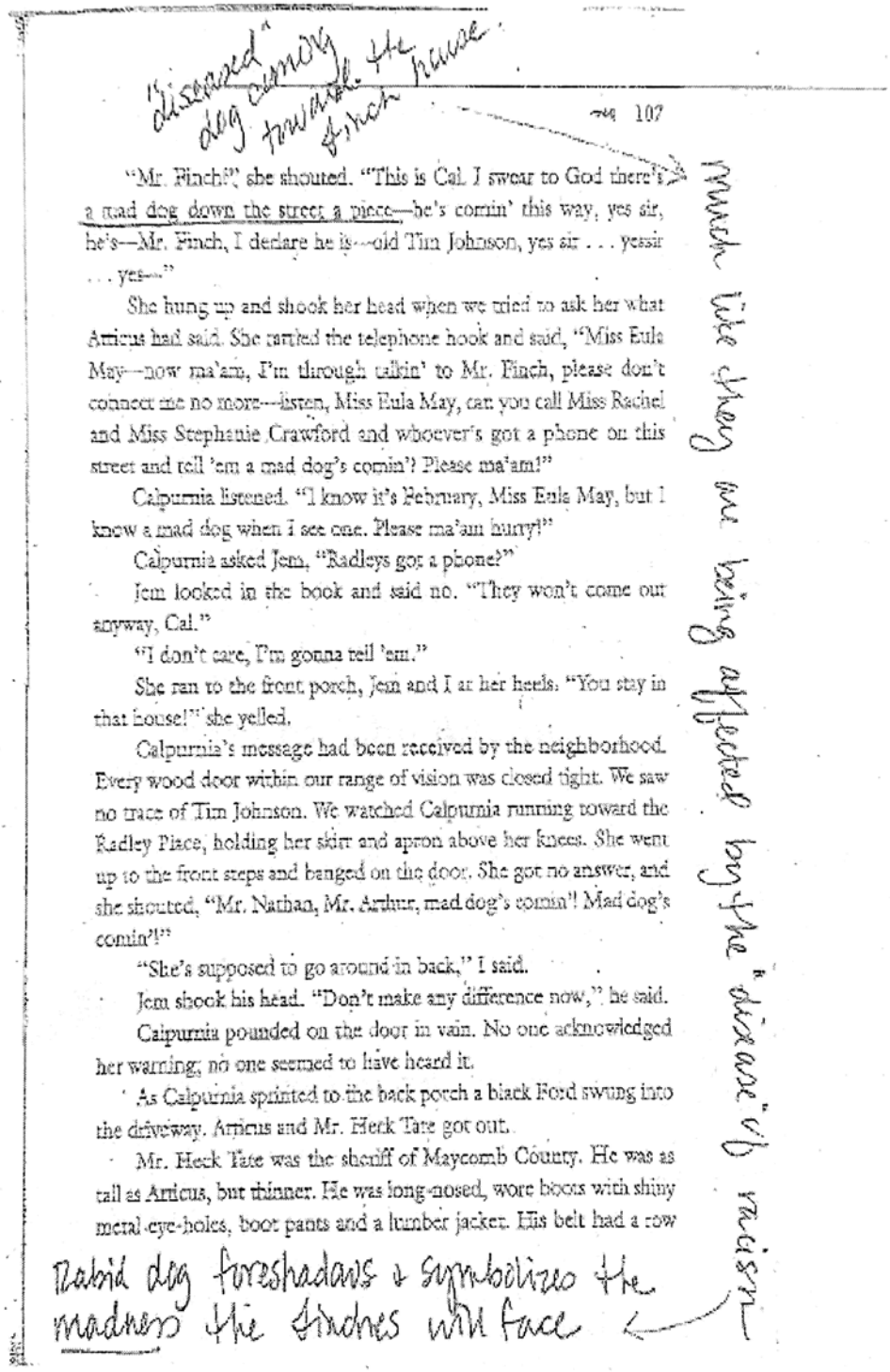
REMINDERS: In challenging your skillset and academic potential in an advanced course, it is expected for you to put in your best effort and not settle for surface level thinking. Your annotations and written reflections to these sample texts must be QUALITY and APPROPRIATE.

- Annotations are NOT merely underlining/labeling or recalling/summarizing
- Personal reactions for annotations are off limits; comments like "yikes!", "me too!", or any other comment that does not build on the academics of the assignment will work against your grade
- Your grades will be weighted. This assignment will be in a larger category. You have roughly 2.5 months to complete this assignment, and the quality of work turned in *must* reflect this
- You should also be prepared to test, write, and/or engage in whole class discussion with each unit excerpt(s)
- Written reflections must showcase quality effort, thorough connection to the deeper meaning of the text(s), and proper grammar and mechanics with few errors

Completed annotations and written reflections for each of the 7 unit excerpts are due on the first day of school in September. You may bring in a hard copy of your paragraphs or you may email them to me. I will also be collecting your packets to review your annotations. If you have any questions throughout the summer, please feel free to send me a message via Remind. I hope you enjoy your readings this summer, remember to give yourself time to recharge, and I look forward to having you in class in the fall. :)

"Reading is the key that opens doors to many good things in life. Reading shaped my dreams, and more reading helped me make my dreams come true." Ruth Bader Ginsburg

Quality Annotation Example:



"diseased" dog coming towards the finch house.

"Mr. Finch!" she shouted. "This is Cal. I swear to God there's a mad dog down the street a piece—he's comin' this way, yes sir, he's—Mr. Finch, I declare he is—old Tim Johnson, yes sir . . . yessir . . . yes—"

She hung up and shook her head when we tried to ask her what Atticus had said. She rattled the telephone hook and said, "Miss Eula May—now ma'am, I'm through talkin' to Mr. Finch, please don't connect me no more—listen, Miss Eula May, can you call Miss Rachel and Miss Stephanie Crawford and whoever's got a phone on this street and tell 'em a mad dog's comin'? Please ma'am!"

Calpurnia listened. "I know it's February, Miss Eula May, but I know a mad dog when I see one. Please ma'am hurry!"

Calpurnia asked Jem, "Radleys got a phone?"

Jem looked in the book and said no. "They won't come out anyway, Cal."

"I don't care, I'm gonna tell 'em."

She ran to the front porch, Jem and I at her heels. "You stay in that house!" she yelled.

Calpurnia's message had been received by the neighborhood. Every wood door within our range of vision was closed tight. We saw no trace of Tim Johnson. We watched Calpurnia running toward the Radley Place, holding her skirt and apron above her knees. She went up to the front steps and banged on the door. She got no answer, and she shouted, "Mr. Nathan, Mr. Arthur, mad dog's comin'! Mad dog's comin'!"

"She's supposed to go around in back," I said.

Jem shook his head. "Don't make any difference now," he said.

Calpurnia pounded on the door in vain. No one acknowledged her warning; no one seemed to have heard it.

As Calpurnia sprinted to the back porch a black Ford swung into the driveway. Atticus and Mr. Heck Tate got out.

Mr. Heck Tate was the sheriff of Maycomb County. He was as tall as Atticus, but thinner. He was long-nosed, wore boots with shiny metal eye-holes, boot pants and a lumber jacket. His belt had a row

Much like they are being affected by the "disease" of racism

Rabid dog foreshadows & symbolizes the madness the finches will face

Phillis Wheatley
c. 1753–1784

NOTABLE QUOTE
"Some view our sable race with scornful eye . . .
Remember, Christians, Negroes, black as Cain,
May be refin'd, and join th' angelic train."

Letter to the Reverend Samson Occom

by Phillis Wheatley

Phillis Wheatley became the first African-American poet to be published. Moreover, her unusual life is the stuff that movies are made of. Kidnapped at age seven in West Africa, she was sold to the prosperous Wheatley family at a Boston slave auction. Within 16 months, the precocious child had mastered English and could read the Bible. She then went on to learn Latin and Greek well enough to read the classics.

Startling Success Story With the encouragement of the Wheatley family, she started writing poetry as a teenager. She gained considerable fame both in the colonies and in England when newspapers began publishing her poems, most of them on moral and religious subjects. While in London in 1773 to publish her book of poetry, Wheatley was the toast of society, which included many nobles and dignitaries and the visiting American patriot Ben Franklin.

Life as a Free Black Woman By 1778, Wheatley had gained her freedom and married a free black man. Their life together was a losing struggle against poverty, however, for in many respects living as a free black in a colonial city was as bad as being a slave. In late 1779, Wheatley tried to get a second book of her poems published, but war-torn, financially strapped Boston had lost interest in her.

Abigail Adams
1744–1818

NOTABLE QUOTE
"Remember all Men would be tyrants if they could."

Letter to John Adams

by Abigail Adams

Abigail Adams was the wife of the second U.S. president, John Adams, and mother of the sixth, John Quincy Adams. But she is equally well-known for her outspoken opinions as expressed in thousands of personal letters.

Intelligent and Competent The daughter of a wealthy minister, young Abigail read extensively in her father's well-stocked library. After marrying John Adams, she moved with him to a farm in Braintree, Massachusetts. As John became increasingly involved in colonial politics and the struggle for independence, Abigail took over management of the household and farm as well as John's business affairs.

An Early Feminist? Because of her support for women's education and her acute awareness of men's "absolute power," many have championed Abigail Adams as an early advocate of women's rights. However, although her thinking was clearly advanced for her time—she also favored the abolition of slavery—she held quite conventional views about a woman's subordinate role in society.

Author Online

For more on Wheatley and Adams, visit the **Literature Center** at **ClassZone.com**.

Letter to the Reverend Samson Occom

Phillis Wheatley

BACKGROUND The Reverend Samson Occom was a Mohegan Indian who became a minister after converting to Christianity. In a letter to Phillis Wheatley, he had criticized some of his fellow ministers for owning slaves. Wheatley's response to her friend, dated February 11, 1774, was later published in colonial newspapers.

Reverend and honored sir,

I have this day received your obliging kind epistle, and am greatly satisfied with your reasons respecting the negroes, and think highly reasonable what you offer in vindication of their natural rights: Those that invade them cannot be insensible that the divine light is chasing away the thick darkness which broods over the land of Africa;[1] and the chaos which has reigned so long, is converting into beautiful order, and reveals more and more clearly the glorious dispensation of civil and religious liberty, which are so inseparably united, that there is little or no enjoyment of one without the other: Otherwise, perhaps, the Israelites had been less solicitous for their freedom from Egyptian slavery;[2] I do not say they would have been contented without it, by no means; for in every human breast God has implanted a principle, which we call love of freedom; it is impatient Ⓐ of oppression, and pants for deliverance; and by the leave of our modern Egyptians[3] I will assert, that the same principle lives in us. God grant deliverance in his own way and time, and get him honor upon all those whose avarice impels them to countenance and help forward the calamities of their fellow creatures. This I desire not for their hurt, but to convince them of the strange absurdity of their conduct, whose words and actions are so diametrically opposite. How well the cry for liberty, and the reverse disposition for the exercise of oppressive power over others agree—I humbly think it does not require the penetration[4] of a philosopher to determine.— Ⓑ

Phillis Wheatley

ANALYZE VISUALS
This image shows a slave auction in New Amsterdam (New York). What does this tell you about slavery in colonial America?

Ⓐ **DICTION**
Describe Wheatley's **diction** in lines 1–11. How do you think her way of writing might have struck white readers at the time?

Ⓑ **PRIMARY SOURCES**
Does Wheatley's letter deal with private or public issues? What are they?

1. **insensible . . . the land of Africa:** unaware that Christianity is spreading throughout Africa.
2. **Israelites . . . Egyptian slavery:** a biblical allusion to the Israelites who were led out of Egypt by Moses.
3. **modern Egyptians:** the owners of African slaves.
4. **penetration:** understanding; insight.

First Slave Auction in New Amsterdam, 1655. The Granger Collection, New York.

Letter to JOHN ADAMS

Abigail Adams

BACKGROUND In March of 1776, while John Adams was in Philadelphia with other delegates drafting a code of laws for the new independent country, Abigail wrote a letter asking him to "remember the ladies" in the new laws: "Be more generous and favorable to them than your ancestors. Do not put such unlimited power into the hands of husbands." John's response was to laugh and remark, "You are so saucy." The following is the next letter she sent to him.

Braintree, 7, May, 1776

How many are the solitary hours I spend, ruminating upon the past, and anticipating the future, whilst you, overwhelmed with the cares of state, have but a few moments you can devote to any individual. All domestic pleasures and enjoyments are absorbed in the great and important duty you owe your country, "for our country is, as it were, a secondary god, and the first and greatest parent. It is to be preferred to parents, wives, children, friends, and all things, the gods only excepted; for, if our country perishes, it is as impossible to save an individual, as to preserve one of the fingers of a mortified hand." Thus do I suppress every wish, and silence every murmur, acquiescing in a painful separation from the companion of my youth, and the friend of my heart. C

I believe 't is near ten days since I wrote you a line. I have not felt in a humor to entertain you if I had taken up my pen. Perhaps some unbecoming invective[1] might have fallen from it. The eyes of our rulers have been closed, and a lethargy has seized almost every member. I fear a fatal security has taken possession of them. Whilst the building is in flames, they tremble at the expense of water to quench it. In short, two months have elapsed since the evacuation of Boston,[2] and very little has been done in that time to secure it, or the harbor, from future

ANALYZE VISUALS
These pastel portraits of Abigail and John Adams were done in 1766, about two years after their marriage. How do these portraits compare with those that might be done today of a young couple?

C PRIMARY SOURCES
Does Adams's letter concern itself with private or public issues in lines 1–10? What does she say about the relationship between the private and the public?

1. **unbecoming invective:** inappropriate abusive language.
2. **two months . . . Boston:** British troops under General William Howe and more than a thousand Loyalists evacuated Boston on March 17, 1776.

invasion. The people are all in a flame, and no one among us, that I have heard of, even mentions expense. They think, universally, that there has been an amazing neglect somewhere. Many have turned out as volunteers to work upon Noddle's Island, and many more would go upon Nantasket,[3] if the business was once set on foot. "'T is a maxim of state, that power and liberty are like heat and moisture. Where they are well mixed, every thing prospers; where they are single, they are destructive."

A government of more stability is much wanted in this colony, and they are ready to receive it from the hands of the Congress. And since I have begun with maxims of state,[4] I will add another, namely, that a people may let a king fall, yet still remain a people; but, if a king let his people slip from him, he is no longer a king.[5] And as this is most certainly our case, why not proclaim to the world, in decisive terms, your own importance? D

Shall we not be despised by foreign powers, for hesitating so long at a word?

I cannot say that I think you are very generous to the ladies; for, whilst you are proclaiming peace and good-will to men, emancipating all nations, you insist upon retaining an absolute power over wives. But you must remember, that arbitrary power is like most other things which are very hard, very liable to be broken; and, notwithstanding all your wise laws and maxims, we have it in our power, not only to free ourselves, but to subdue our masters, and, without violence, throw both your natural and legal authority at our feet;—

"Charm by accepting, by submitting sway,
Yet have our humor most when we obey."[6] E

I thank you for several letters which I have received since I wrote last; they alleviate a tedious absence, and I long earnestly for a Saturday evening, and experience a similar pleasure to that which I used to find in the return of my friend upon that day after a week's absence. The idea of a year dissolves all my philosophy.

Our little ones, whom you so often recommend to my care and instruction, shall not be deficient in virtue or probity,[7] if the precepts of a mother have their desired effect; but they would be doubly enforced, could they be indulged with the example of a father alternately before them. I often point them to their sire, "engaged in a corrupted state,
Wrestling with vice and faction."[8] F

A. Adams

D DICTION
Reread lines 25–30. What words suggest a concern with political issues? What does this diction tell you about the writer's comfort with discussing the subject of government?

E PRIMARY SOURCES
What inconsistency in the attitudes of the times does Abigail Adams point out in lines 32–40?

F DICTION
Reread lines 46–51. What does the formal language used to discuss both public and private matters tell you about family relations at the time?

3. **Noddle's Island . . . Nantasket:** sites near the city of Boston. Noddle's Island is now called East Boston.
4. **maxims of state:** rules or short sayings related to government.
5. **king:** a reference to King George III, who ignored colonists' protests and put Massachusetts under military rule.
6. **"Charm . . . obey":** a couplet taken from Alexander Pope's poem *Moral Essays.*
7. **deficient . . . probity:** lacking in goodness or integrity.
8. **"engaged . . . faction":** lines taken from Joseph Addison's play *Cato.* Cato (234–149 B.C.) was a Roman politician who fought for high moral standards in the Roman Senate.

Luther
Honors 21-22
Summer Homework

PART 1 REFLECTION PROMPT: *Letter to Rev. Samson Occom* and *Letter to John Adams*

Write a persuasive letter to someone in a position of authority that encourages them to take a specific action. The letter should be approximately one page in length.

**This may be typed or written, and it must be double spaced.

I Hear America Singing
I Sit and Look Out
from Song of Myself

Poetry by WALT WHITMAN

"I sound my barbaric yawp over the roofs of the world."

Connect to Your Life

Images of America Many of Walt Whitman's poems contain vivid images of America in the mid-1800s. What images do you think capture the spirit and reality of America today? Share descriptions or sketches with a small group of classmates.

Build Background

A Revolution in Poetry Walt Whitman's first book of poems, *Leaves of Grass,* was so revolutionary in content and form that publishers would not publish it. After Whitman printed the book himself in 1855, many established poets and critics disparaged it. In 1856, the *Saturday Review* suggested that "if the *Leaves of Grass* should come into anybody's possession, our advice is to throw them instantly behind the fire."

Doubtless Whitman was shocked and hurt by such a reception, for he saw himself as capturing the spirit of his country and his times. In the preface to *Leaves of Grass* he wrote, "The United States themselves are essentially the greatest poem." Whitman's images encompass all of American life, including the common and "vulgar." His lines are long and rambling, like the vastly expanding country. His language reflects the vigor and tang of American speech, resounding with new, distinctively American, rhythms. Most of his poems are marked by optimism, vitality, and a love of nature, free expression, and democracy—values often associated with the America of his day.

VIDEODISC **LaserLinks: Background for Reading**
Biographical Connection

Focus Your Reading

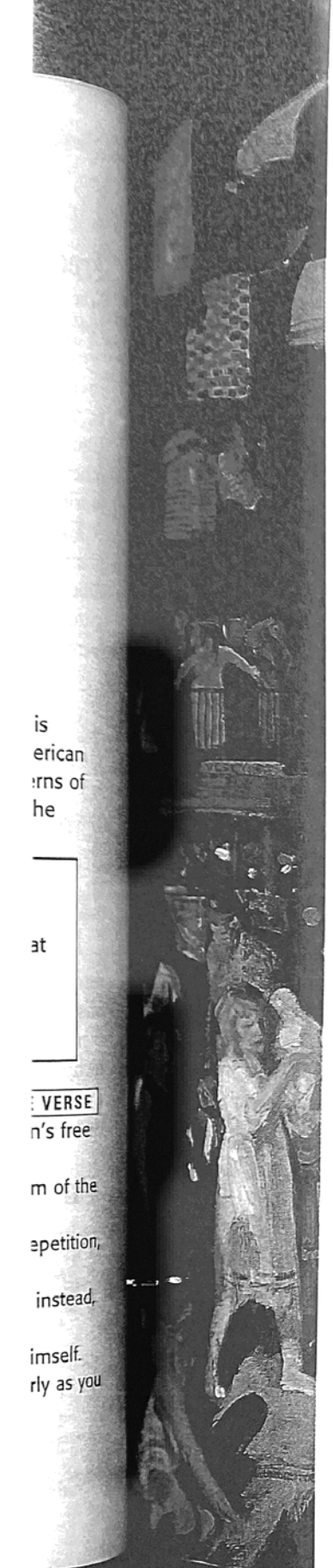
LITERARY ANALYSIS FREE VERSE Walt Whitman is generally credited with bringing free verse to American poetry. **Free verse** is poetry without regular patterns of rhyme and meter. Whitman, however, does use the following poetic devices to create rhythm:

> **Catalog** There are frequent lists of people, things, and attributes.
> **Repetition** Words or phrases are repeated at the beginning of two or more lines.
> **Parallelism** Related ideas are phrased in similar ways.

ACTIVE READING STRATEGIES FOR READING FREE VERSE

Use the following strategies as you read Whitman's free verse:

- Read the poems aloud, and listen to the rhythm of the lines.
- Notice where he uses the devices of catalog, repetition and parallelism.
- Do not spend too much time on any one line; instead appreciate the sweep of his images and ideas.
- The speaker can be identified with Whitman himself. Build a mental image of the speaker, particularly as you read "Song of Myself."



I Hear America Singing

WALT WHITMAN

I hear America singing, the varied carols I hear,
Those of mechanics, each one singing his as it should be blithe[1] and strong,
The carpenter singing his as he measures his plank or beam,
The mason singing his as he makes ready for work, or leaves off work,
The boatman singing what belongs to him in his boat, the deckhand singing on the steamboat deck,
The shoemaker singing as he sits on his bench, the hatter singing as he stands,
The wood-cutter's song, the ploughboy's on his way in the morning, or at noon intermission or at sundown,
The delicious singing of the mother, or of the young wife at work, or of the girl sewing or washing,
Each singing what belongs to him or her and to none else,
The day what belongs to the day—at night the party of young fellows, robust, friendly,
Singing with open mouths their strong melodious songs.

1. **blithe** (blīth): carefree and lighthearted.

I Sit and Look Out

WALT WHITMAN

I sit and look out upon all the sorrows of the world, and upon all oppression and shame,
I hear secret convulsive sobs from young men at anguish with themselves, remorseful after deeds done,
I see in low life the mother misused by her children, dying, neglected, gaunt, desperate,
I see the wife misused by her husband, I see the treacherous seducer of young women,
I mark the ranklings of jealousy and unrequited love attempted to be hid, I see these sights on the earth,
I see the workings of battle, pestilence, tyranny, I see martyrs and prisoners,
I observe a famine at sea, I observe the sailors casting lots who shall be kill'd to preserve the lives of the rest,
I observe the slights and degradations cast by arrogant persons upon laborers, the poor, and upon negroes, and the like;
All these—all the meanness and agony without end I sitting look out upon,
See, hear, and am silent.

GUIDE FOR READING

2 convulsive: intense and uncontrolled.

2–8 Notice how many sorrows the speaker lists in this poem. What effect might this have on a reader?

3 low life: the life of the lower classes.

5 ranklings: bitter feelings or resentments; **unrequited:** not returned.

7 casting lots: deciding by means of a random choice of objects (as in drawing straws).

Thinking Through the Literature

1. **Comprehension Check** Name one of the social injustices described in this poem.
2. How do you evaluate the speaker's response to the sorrows of the world?

THINK ABOUT
- what the speaker sees and hears
- why the speaker might respond with silence
- whether you think silence is the appropriate response

3. If Whitman were to write this poem today, do you think he would list the same sorrows or different ones? Explain your opinion.

from

Song of Myself

WALT WHITMA

1

I celebrate myself, and sing myself,
And what I assume you shall assume,
For every atom belonging to me as good belongs to you.

I loaf and invite my soul,
I lean and loaf at my ease observing a spear of summer grass.

My tongue, every atom of my blood, form'd from this soil, this air,
Born here of parents born here from parents the same, and their parents the same,
I, now thirty seven years old in perfect health begin,
Hoping to cease not till death.

Creeds and schools in abeyance,
Retiring back a while sufficed at what they are, but never forgotten,
I harbor for good or bad, I permit to speak at every hazard,
Nature without check with original energy.

GUIDE FOR READING

1–3 Why do you think the spea identifies the reader with himse at the very beginning of the poem?

10 in abeyance (ə-bā′əns): temporarily set aside.

11 sufficed at: satisfied with.

6

A child said *What is the grass?* fetching it to me with full hands,
How could I answer the child? I do not know what it is any more than he.
I guess it must be the flag of my disposition, out of hopeful green stuff woven.

Or I guess it is the handkerchief of the Lord,
A scented gift and remembrancer designedly dropt,
Bearing the owner's name someway in the corners, that we may see and remark, and say *Whose?*

Or I guess the grass is itself a child, the produced babe of the vegetation.
Or I guess it is a uniform hieroglyphic,
And it means, Sprouting alike in broad zones and narrow zones,
Growing among black folks as among white,
Kanuck, Tuckahoe, Congressman, Cuff, I give them the same, I receive them the same.

And now it seems to me the beautiful uncut hair of graves.
Tenderly will I use you curling grass,
It may be you transpire from the breasts of young men,
It may be if I had known them I would have loved them,
It may be you are from old people, or from offspring taken soon out of their mothers' laps,
And here you are the mothers' laps.

16–25 What metaphors does the speaker use to describe what grass means to him?

18 remembrancer designedly dropt: a purposely dropped token of affection.

21 hieroglyphic: a system of symbols that represent meanings or speech sounds.

24 Kanuck, Tuckahoe, . . . Cuff: slang terms for various groups of people. A Kanuck (now spelled Canuck) is a Canadian, especially a French Canadian; a Tuckahoe is someone from the coast of Virginia; and a Cuff is an African American.

25–33 The speaker presents the grass as "the uncut hair of graves." Who are the dead that he includes in this extended metaphor?

27 transpire: emerge; ooze out.

This grass is very dark to be from the white heads of old mothers,
Darker than the colorless beards of old men,
Dark to come from under the faint red roofs of mouths.

O I perceive after all so many uttering tongues,
And I perceive they do not come from the roofs of mouths for nothing.

I wish I could translate the hints about the dead young men and women,
And the hints about old men and mothers, and the offspring taken soon out of their laps.

What do you think has become of the young and old men?
And what do you think has become of the women and children?

They are alive and well somewhere,
The smallest sprout shows there is really no death,
And if ever there was it led forward life, and does not wait at the end to arrest it,
And ceas'd the moment life appear'd.

All goes onward and outward, nothing collapses,
And to die is different from what any one supposed, and luckier.

38–45 What concept of death does the speaker express in these lines?

45 Why does the speaker think that to die is "luckier" than what people suppose?

52

The spotted hawk swoops by and accuses me, he complains
of my gab and my loitering.

I too am not a bit tamed, I too am untranslatable,
I sound my barbaric yawp over the roofs of the world.

The last scud of day holds back for me,
It flings my likeness after the rest and true as any on the
shadow'd wilds,
It coaxes me to the vapor and the dusk.

I depart as air, I shake my white locks at the runaway sun,
I effuse my flesh in eddies, and drift it in lacy jags.

I bequeath myself to the dirt to grow from the grass I love,
If you want me again look for me under your boot-soles.

You will hardly know who I am or what I mean,
But I shall be good health to you nevertheless,
And filter and fibre your blood.

Failing to fetch me at first keep encouraged,
Missing me one place search another,
I stop somewhere waiting for you.

48 yawp: loud, rough speech.

49 scud: wind-blown cloud.

53 effuse . . . eddies: scatter my flesh in swirling currents.

54 bequeath: hand over, as if in a will.

61 Why do you think the speaker says he's "waiting for you"?

Luther
Honors 21-22
Summer Homework

PART 2 REFLECTION PROMPT: *I Hear America Singing*, *I Sit and Look Out*, and *Song of Myself*

These poems are part of the unit titled "Spirit of the Individual." After reading all of the poems, write a CER (Claim, Evidence, Reasoning) paragraph (at least 6-7 sentences) that explores the theme of the unit. Be sure to use textual evidence from at least two of the poems.

- Claim = concise sentence that states your position or answers the prompt
- Evidence = specific details or lines from the text (cite when necessary)
- Reasoning = analysis of the evidence with meaningful connections to the claim

**This may be typed or written, and it must be double spaced.

"'Nothing is like it used to be, lady,' he said. 'The world is almost rotten.'"

The Life You Save May Be Your Own

Short Story by FLANNERY O'CONNOR

Comparing Literature

Traditions Across Time: Southern Gothic

Influenced by Edgar Allan Poe and Nathaniel Hawthorne, Flannery O'Connor wrote stories filled with sinister characters and bizarre situations. Like these two earlier writers of Gothic literature, she vividly portrays the experiences of isolated, self-absorbed people set against the backdrop of a grotesque world.

Points of Comparison As you read "The Life You Save May Be Your Own," compare the characters with those in Poe's and Hawthorne's stories.

Build Background

Southern Sideshow As a child, Flannery O'Connor had a pet chicken that could either walk backward or forward, and some news reporters came to photograph the animal. This experience, she later said, marked her for life, for it began her preoccupation with the grotesque—a fascination she shares with other writers of her region who are often classified as belonging to the literary tradition known as Southern Gothic. "Southern writers are fond of 'writing about freaks,' " she remarked, "because we are still able to recognize one." O'Connor's fictional world—the 1940s and 1950s South—is populated with misfits, fanatics, and con artists. O'Connor believed that "distortion was the only way to make people see." In twisting reality, she used elements of the grotesque to convey a message about the need for spiritual renewal.

WORDS TO KNOW
Vocabulary Preview

composed
gaunt
list
morose
rue

Focus Your Reading

LITERARY ANALYSIS IRONY Irony is a contrast between what is expected and what actually exists or happens. In literature, **situational irony** is a contrast between what a character expects to happen and what actually happens. **Dramatic irony** occurs when readers know more about a situation in a story than the characters do. Look for examples of irony in this story.

ACTIVE READING DRAWING CONCLUSIONS ABOUT CHARACTERS

O'Connor never tells the reader directly whether her **characters** are good or evil. Instead, she allows the reader to **draw conclusions** about characters based on clues, such as the characters' thoughts, words, and actions. The names O'Connor gives characters and the **imagery** she uses to describe them also provide hints about characters and their moral conduct.

READER'S NOTEBOOK To help you draw conclusions about the characters, use the reading-strategy questions inserted throughout the selection. Write your responses in your notebook.

YOUR OWN MAY BE YOU SAVE THE LIFE

FLANNERY O'CONNOR

The old woman and her daughter were sitting on their porch when Mr. Shiftlet came up their road for the first time. The old woman slid to the edge of her chair and leaned forward, shading her eyes from the piercing sunset with her hand. The daughter could not see far in front of her and continued to play with her fingers. Although the old woman lived in this desolate spot with only her daughter and she had never seen Mr. Shiftlet before, she could tell, even from a distance, that he was a tramp and no one to be afraid of. His left coat sleeve was folded up to show there was only half an arm in it, and his gaunt figure listed slightly to the side as if the breeze were pushing him. He had on a black town suit and a brown felt hat that was turned up in the front and down in the back and he carried a tin toolbox by a handle. He came on, at an amble, up her road, his face turned toward the sun which appeared to be balancing itself on the peak of a small mountain.

The old woman didn't change her position until he was almost into her yard; then she rose with one hand fisted on her hip. The daughter, a large girl in a short blue organdy dress, saw him all at once and jumped up and began to stamp and point and make excited speechless sounds.

Mr. Shiftlet stopped just inside the yard and set his box on the ground and tipped his hat at her as if she were not in the least afflicted; then he turned toward the old woman and swung the hat all the way off. He had long black slick hair that hung flat from a part in the middle to beyond the tips of his ears on either side. His face descended in forehead for more than half its length and ended suddenly with his features just balanced over a jutting steel-trap jaw. He seemed to be a young man but he had a look of composed

WORDS TO KNOW
gaunt (gônt) *adj.* thin and bony
list (lĭst) *v.* to lean or tilt to one side
composed (kəm-pōzd') *adj.* calm; cool and collected

dissatisfaction as if he understood life thoroughly.

"Good evening," the old woman said. She was about the size of a cedar fence post and she had a man's gray hat pulled down low over her head.

The tramp stood looking at her and didn't answer. He turned his back and faced the sunset. He swung both his whole and his short arm up slowly so that they indicated an expanse of sky and his figure formed a crooked cross. The old woman watched him with her arms folded across her chest as if she were the owner of the sun, and the daughter watched, her head thrust forward and her fat helpless hands hanging at the wrists. She had long pink-gold hair and eyes as blue as a peacock's neck.

He held the pose for almost fifty seconds and then he picked up his box and came on to the porch and dropped down on the bottom step. "Lady," he said in a firm nasal voice, "I'd give a fortune to live where I could see me a sun do that every evening."

"Does it every evening," the old woman said and sat back down. The daughter sat down too and watched him with a cautious, sly look as if he were a bird that had come up very close. He leaned to one side, rooting in his pants pocket, and in a second he brought out a package of chewing gum and offered her a piece. She took it and unpeeled it and began to chew without taking her eyes off him. He offered the old woman a piece but she only raised her upper lip to indicate she had no teeth.

Mr. Shiftlet's pale, sharp glance had already passed over everything in the yard—the pump near the corner of the house and the big fig tree that three or four chickens were preparing to roost in—and had moved to a shed where he saw the square rusted back of an automobile. "You ladies drive?" he asked.

"That car ain't run in fifteen year," the old woman said. "The day my husband died, it quit running."

"Nothing is like it used to be, lady," he said. "The world is almost rotten."

"That's right," the old woman said. "You from around here?"

"Name Tom T. Shiftlet," he murmured, looking at the tires.

"I'm pleased to meet you," the old woman said. "Name Lucynell Crater and daughter Lucynell Crater. What you doing around here, Mr. Shiftlet?"

He judged the car to be about a 1928 or '29 Ford. "Lady," he said, and turned and gave her his full attention, "lemme tell you something. There's one of these doctors in Atlanta that's taken a knife and cut the human heart—the human heart," he repeated, leaning forward, "out of a man's chest and held it in his hand," and he held his hand out, palm up, as if it were slightly weighted with the human heart, "and studied it like it was a day-old chicken, and lady," he said, allowing a long significant pause in which his head slid forward and his clay-colored eyes brightened, "he don't know no more about it than you or me."

"That's right," the old woman said.

"Why, if he was to take that knife and cut into every corner of it, he still wouldn't know no more than you or me. What you want to bet?"

"Nothing," the old woman said wisely. "Where you come from, Mr. Shiftlet?"

He didn't answer. He reached into his pocket and brought out a sack of tobacco and a package of cigarette papers and rolled himself a cigarette, expertly with one hand, and attached it in a hanging position to his upper lip. Then he took a box of wooden matches from his pocket and struck one on his shoe. He held the burning match as if he were studying the mystery of flame while it traveled dangerously toward his skin. The daughter began to make loud noises and to point to his hand and shake her finger at him, but when the flame was just before touching him, he leaned down with his hand cupped over it as if he were going to set fire to his nose and lit the cigarette.

He flipped away the dead match and blew a stream of gray into the evening. A sly look came

over his face. "Lady," he said, "nowadays, people'll do anything anyways. I can tell you my name is Tom T. Shiftlet and I come from Tarwater, Tennessee, but you never have seen me before: how you know I ain't lying? How you know my name ain't Aaron Sparks, lady, and I come from Singleberry, Georgia, or how you know it's not George Speeds and I come from Lucy, Alabama, or how you know I ain't Thompson Bright from Toolafalls, Mississippi?"

"I don't know nothing about you," the old woman muttered, irked.

"Lady," he said, "people don't care how they lie. Maybe the best I can tell you is, I'm a man; but listen lady," he said and paused and made his tone more ominous still, "what is a man?"

The old woman began to gum a seed. "What you carry in that tin box, Mr. Shiftlet?" she asked.

"Tools," he said, put back. "I'm a carpenter."

"Well, if you come out here to work, I'll be able to feed you and give you a place to sleep but I can't pay. I'll tell you that before you begin," she said.

There was no answer at once and no particular expression on his face. He leaned back against the two-by-four that helped support the porch roof. "Lady," he said slowly, "there's some men that some things mean more to them than money." The old woman rocked without comment and the daughter watched the trigger that moved up and down in his neck. He told the old woman then that all most people were interested in was money, but he asked what a man was made for. He asked her if a man was made for money, or what. He asked her what she thought she was made for but she didn't answer, she only sat rocking and wondered if a one-armed man could put a new roof on her garden house. He asked a lot of questions that she didn't answer. He told her that he was twenty-eight years old and had lived a varied life. He had been a gospel singer, a foreman on the railroad, an assistant in an undertaking parlor, and he come over the radio for three months with Uncle Roy and his Red Creek Wranglers. He said he had fought and bled in the Arm Service of his country and visited every foreign land and that everywhere he had seen people that didn't care if they did a thing one way or another. He said he hadn't been raised thataway.

A fat yellow moon appeared in the branches of the fig tree as if it were going to roost there with the chickens. He said that a man had to escape to the country to see the world whole and that he wished he lived in a desolate place like this where he could see the sun go down every evening like God made it to do.

"Are you married or are you single?" the old woman asked.

There was a long silence. "Lady," he asked finally, "where would you find you an innocent woman today? I wouldn't have any of this trash I could just pick up."

The daughter was leaning very far down, hanging her head almost between her knees watching him through a triangular door she had made in her overturned hair; and she suddenly fell in a heap on the floor and began to whimper. Mr. Shiftlet straightened her out and helped her get back in the chair.

"Is she your baby girl?" he asked.

"My only," the old woman said, "and she's the sweetest girl in the world. I would give her up for nothing on earth. She's smart too. She can sweep the floor, cook, wash, feed the chickens, and hoe. I wouldn't give her up for a casket of jewels."

"No," he said kindly, "don't ever let any man take her away from you."

"Any man come after her," the old woman said, " 'll have to stay around the place."

Mr. Shiftlet's eye in the darkness was focused on a part of the automobile bumper that glittered in the distance. "Lady," he said, jerking his short arm up as if he could point with it to her house and yard and pump, "there ain't a broken thing on this plantation that I couldn't fix for you, one-arm jackleg[1] or not. I'm a

1. **jackleg:** someone who does work he or she has not been trained to do.

man," he said with a sullen dignity, "even if I ain't a whole one. I got," he said, tapping his knuckles on the floor to emphasize the immensity of what he was going to say, "a moral intelligence!" and his face pierced out of the darkness into a shaft of door light and he stared at her as if he were astonished himself at this impossible truth.

ACTIVE READING

EVALUATE How would you characterize Mr. Shiftlet? Mrs. Crater? her daughter, Lucynell?

The old woman was not impressed with the phrase. "I told you you could hang around and work for food," she said, "if you don't mind sleeping in that car yonder."

"Why listen, lady," he said with a grin of delight, "the monks of old slept in their coffins!"

"They wasn't as advanced as we are," the old woman said.

The next morning he began on the roof of the garden house while Lucynell, the daughter, sat on a rock and watched him work. He had not been around a week before the change he had made in the place was apparent. He had patched the front and back steps, built a new hog pen, restored a fence, and taught Lucynell, who was completely deaf and had never said a word in her life, to say the word bird. The big rosy-faced girl followed him everywhere, saying "Burrttddt ddbirrrttdt," and clapping her hands. The old woman watched from a distance, secretly pleased. She was ravenous for a son-in-law.

Mr. Shiftlet slept on the hard narrow back seat of the car with his feet out the side window. He had his razor and a can of water on a crate that served him as a bedside table and he put up a piece of mirror against the back glass and kept his coat neatly on a hanger that he hung over one of the windows.

In the evenings he sat on the steps and talked while the old woman and Lucynell rocked violently in their chairs on either side of him. The old woman's three mountains were black against the dark blue sky and were visited off and on by various planets and by the moon after it had left the chickens. Mr. Shiftlet pointed out that the reason he had improved this plantation was because he had taken a personal interest in it. He said he was even going to make the automobile run.

He had raised the hood and studied the mechanism, and he said he could tell that the car had been built in the days when cars were really built. You take now, he said, one man puts in one bolt and another man puts in another bolt and another man puts in another bolt so that it's a man for a bolt. That's why you have to pay so much for a car: you're paying all those men. Now if you didn't have to pay but one man, you could get you a cheaper car and one that had had a personal interest taken in it, and it would be a better car. The old woman agreed with him that this was so.

Mr. Shiftlet said that the trouble with the world was that nobody cared, or stopped and took any trouble. He said he never would have been able to teach Lucynell to say a word if he hadn't cared and stopped long enough.

"Teach her to say something else," the old woman said.

"What you want her to say next?" Mr. Shiftlet asked.

The old woman's smile was broad and toothless and suggestive. "Teach her to say 'sugarpie,'" she said.

ACTIVE READING

CLARIFY What do you think is on the old woman's mind?

Mr. Shiftlet already knew what was on her mind.

The next day he began to tinker with the automobile, and that evening he told her that if she would buy a fan belt, he would be able to make the car run.

The old woman said she would give him the money. "You see that girl yonder?" she asked, pointing to Lucynell who was sitting on the floor a foot away, watching him, her eyes blue even in the dark. "If it was ever a man wanted to take

her away, I would say, 'No man on earth is going to take that sweet girl of mine away from me!' but if he was to say, 'Lady, I don't want to take her away, I want her right here,' I would say, 'Mister, I don't blame you none. I wouldn't pass up a chance to live in a permanent place and get the sweetest girl in the world myself. You ain't no fool,' I would say."

"How old is she?" Mr. Shiftlet asked casually.

"Fifteen, sixteen," the old woman said. The girl was nearly thirty but because of her innocence it was impossible to guess.

"It would be a good idea to paint it too," Mr. Shiftlet remarked. "You don't want it to rust out."

"We'll see about that later," the old woman said.

The next day he walked into town and returned with the parts he needed and a can of gasoline. Late in the afternoon, terrible noises issued from the shed and the old woman rushed out of the house, thinking Lucynell was somewhere having a fit. Lucynell was sitting on a chicken crate, stamping her feet and screaming, "Burrddttt! bddurrddtttt!" but her fuss was drowned out by the car. With a volley of blasts it emerged from the shed, moving in a fierce and stately way. Mr. Shiftlet was in the driver's seat, sitting very erect. He had an expression of serious modesty on his face as if he had just raised the dead.

That night, rocking on the porch, the old woman began her business, at once. "You want you an innocent woman, don't you?" she asked sympathetically. "You don't want none of this trash."

"No'm, I don't," Mr. Shiftlet said.

"One that can't talk," she continued, "can't sass you back or use foul language. That's the kind for you to have. Right there," and she pointed to Lucynell sitting cross-legged in her chair, holding both feet in her hands.

"That's right," he admitted. "She wouldn't give me any trouble."

"Saturday," the old woman said, "you and her and me can drive into town and get married."

Mr. Shiftlet eased his position on the steps.

"I can't get married right now," he said. "Everything you want to do takes money and I ain't got any."

"What you need with money?" she asked.

"It takes money," he said. "Some people'll do anything anyhow these days, but the way I think, I wouldn't marry no woman that I couldn't take on a trip like she was somebody. I mean take her to a hotel and treat her. I wouldn't marry the Duchesser Windsor," he said firmly, "unless I could take her to a hotel and giver something good to eat.

"I was raised thataway and there ain't a thing I can do about it. My old mother taught me how to do."

"Lucynell don't even know what a hotel is," the old woman muttered. "Listen here, Mr. Shiftlet," she said, sliding forward in her chair, "you'd be getting a permanent house and a deep well and the most innocent girl in the world. You don't need no money. Lemme tell you something: there ain't any place in the world for a poor, disabled, friendless drifting man."

The ugly words settled in Mr. Shiftlet's head like a group of buzzards in the top of a tree. He didn't answer at once. He rolled himself a cigarette and lit it and then he said in an even voice, "Lady, a man is divided into two parts, body and spirit."

The old woman clamped her gums together.

"A body and a spirit," he repeated. "The body, lady, is like a house: it don't go anywhere; but the spirit, lady, is like a automobile: always on the move, always . . ."

"Listen, Mr. Shiftlet," she said, "my well never goes dry and my house is always warm in the winter and there's no mortgage on a thing about this place. You can go to the courthouse and see for yourself. And yonder under that shed is a fine automobile." She laid the bait carefully. "You can have it painted by Saturday. I'll pay for the paint."

In the darkness, Mr. Shiftlet's smile stretched like a weary snake waking up by a fire. After a second he recalled himself and said, "I'm only saying a man's spirit means more to him than anything else. I would have to take my wife off for the weekend without no regards at all for cost. I got to follow where my spirit says to go."

"I'll give you fifteen dollars for a weekend trip," the old woman said in a crabbed voice. "That's the best I can do."

"That wouldn't hardly pay for more than the gas and the hotel," he said. "It wouldn't feed her."

"Seventeen-fifty," the old woman said. "That's all I got so it isn't any use you trying to milk me. You can take a lunch."

Mr. Shiftlet was deeply hurt by the word *milk*. He didn't doubt that she had more money sewed up in her mattress, but he had already told her he was not interested in her money. "I'll make that do," he said and rose and walked off without treating[2] with her further.

ACTIVE READING

CONCLUDE What can you conclude about Mr. Shiftlet's intentions from these negotiations?

On Saturday the three of them drove into town in the car that the paint had barely dried on, and Mr. Shiftlet and Lucynell were married in the Ordinary's[3] office while the old woman witnessed. As they came out of the courthouse, Mr. Shiftlet began twisting his neck in his collar. He looked morose and bitter as if he had been insulted while someone held him. "That didn't satisfy me none," he said. "That was just something a woman in an office did, nothing but paperwork and blood tests. What do they know about my blood? If they was to take my heart and cut it out," he said, "they wouldn't know a thing about me. It didn't satisfy me at all."

"It satisfied the law," the old woman said sharply.

"The law," Mr. Shiftlet said and spit. "It's the law that don't satisfy me."

He had painted the car dark green with a yellow band around it just under the windows. The three of them climbed in the front seat and the old woman said, "Don't Lucynell look pretty? Looks like a baby doll." Lucynell was dressed up in a white dress that her mother had uprooted from a trunk and there was a Panama hat on her head with a bunch of red wooden cherries on the brim. Every now and then her placid expression was changed by a sly isolated little thought like a shoot of green in the desert. "You got a prize!" the old woman said.

Mr. Shiftlet didn't even look at her.

They drove back to the house to let the old woman off and pick up the lunch. When they were ready to leave, she stood staring in the window of the car, with her fingers clenched around the glass. Tears began to seep sideways out of her eyes and run along the dirty creases in her face. "I ain't ever been parted with her for two days before," she said.

Mr. Shiftlet started the motor.

"And I wouldn't let no man have her but you because I seen you would do right. Goodbye, Sugarbaby," she said, clutching at the sleeve of the white dress. Lucynell looked straight at her and didn't seem to see her there at all. Mr. Shiftlet eased the car forward so that she had to move her hands.

The early afternoon was clear and open and surrounded by pale blue sky. Although the car would go only thirty miles an hour, Mr. Shiftlet imagined a terrific climb and dip and swerve that went entirely to his head so that he forgot his morning bitterness. He had always wanted an automobile, but he had never been able to afford one before. He drove very fast because he wanted to make Mobile by nightfall.

2. **treating:** discussing terms; negotiating.
3. **Ordinary's:** judge's.

WORDS TO KNOW **morose** (mə-rōs') *adj.* gloomy and ill-tempered

Occasionally he stopped his thoughts long enough to look at Lucynell in the seat beside him. She had eaten the lunch as soon as they were out of the yard and now she was pulling the cherries off the hat one by one and throwing them out the window. He became depressed in spite of the car. He had driven about a hundred miles when he decided that she must be hungry again and at the next small town they came to, he stopped in front of an aluminum-painted eating place called The Hot Spot and took her in and ordered her a plate of ham and grits. The ride had made her sleepy and as soon as she got up on the stool, she rested her head on the counter and shut her eyes. There was no one in The Hot Spot but Mr. Shiftlet and the boy behind the counter, a pale youth with a greasy rag hung over his shoulder. Before he could dish up the food, she was snoring gently.

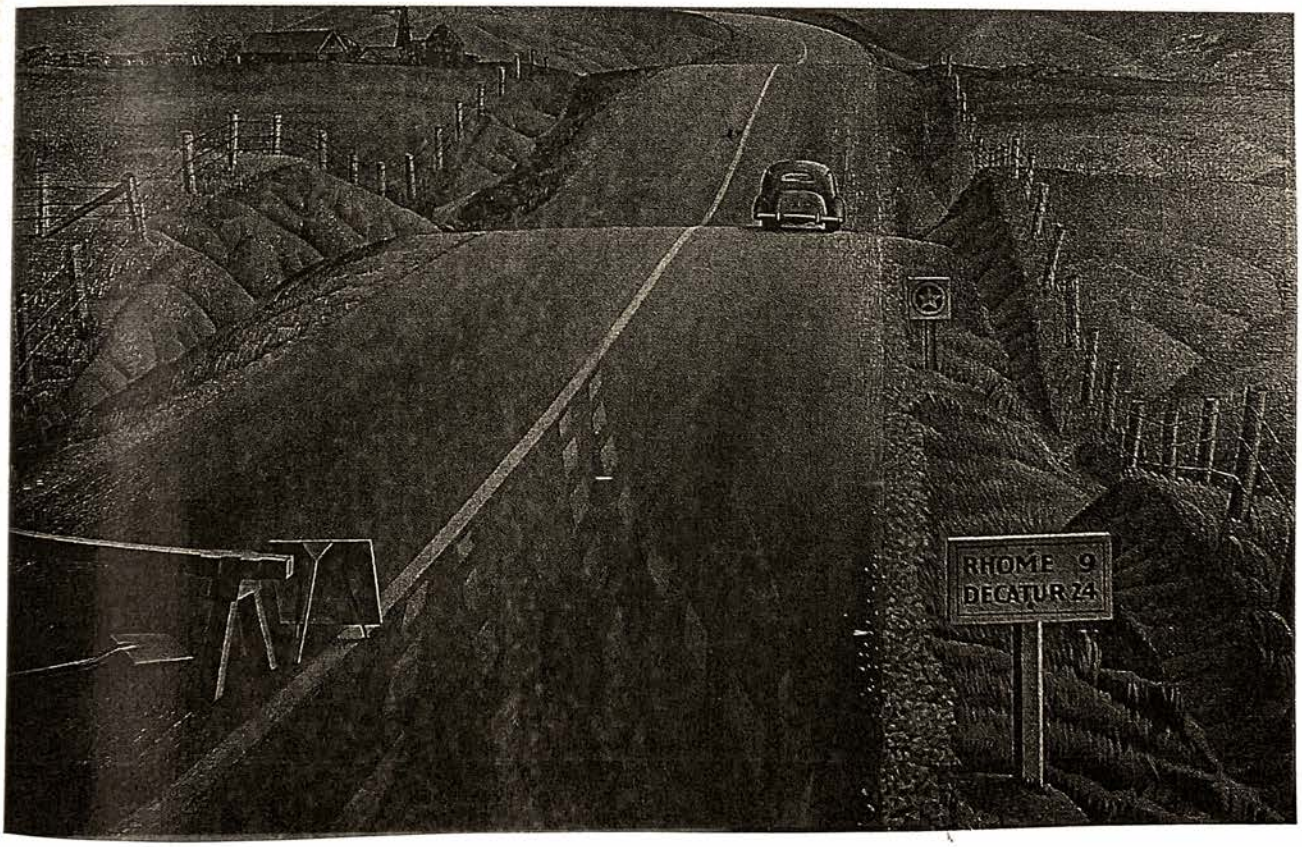
"Give it to her when she wakes up," Mr. Shiftlet said. "I'll pay for it now."

The boy bent over her and stared at the long pink-gold hair and the half-shut sleeping eyes. Then he looked up and stared at Mr. Shiftlet. "She looks like an angel of Gawd," he murmured.

"Hitchhiker," Mr. Shiftlet explained. "I can't wait. I got to make Tuscaloosa."

The boy bent over again and very carefully touched his finger to a strand of the golden hair, and Mr. Shiftlet left.

Road to Rhome (1938), Alexander Hogue. Private collection.



ACTIVE READING

QUESTION Why do you think Mr. Shiftlet feels "more depressed than ever"?

He was more depressed than ever as he drove on by himself. The late afternoon had grown hot and sultry and the country had flattened out. Deep in the sky a storm was preparing very slowly and without thunder as if it meant to drain every drop of air from the earth before it broke. There were times when Mr. Shiftlet preferred not to be alone. He felt too that a man with a car had a responsibility to others, and he kept his eye out for a hitchhiker. Occasionally he saw a sign that warned: "Drive carefully. The life you save may be your own."

The narrow road dropped off on either side into dry fields, and here and there a shack or a filling station stood in a clearing. The sun began to set directly in front of the automobile. It was a reddening ball that through his windshield was slightly flat on the bottom and top. He saw a boy in overalls and a gray hat standing on the edge of the road and he slowed the car down and stopped in front of him. The boy didn't have his hand raised to thumb the ride, he was only standing there, but he had a small cardboard suitcase and his hat was set on his head in a way to indicate that he had left somewhere for good. "Son," Mr. Shiftlet said, "I see you want a ride."

The boy didn't say he did or he didn't but he opened the door of the car and got in, and Mr. Shiftlet started driving again. The child held the suitcase on his lap and folded his arms on top of it. He turned his head and looked out the window away from Mr. Shiftlet. Mr. Shiftlet felt oppressed. "Son," he said after a minute, "I got the best old mother in the world so I reckon you only got the second best."

The boy gave him a quick dark glance and then turned his face back out the window.

"It's nothing so sweet," Mr. Shiftlet continued, "as a boy's mother. She taught him his first prayers at her knee, she give him love when no other would, she told him what was right and what wasn't, and she seen that he done the right thing. Son," he said, "I never rued a day in my lif like the one I rued when I left that old mother of mine."

The boy shifted in his seat but he didn't look at Mr. Shiftlet. He unfolded his arms and put one hand on the door handle.

"My mother was a angel of Gawd," Mr. Shiftlet said in a very strained voice. "He took her from heaven and giver to me and I left her."

ACTIVE READING

QUESTION Why do you think Mr. Shiftlet is speaking this way to the hitchhiker?

His eyes were instantly clouded over with a mist c tears. The car was barely moving.

The boy turned angrily in the seat. "You go to the devil!" he cried. "My old woman is a fleabag and yours is a stinking polecat!" and with that he flung the door open and jumped out with his suitcase into the ditch.

Mr. Shiftlet was so shocked that for about a hundred feet he drove along slowly with the doo still open. A cloud, the exact color of the boy's hat and shaped like a turnip, had descended ove the sun, and another, worse looking, crouched behind the car. Mr. Shiftlet felt that the rottenness of the world was about to engulf him. He raised his arm and let it fall again to his breast. "Oh Lord!" he prayed. "Break forth and wash the slime from this earth!"

The turnip continued slowly to descend. After a few minutes there was a guffawing peal of thunde from behind and fantastic raindrops, like tin-can tops, crashed over the rear of Mr. Shiftlet's car. Very quickly he stepped on the gas, and with his stump sticking out the window, he raced the galloping shower into Mobile. ❖

WORDS TO KNOW **rue** (rōō) *v.* to regret

Luther
Honors 21-22
Summer Homework

PART 3 REFLECTION PROMPT: *The Life You Save May Be Your Own*

In a well-developed paragraph (at least 6-7 sentences), explain the significance behind a character's name.

**This may be typed or written, and it must be double spaced.

"Well, there was a feller here once by the name of Jim Smiley . . ."

The Notorious Jumping Frog of Calaveras County

Short Story by MARK TWAIN

Connect to Your Life

Telling Tales The narrator of this story asks an old Westerner if he knows anything about a man named Smiley. The old man corners him and tells him an incredible tale about a wager on a jumping frog. Think about a situation in which you heard someone tell an outlandish story that others believed. What made the tale so convincing? Discuss this situation with a group of classmates.

Build Background

Western Humor Twain got the idea for this story in the gold hills outside San Francisco in 1865. While there, he mined for gold and spent time listening to local storytellers, who told this tale and others without ever cracking a smile. From these storytellers, Twain learned two truths about humor writing that he used for the rest of his life: one, the manner in which a person tells a story is what makes it funny; and two, a successful humorist should always pretend to be dead serious.

WORDS TO KNOW
Vocabulary Preview

cavorting	infamous
commission	lattice
dilapidated	recommence
enterprising	tranquil
inclination	vagabond

Focus Your Reading

LITERARY ANALYSIS TALL TALE This story by Twain is an example of a **tall tale,** a distinctively American form of humorous story that features exaggeration. Much of a tall tale's rich humor comes from its use of **local color,** or writing that truthfully imitates ordinary life and brings a region alive by portraying its typical dress, mannerisms, customs, character types, and **dialects.** In Twain's tale, dialect, or local language, plays a crucial role, as seen in this passage:

> ***Smiley was monstrous proud of his frog, and well he might be for fellers that had traveled and been everywheres all said he laid over any frog that ever*** **they** ***see.***

As you read, be on the lookout for the characteristics of a tall tale.

ACTIVE READING UNDERSTANDING DIALECT Sometimes **dialects** are so different from familiar language that they can be hard to understand. Moreover, writers often reproduce the sound of words in a dialect by using unconventional spellings. As you read Twain's tale, use these techniques to decode difficult passages of dialect:

- Read slowly. Listen to the words as if someone were speaking them. You might try reading the story aloud to help you recognize unusual words as you pronounce them.
- Use **context clues** to figure out the meaning of unfamiliar words. For example, Twain writes, "You'd see that frog whirling in the air like a doughnut—see him turn one summerset. . . ." Twain restates the meaning of the unfamiliar word *summerset.* He uses the phrase "whirling in the air like a doughnut" to indicate that *summerset* must be the word *somersault.*

READER'S NOTEBOOK As you read, jot down unfamiliar words and expressions and what you think they mean. Here's an example:

DIALECT	
Well, thish-yer Smiley had rat terriers	Thish-yer = this here

The Notorious *Jumping Frog* of Calaveras County

Mark Twain

In compliance with the request of a friend of mine who wrote me from the East, I called on good-natured, garrulous[1] old Simon Wheeler and inquired after my friend's friend, Leonidas W. Smiley, as requested to do, and I hereunto append[2] the result. I have a lurking suspicion that *Leonidas W.* Smiley is a myth, that my friend never knew such a personage, and that he only conjectured that if I asked old Wheeler about him, it would remind him of his infamous *Jim* Smiley and he would go to work and bore me to death with some exasperating reminiscence of him as long and as tedious as it should be useless to me. If that was the design, it succeeded.

I found Simon Wheeler dozing comfortably by the barroom stove of the dilapidated tavern in the decayed mining camp of Angel's, and I noticed that he was fat and baldheaded and had an expression of winning gentleness and simplicity upon his tranquil countenance. He roused up and gave me good day. I told him that a friend of mine had commissioned me to make some inquiries about a cherished companion of his boyhood named *Leonidas W.* Smiley—*Rev. Leonidas W.* Smiley, a young minister of the Gospel, who he had heard was at one time a resident of Angel's Camp. I added that if Mr. Wheeler could tell me anything about this Rev. Leonidas W. Smiley, I would feel under many obligations to him.

Simon Wheeler backed me into a corner and blockaded me there with his chair, and then sat down and reeled off the monotonous narrative which follows this paragraph. He never smiled, he never frowned, he never changed his voice from the gentle-flowing key to which he tuned his initial sentence, he never betrayed the slightest suspicion of enthusiasm, but all through the interminable[3] narrative there ran a vein of impressive earnestness and sincerity which showed me plainly that, so far from his imagining that there was anything ridiculous or funny about his story, he regarded it as a really important matter and admired its two heroes as men of transcendent genius in finesse.[4] I let him go on in his own way and never interrupted him once.

"Rev. Leonidas W. H'm, Reverend Le—Well, there was a feller here once by the name of *Jim* Smiley, in the winter of '49—or maybe it was the spring of '50—I don't recollect exactly, somehow, though what makes me think it was one or the other is because I remember the big flume[5] warn't finished when he first come to the camp; but anyway, he was the curiousest man about always betting on anything that turned up you ever see, if he could get anybody to bet on the other side, and if he couldn't he'd change sides. Any way that

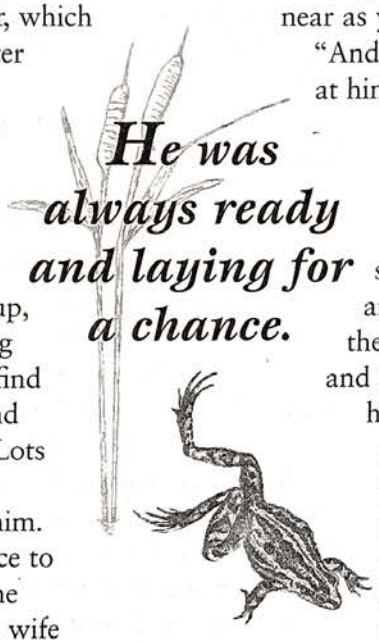
1. **garrulous** (găr′ə-ləs): extremely talkative.
2. **hereunto append:** add to this document.
3. **interminable** (ĭn-tûr′mə-nə-bəl): seemingly endless.
4. **men of . . . finesse** (fə-nĕs′): exceptionally brilliant men.
5. **flume:** a wooden trough built as a channel for running water—used in gold mining to separate particles of gold.

WORDS TO KNOW

infamous (ĭn′fə-məs) *adj.* notorious
dilapidated (dĭ-lăp′ĭ-dā′tĭd) *adj.* in a state of disrepair; rundown
tranquil (trăng′kwəl) *adj.* undisturbed; peaceful
commission (kə-mĭsh′ən) *v.* to assign a task or duty to

suited the other man would suit *him*—any way just so's he got a bet, *he* was satisfied. But still he was lucky, uncommon lucky; he most always come out winner. He was always ready and laying for a chance; there couldn't be no solit'ry thing mentioned but that feller'd offer to bet on it and take ary side you please, as I was just telling you. If there was a horse race, you'd find him flush or you'd find him busted at the end of it; if there was a dogfight, he'd bet on it; if there was a cat fight, he'd bet on it; if there was a chicken fight, he'd bet on it; why, if there was two birds setting on a fence, he would bet you which one would fly first; or if there was a camp meeting, he would be there reg'lar to bet on Parson Walker, which he judged to be the best exhorter about here, and so he was too, and a good man. If he even see a straddlebug start to go anywheres, he would bet you how long it would take him to get to—to wherever he was going to, and if you took him up, he would foller that straddlebug to Mexico but what he would find out where he was bound for and how long he was on the road. Lots of the boys here has seen that Smiley and can tell you about him. Why, it never made no difference to *him*—he'd bet on *any* thing—the dangdest feller. Parson Walker's wife laid very sick once for a good while, and it seemed as if they warn't going to save her; but one morning he come in and Smiley up and asked him how she was, and he said she was considerable better—thank the Lord for his inf'nite mercy—and coming on so smart that with the blessing of Prov'dence she'd get well yet; and Smiley, before he thought, says, 'Well, I'll resk two-and-a-half she don't anyway.'

"Thish-yer Smiley had a mare—the boys called her the fifteen-minute nag but that was only in fun, you know, because of course she was faster than that—and he used to win money on that horse, for all she was so slow and always had the asthma, or the distemper, or the consumption,[6] or something of that kind. They used to give her two or three hundred yards' start and then pass her underway, but always at the fag end of the race she'd get excited and desperatelike, and come cavorting and straddling up and scattering her legs around limber, sometimes in the air and sometimes out to one side among the fences, and kicking up m-o-r-e dust and raising m-o-r-e racket with her coughing and sneezing and blowing her nose—and always fetch up at the stand just about a neck ahead, as near as you could cipher it down.[7]

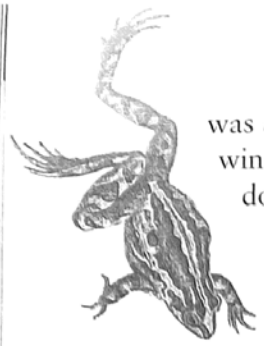


He was always ready and laying for a chance.

"And he had a little small bull-pup, that to look at him you'd think he warn't worth a cent but to set around and look ornery and lay for a chance to steal something. But as soon as money was up on him he was a different dog; his underjaw'd begin to stick out like the fo'castle[8] of a steamboat and his teeth would uncover and shine like the furnaces. And a dog might tackle him and bullyrag[9] him, and bite him and throw him over his shoulder two or three times, and Andrew Jackson—which was the name of the pup—Andrew Jackson would never let on but what *he* was satisfied and hadn't expected nothing else—and the bets being doubled and doubled on the other side all the time, till the money was all up; and then all of a sudden he would grab that other dog jest by the j'int of his hind leg and freeze to it—not chaw, you understand, but only just grip and hang on till they throwed up the sponge,[10] if it

6. **distemper . . . consumption:** diseases of mammals.
7. **cipher** (sī'fər) **it down:** calculate it; figure it.
8. **fo'castle** (fōk'səl): forecastle—the part of a steamboat in front of the superstructure.
9. **bullyrag:** harass.
10. **throwed up the sponge:** gave up.

WORDS TO KNOW **cavorting** (kə-vôr'tĭng) *adj.* prancing about; capering **cavort** *v.*



was a year. Smiley always come out winner on that pup till he harnessed a dog once that didn't have no hind legs, because they'd been sawed off in a circular saw, and when the thing had gone along far enough and the money was all up and he come to make a snatch for his pet holt,[11] he see in a minute how he'd been imposed on and how the other dog had him in the door, so to speak, and he 'peared surprised, and then he looked sorter discouragedlike and didn't try no more to win the fight, and so he got shucked out bad. He give Smiley a look, as much as to say his heart was broke, and it was *his* fault for putting up a dog that hadn't no hind legs for him to take holt of, which was his main dependence in a fight, and then he limped off a piece and laid down and died. It was a good pup, was that Andrew Jackson, and would have made a name for hisself if he'd lived, for the stuff was in him and he had genius—I know it, because he hadn't no opportunities to speak of, and it don't stand to reason that a dog could make such a fight as he could under them circumstances if he hadn't no talent. It always makes me feel sorry when I think of that last fight of his'n and the way it turned out.

"Well, thish-yer Smiley had rat terriers, and chicken cocks, and tomcats and all them kind of things till you couldn't rest, and you couldn't fetch nothing for him to bet on but he'd match you. He ketched a frog one day and took him home, and said he cal'lated[12] to educate him; and so he never done nothing for three months but set in his back yard and learn that frog to jump. And you bet you he *did* learn him, too. He'd give him a little punch behind, and the next minute you'd see that frog whirling in the air like a doughnut—see him turn one summerset, or maybe a couple if he got a good start, and come down flatfooted and all right, like a cat. He got him up so in the matter of ketching flies, and kep' him in practice so constant, that he'd nail a fly every time as fur as he could see him. Smiley said all a frog wanted was education and he could do 'most anything—and I believe him. Why, I've seen him set Dan'l Webster down here on this floor—Dan'l Webster was the name of the frog—and sing out, 'Flies, Dan'l, flies!' and quicker'n you could wink he'd spring straight up and snake a fly off'n the counter there, and flop down on the floor ag'in as solid as a gob of mud, and fall to scratching the side of his head with his hind foot as indifferent as if he hadn't no idea he'd been doin' any more'n any frog might do. You never see a frog so modest and straight-for'ard as he was, for all he was so gifted. And when it come to fair and square jumping on a deadlevel, he could get over more ground at one straddle than any animal of his breed you ever see. Jumping on a dead level was his strong suit, you understand; and when it come to that, Smiley would ante up money on him as long as he had a red.[13] Smiley was monstrous proud of his frog, and well he might be for fellers that had traveled and been everywheres all said he laid over any frog that ever *they* see.

"Well, Smiley kep' the beast in a little lattice box, and he used to fetch him downtown sometimes and lay for a bet. One day a feller—a stranger in the camp, he was—come acrost him with his box and says:

"'What might it be that you've got in the box?'

"And Smiley says, sorter indifferentlike, 'It might be a parrot, or it might be a canary, maybe, but it ain't—it's only just a frog.'

"And the feller took it and looked at it careful, and turned it round this way and that, and says, 'H'm—so 'tis. Well, what's *he* good for?'

"'Well,' Smiley says, easy and careless, 'he's good enough for *one* thing, I should judge—he can outjump any frog in Calaveras County.'

"The feller took the box again and took another long, particular look, and give it back to Smiley

11. **pet holt:** favorite grip.

12. **cal'lated** (kăl'lā'tĭd): calculated; intended.

13. **red:** red cent (slang for a penny).

WORDS TO KNOW **lattice** (lăt'ĭs) *n.* an open framework made of spaced, crisscrossed strips

and says, very deliberate, 'Well,' he says, 'I don't see no p'ints[14] about that frog that's any better'n any other frog.'

"'Maybe you don't,' Smiley says. 'Maybe you understand frogs and maybe you don't understand 'em; maybe you've had experience and maybe you ain't only a amature, as it were. Anyways, I've got *my* opinion, and I'll resk forty dollars that he can outjump any frog in Calaveras County.'

"And the feller studied a minute and then says, kinder sadlike, 'Well, I'm only a stranger here and I ain't got no frog; but if I had a frog, I'd bet you."

"And then Smiley says, 'That's all right—that's all right—if you'll hold my box a minute, I'll go and get you a frog.' And so the feller took the box and put up his forty dollars along with Smiley's, and set down to wait.

"So he set there a good while thinking and thinking to himself, and then he got the frog out and prized his mouth open and took a teaspoon and filled him full of quail shot[15]—filled him pretty near up to his chin—and set him on the floor. Smiley he went to the swamp and slopped around in the mud for a long time, and finally he ketched a frog and fetched him in and give him to this feller, and says:

"'Now, if you're ready, set him alongside of Dan'l, with his forepaws just even with Dan'l's, and I'll give the word.' Then he says, 'One—two—three—*git!*' and him and the feller touched up the frogs from behind, and the new frog hopped off lively, but Dan'l give a heave and hysted up his shoulders—so—like a Frenchman, but it warn't no use—he couldn't budge; he was planted as solid as a church, and he couldn't no more stir than if he was anchored out. Smiley was a good deal surprised, and he was disgusted too, but he didn't have no idea what the matter was, of course.

"The feller took the money and started away, and when he was going out at the door, he sorter jerked his thumb over his shoulder—so—at Dan'l and says again, very deliberate, 'Well,' he says, *'I* don't see no p'ints about that frog that's any better'n any other frog.'

"Smiley he stood scratching his head and looking down at Dan'l a long time, and at last he says, 'I do wonder what in the nation that frog throw'd off for—I wonder if there ain't something the matter with him—he 'pears to look mighty baggy, somehow.' And he ketched Dan'l by the nap of the neck and hefted him, and says, 'Why, blame my cats if he don't weigh five pound!' and turned him upside down and he belched out a double handful of shot. And then he see how it was, and he was the maddest man—he set the frog down and took out after that feller, but he never ketched him. And—"

[Here Simon Wheeler heard his name called from the front yard and got up to see what was wanted.] And turning to me as he moved away, he said: "Just set where you are, stranger, and rest easy—I ain't going to be gone a second."

But, by your leave, I did not think that a continuation of the history of the enterprising vagabond *Jim* Smiley would be likely to afford me much information concerning the Rev. *Leonidas W.* Smiley and so I started away.

At the door I met the sociable Wheeler returning, and he buttonholed[16] me and recommenced:

"Well, thish-yer Smiley had a yaller one-eyed cow that didn't have no tail, only just a short stump like a bannanner, and—"

However, lacking both time and inclination, I did not wait to hear about the afflicted cow but took my leave.

14. **p'ints:** points.
15. **quail shot:** small lead pellets for firing from a shotgun.
16. **buttonholed:** detained for conversation.

WORDS TO KNOW

enterprising (ĕn'tər-prī'zĭng) *adj.* possessing imagination and initiative
vagabond (văg'ə-bŏnd') *n.* a wanderer; drifter
recommence (rē'kə-mĕns') *v.* to begin again
inclination (ĭn'klə-nā'shən) *n.* a favorable disposition; desire

Luther
Honors 21-22
Summer Homework

PART 4 REFLECTION PROMPT: *The Notorious Jumping Frog of Calaveras County*

In this tall tale, the author is making subtle comments on some of the negative qualities of society and human behavior. Explain one of the observations the author is making about society and/or human nature and discuss your reaction. Your response should be formatted as a CER paragraph (see Part 2 for CER breakdown).

**This may be typed or written, and it must be double spaced.

"Something there is that doesn't love a wall."

Selected Poems

Poetry by ROBERT FROST

Connect to Your Life

Alone or Together? The idea of being alone or somehow separated from others runs through many of Frost's poems. Yet often people choose to be alone. Think about times when you need companionship and times when you choose to be alone. What happens if you want other people around and no one chooses to be with you? Jot down your ideas. You may then discuss your ideas with a partner.

Build Background

Poetry of Frost Robert Frost is perhaps the most widely read American poet of the 20th century. In many ways, he is a transitional figure between the 19th and 20th centuries. Like Emerson, Thoreau, and the other transcendentalists, Frost loved nature and wrote about the lone individual making choices about how to live. Like the modernists who were his contemporaries, Frost portrayed the forces in modern society that served to isolate people. Many of his poems portray tensions in relationships as well as the advantages and disadvantages of being alone.

Focus Your Reading

LITERARY ANALYSIS MOOD IN POETRY **Mood** is the overall feeling or atmosphere that a writer creates for the reader. Frost uses a variety of devices to set the mood, including

- **imagery**—descriptive phrases that appeal to the senses
- **rhythm**—the pattern or flow of words and lines in a poem
- **repetition**—the repeated use of a word or phrase for emphasis

As you read each poem, decide what mood is communicated and what techniques Frost has used to get it across.

ACTIVE READING ANALYZING WORD CHOICE Be aware of the writer's **word choice.** Focus on the words and phrases that Frost uses to create **mood.** To increase your awareness, try these strategies:

- Read the poems aloud to help you notice mood-setting words or phrases.
- If a word catches your attention, stop and consider its meaning, your emotional response to it, and the effect it creates.

READER'S NOTEBOOK Fill in a chart like this one as you read each poem.

"Acquainted with the Night"	
Word, phrase, or line	line 1
Effect	loneliness, sadness

Acquainted with the Night

ROBERT FROST

I have been one acquainted with the night.
I have walked out in rain—and back in rain.
I have outwalked the furthest city light.

I have looked down the saddest city lane.
I have passed by the watchman on his beat
And dropped my eyes, unwilling to explain.

I have stood still and stopped the sound of feet
When far away an interrupted cry
Came over houses from another street,

But not to call me back or say good-by;
And further still at an unearthly height
One luminary[1] clock against the sky

Proclaimed the time was neither wrong nor right.
I have been one acquainted with the night.

1. **luminary:** giving off light.

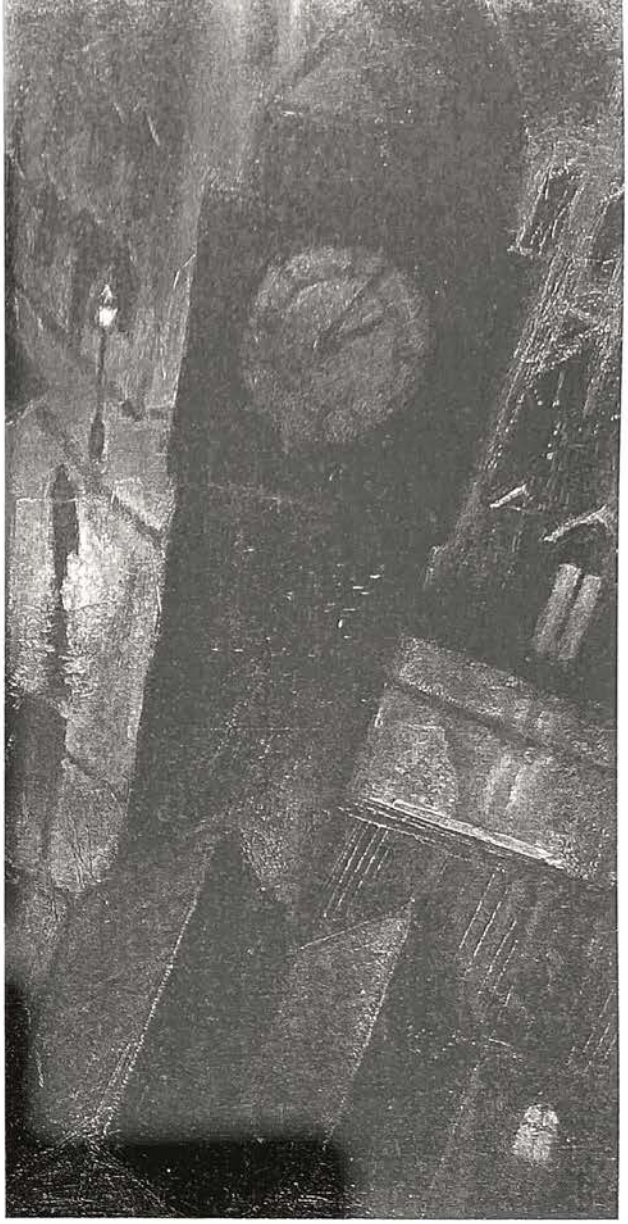
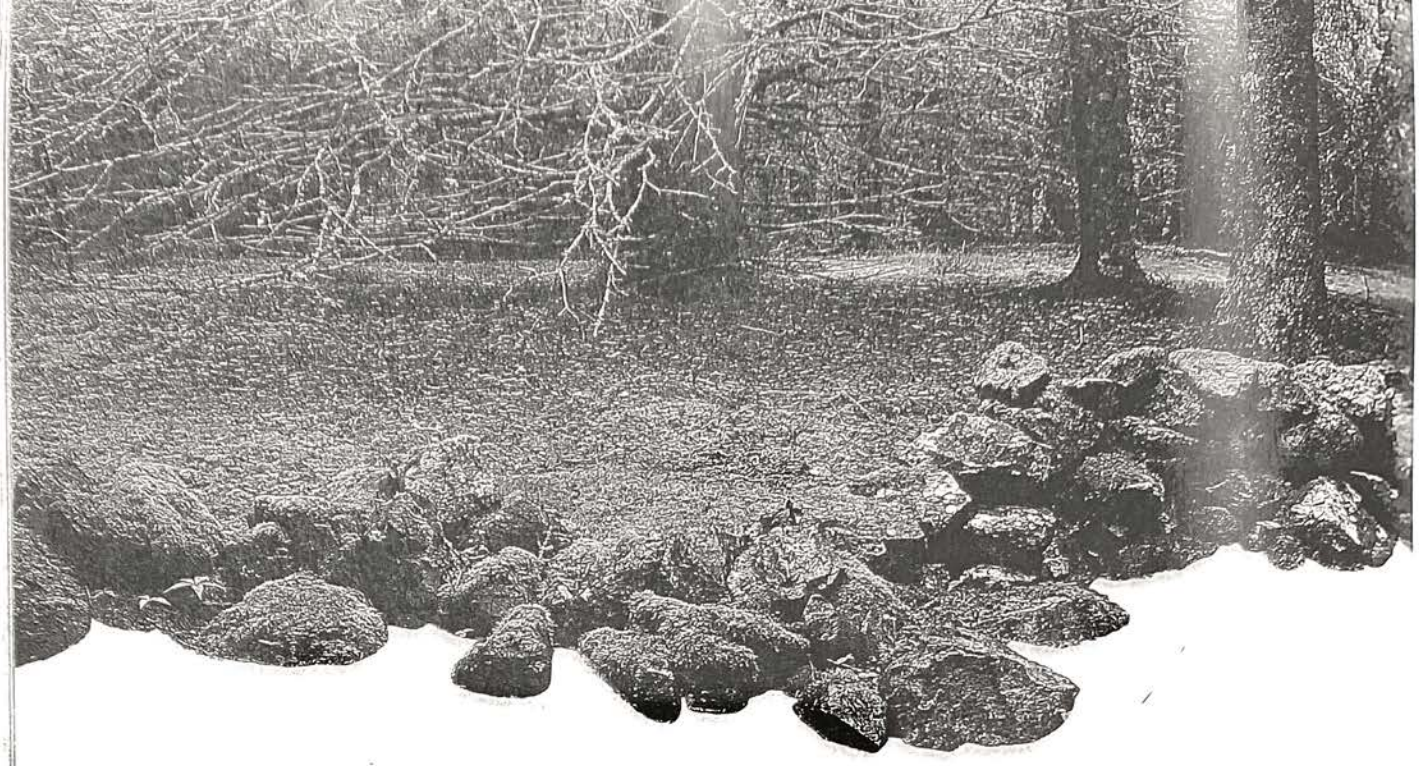


Illustration © Litjiun Wong.

Thinking Through the Literature

1. How would you describe the **speaker** of this poem? Write down a series of adjectives.
2. Do you feel sorry for the speaker? Explain why or why not.
3. How do you think the speaker feels about being alone at night? Cite phrases or lines from the poem that suggest his feelings.
4. Describe the mood of the poem. Cite words, phrases, and images that contribute to the **mood.**

THINK ABOUT
- the expressiveness of words like *furthest, saddest,* and *unearthly*
- the effect of the very regular rhythm of the poem
- Frost's repetition of "I have . . ."



Mending Wall

Robert Frost

Something there is that doesn't love a wall,
That sends the frozen-ground-swell under it
And spills the upper boulders in the sun,
And makes gaps even two can pass abreast.
The work of hunters is another thing:
I have come after them and made repair
Where they have left not one stone on a stone,
But they would have the rabbit out of hiding,
To please the yelping dogs. The gaps I mean,
No one has seen them made or heard them made,
But at spring mending-time we find them there.
I let my neighbor know beyond the hill;
And on a day we meet to walk the line
And set the wall between us once again.
We keep the wall between us as we go.
To each the boulders that have fallen to each.
And some are loaves and some so nearly balls
We have to use a spell to make them balance:

GUIDE FOR READING

1–4 In some parts of New England, the farms are separated by low walls made of stones that are simply piled up, not mortared together. During the winter, moisture in the ground freezes and makes the earth expand, causing portions of the wall to topple.

12–14 .Notice that it is the speaker who lets the neighbor know it is time to mend the wall.

"Stay where you are until our backs are turned!"
We wear our fingers rough with handling them.
Oh, just another kind of outdoor game,
One on a side. It comes to little more:
There where it is we do not need the wall:
He is all pine and I am apple orchard.
My apple trees will never get across
And eat the cones under his pines, I tell him.
He only says, "Good fences make good neighbors."
Spring is the mischief in me, and I wonder
If I could put a notion in his head:
"*Why* do they make good neighbors? Isn't it
Where there are cows? But here there are no cows.
Before I built a wall I'd ask to know
What I was walling in or walling out,
And to whom I was like to give offense.
Something there is that doesn't love a wall,
That wants it down." I could say "Elves" to him,
But it's not elves exactly, and I'd rather
He said it for himself. I see him there,
Bringing a stone grasped firmly by the top
In each hand, like an old-stone savage armed.
He moves in darkness as it seems to me,
Not of woods only and the shade of trees.
He will not go behind his father's saying,
And he likes having thought of it so well
He says again, "Good fences make good neighbors."

23–26 According to the speaker, why is there no practical need for the wall?

27 What need does the neighbor see for the wall?

36–38 Notice the speaker's playful, teasing tone here.

38–42 What is the speaker's opinion of his neighbor?

Thinking Through the Literature

1. Which man in "Mending Wall" would you prefer as a neighbor? Why?
2. How do the **speaker** of the poem and his neighbor differ?

   THINK ABOUT
   - how each feels about the wall and the job of rebuilding it
   - the image the speaker has of his neighbor in lines 38–42

3. Explain what you think the wall represents in each of the following statements:

   THINK ABOUT
   - "Something there is that doesn't love a wall."
   - "We keep the wall between us as we go."
   - "Before I built a wall I'd ask to know / What I was walling in or walling out."
   - "He says again, 'Good fences make good neighbors.'"

4. Does the wall separate the neighbors or bring them closer together? Explain.

"Out, Out—"

Robert Frost

The buzz saw snarled and rattled in the yard
And made dust and dropped stove-length sticks of wood,
Sweet-scented stuff when the breeze drew across it.
And from there those that lifted eyes could count
Five mountain ranges one behind the other
Under the sunset far into Vermont.
And the saw snarled and rattled, snarled and rattled,
As it ran light, or had to bear a load.
And nothing happened: day was all but done.
Call it a day, I wish they might have said
To please the boy by giving him the half hour
That a boy counts so much when saved from work.
His sister stood beside them in her apron
To tell them 'Supper.' At the word, the saw,
As if to prove saws knew what supper meant,
Leaped out at the boy's hand, or seemed to leap—
He must have given the hand. However it was,
Neither refused the meeting. But the hand!
The boy's first outcry was a rueful[1] laugh,
As he swung toward them holding up the hand
Half in appeal, but half as if to keep
The life from spilling. Then the boy saw all—
Since he was old enough to know, big boy
Doing a man's work, though a child at heart—
He saw all spoiled. 'Don't let him cut my hand off—
The doctor, when he comes. Don't let him, sister!'
So. But the hand was gone already.
The doctor put him in the dark of ether.
He lay and puffed his lips out with his breath.
And then—the watcher at his pulse took fright.
No one believed. They listened at his heart.
Little—less—nothing!—and that ended it.
No more to build on there. And they, since they
Were not the one dead, turned to their affairs.

1. **rueful** (rōō′fəl): expressing sorrow or regret.

Luther
Honors 21-22
Summer Homework

PART 5 REFLECTION PROMPT: *Acquainted with the Night*, *Mending Wall*, and *Out, Out--*

Write a paragraph (at least 6-7 sentences) in which you identify and explain a similarity between two of the poems. Write a second paragraph in which you draw a conclusion about the author's values, belief system, or worldview.

**This may be typed or written, and it must be double spaced.

"I think this kid is hurting."

Teenage Wasteland

Short Story by ANNE TYLER

Connect to Your Life

Troubled Teen In this story, Daisy and Matt learn that their teenage son, Donny, is having trouble in school. What advice would you give to parents in this situation? With a small group of classmates, discuss things you would do or rules you might enforce to help a teenager improve in school.

Build Background

Academic Reform Debate In keeping with other changes during the 1960s and 1970s, experimental theories of education were being tested in many U.S. schools and universities. Believing that teachers should act as assistants or helpers rather than as authority figures, supporters of "alternative schools" and "the open classroom" wanted to do away with traditional teaching methods. They wanted students to be free to discover their own learning styles, guide their own curriculum, and progress at their own pace. While quite successful in some schools, this academic reform movement met resistance from some educators and parents who felt that students, if left to themselves, would not be taught the basic skills of reading, writing, and arithmetic. In "Teenage Wasteland," Daisy and Matt, like many parents at the time, find themselves caught in the middle of this continuing debate. They receive conflicting advice from educators about how to help their son.

WORDS TO KNOW
Vocabulary Preview

amiably	qualm
forlorn	shamble
looming	subdued
morass	temporize
punitive	vindictive

Focus Your Reading

LITERARY ANALYSIS CHARACTER: PROTAGONIST AND ANTAGONIST

The **protagonist** is the central character in a short story, novel, or play. The **antagonist** is the character or force that the protagonist is pitted against. Decide who is the protagonist and who is the antagonist in this story.

ACTIVE READING RECOGNIZING IMPORTANT DETAILS

In "Teenage Wasteland," Tyler uses many **details**—or specific pieces of information—to create an experience for your imagination. All of these details contribute to the total effect of the story, and you should savor them as you read. For example, notice the following details that reveal how Daisy imagines the principal's perception of herself and her husband: "an overweight housewife in a cotton dress and a too-tall, too-thin insurance agent in a baggy, frayed suit." These details provide a strong clue about Daisy's self-image. Still, some details are more compelling than others and deserve special attention as you read. In this story about a troubled teen, one cluster of important details concerns the different pieces of advice that the parents receive about how to help their son.

READER'S NOTEBOOK

To help you track the different kinds of advice that Daisy and Matt receive, keep a list of that advice in your notebook. As you read, write down what the principal, the teachers, and the tutor say about how to help Donny. Put a check mark beside each piece of advice that Daisy and Matt follow.

Teenage Wasteland

Anne Tyler

He used to have very blond hair—almost white—cut shorter than other children's so that on his crown a little cowlick always stood up to catch the light. But this was when he was small. As he grew older, his hair grew darker, and he wore it longer—past his collar even. It hung in lank, taffy-colored ropes around his face, which was still an endearing face, fine-featured, the eyes an unusual aqua blue. But his cheeks, of course, were no longer round, and a sharp new Adam's apple jogged in his throat when he talked.

In October, they called from the private school he attended to request a conference with his parents. Daisy went alone; her husband was at work. Clutching her purse, she sat on the principal's couch and learned that Donny was noisy, lazy, and disruptive; always fooling around with his friends, and he wouldn't respond in class.

In the past, before her children were born, Daisy had been a fourth-grade teacher. It shamed her now to sit before this principal as a parent, a delinquent parent, a parent who struck Mr. Lanham, no doubt, as unseeing or uncaring. "It isn't that we're not concerned," she said. "Both of us are. And we've done what we could, whatever we could think of. We don't let him watch TV

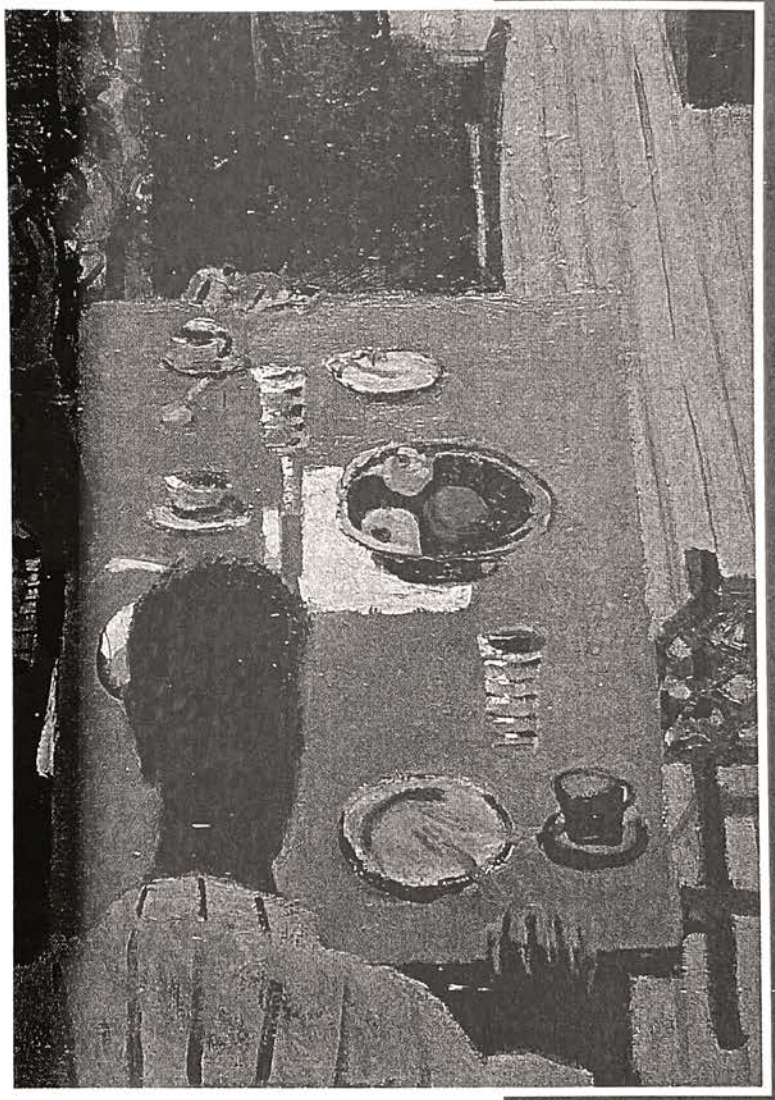


Table with Fruit (1951–1952), David Park, Oil on canvas, 46″ × 35¼″, collection of Mr. and Mrs. R. Crosby Kemper. Photo by Edward B. Bigelow.

on school nights. We don't let him talk on the phone till he's finished his homework. But he tells us he doesn't *have* any homework or he did it all in study hall. How are we to know what to believe?"

From early October through November, at Mr. Lanham's suggestion, Daisy checked Donny's assignments every day. She sat next to him as he worked, trying to be encouraging, sagging inwardly as she saw the poor quality of everything he did—the sloppy mistakes in math, the illogical leaps in his English themes, the history questions left blank if they required any research.

Daisy was often late starting supper, and she couldn't give as much attention to Donny's younger sister. "You'll never guess what happened at . . ." Amanda would begin, and Daisy would have to tell her, "Not now, honey."

By the time her husband, Matt, came home, she'd be snappish. She would recite the day's hardships—the fuzzy instructions in English, the botched history map, the morass of unsolvable algebra equations. Matt would look surprised and confused, and Daisy would gradually wind down. There was no way, really, to convey how exhausting all this was.

In December, the school called again. This time, they wanted Matt to come as well. She and Matt had to sit on Mr. Lanham's couch like two bad children and listen to the news: Donny had improved only slightly, raising a D in history to a C, and a C in algebra to a B-minus. What was worse, he had developed new problems. He had cut classes on at least three occasions. Smoked in the furnace room. Helped Sonny Barnett break into a freshman's locker. And last week, during athletics, he and three friends had been seen off the school grounds; when they returned, the coach had smelled beer on their breath.

Daisy and Matt sat silent, shocked. Matt rubbed his forehead with his fingertips. Imagine, Daisy thought, how they must look to Mr. Lanham: an overweight housewife in a cotton dress and a too-tall, too-thin insurance agent in a baggy, frayed suit. Failures, both of them—the kind of people who are always hurrying to catch up, missing the point of things that everyone else grasps at once. She wished she'd worn nylons instead of knee socks.

It was arranged that Donny would visit a psychologist for testing. Mr. Lanham knew just the person. He would set this boy straight, he said.

When they stood to leave, Daisy held her stomach in and gave Mr. Lanham a firm, responsible handshake.

Donny said the psychologist was a jackass and the tests were really dumb; but he kept all three of his appointments, and when it was time for the follow-up conference with the psychologist and both parents, Donny combed his hair and seemed unusually sober and subdued. The psychologist said Donny had no serious emotional problems. He was merely going through a difficult period in his life. He required some academic help and a better sense of self-worth. For this reason, he was suggesting a man named Calvin Beadle, a tutor with considerable psychological training.

In the car going home, Donny said he'd be damned if he'd let them drag him to some stupid tutor. His father told him to watch his language in front of his mother.

That night, Daisy lay awake pondering the term "self-worth." She had always been free with her praise. She had always told Donny he had talent, was smart, was good with his hands. She had made a big to-do over every little gift he gave her. In fact, maybe she had gone too far, although, Lord knows, she had meant every word. Was that his trouble?

She remembered when Amanda was born. Donny had acted lost and bewildered. Daisy had been alert to that, of course, but still, a new baby keeps you so busy. Had she really done all she could have? She longed—she ached—for a time machine. Given one more chance, she'd do

WORDS TO KNOW
morass (mə-răs') *n.* a difficult, confused, or entangled state of affairs; puzzling mess
subdued (səb-dōōd') *adj.* made submissive; reduced in intensity; toned down
subdue *v.*

it perfectly—hug him more, praise him more, or perhaps praise him less. Oh, who can say . . .

The tutor told Donny to call him Cal. All his kids did, he said. Daisy thought for a second that he meant his own children, then realized her mistake. He seemed too young, anyhow, to be a family man. He wore a heavy brown handlebar mustache. His hair was as long and stringy as Donny's, and his jeans as faded. Wire-rimmed spectacles slid down his nose. He lounged in a canvas director's chair with his fingers laced across his chest, and he casually, amiably questioned Donny, who sat upright and glaring in an armchair.

"So they're getting on your back at school," said Cal. "Making a big deal about anything you do wrong."

"Right," said Donny.

"Any idea why that would be?"

"Oh, well, you know, stuff like homework and all," Donny said.

"You don't do your homework?"

"Oh, well, I might do it sometimes but not just exactly like they want it." Donny sat forward and said, "It's like a prison there, you know? You've got to go to every class, you can never step off the school grounds."

"You cut classes sometimes?"

"Sometimes," Donny said, with a glance at his parents.

Cal didn't seem perturbed. "Well," he said, "I'll tell you what. Let's you and me try working together three nights a week. Think you could handle that? We'll see if we can show that school of yours a thing or two. Give it a month; then if you don't like it, we'll stop. If *I* don't like it, we'll stop. I mean, sometimes people just don't get along, right? What do you say to that?"

"Okay," Donny said. He seemed pleased.

"Make it seven o'clock till eight, Monday, Wednesday, and Friday," Cal told Matt and Daisy. They nodded. Cal shambled to his feet, gave them a little salute, and showed them to the door.

This was where he lived as well as worked, evidently. The interview had taken place in the dining room, which had been transformed into a kind of office. Passing the living room, Daisy winced at the rock music she had been hearing, without registering it, ever since she had entered the house. She looked in and saw a boy about Donny's age lying on a sofa with a book. Another boy and a girl were playing Ping-Pong in front of the fireplace. "You have several here together?" Daisy asked Cal.

"Oh, sometimes they stay on after their sessions, just to rap. They're a pretty sociable group, all in all. Plenty of goof-offs like young Donny here."

He cuffed Donny's shoulder playfully. Donny flushed and grinned.

Climbing into the car, Daisy asked Donny, "Well? What did you think?"

But Donny had returned to his old evasive self. He jerked his chin toward the garage. "Look," he said. "He's got a basketball net."

Now on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays, they had supper early—the instant Matt came home. Sometimes, they had to leave before they were really finished. Amanda would still be eating her dessert. "Bye, honey. Sorry," Daisy would tell her.

Cal's first bill sent a flutter of panic through Daisy's chest, but it was worth it, of course. Just look at Donny's face when they picked him up: alight and full of interest. The principal telephoned Daisy to tell her how Donny had improved. "Of course, it hasn't shown up in his grades yet, but several of the teachers have noticed how his attitude's changed. Yes, sir, I think we're onto something here."

At home, Donny didn't act much different. He still seemed to have a low opinion of his parents. But Daisy supposed that was unavoidable—part of being fifteen. He said his parents were too "controlling"—a word that made Daisy give him a sudden look. He said they acted like wardens.

WORDS TO KNOW

amiably (ā'mē-ə-blē) *adv.* in a pleasant and friendly manner; good-naturedly
shamble (shăm'bəl) *v.* to walk or move awkwardly or clumsily

On weekends, they enforced a curfew. And any time he went to a party, they always telephoned first to see if adults would be supervising. "For God's sake!" he said. "Don't you trust me?"

"It isn't a matter of trust, honey . . . " But there was no explaining to him.

His tutor called one afternoon. "I get the sense," he said, "that this kid's feeling . . . underestimated, you know? Like you folks expect the worst of him. I'm thinking we ought to give him more rope."

"But see, he's still so suggestible," Daisy said. "When his friends suggest some mischief—smoking or drinking or such—why, he just finds it hard not to go along with them."

"Mrs. Coble," the tutor said, "I think this kid is hurting. You know? Here's a serious, sensitive kid, telling you he'd like to take on some grown-up challenges, and you're giving him the message that he can't be trusted. Don't you understand how that hurts?"

"Oh," said Daisy.

"It undermines his self-esteem—don't you realize that?"

"Well, I guess you're right," said Daisy. She saw Donny suddenly from a whole new angle: his pathetically poor posture, that slouch so forlorn that his shoulders seemed about to meet his chin . . . oh, wasn't it awful being young? She'd had a miserable adolescence herself and had always sworn no child of hers would ever be that unhappy.

She'd had a miserable adolescence herself and had always sworn no child of hers would ever be that unhappy.

They let Donny stay out later, they didn't call ahead to see if the parties were supervised, and they were careful not to grill him about his evening. The tutor had set down so many rules! They were not allowed any questions at all about any aspect of school, nor were they to speak with his teachers. If a teacher had some complaint, she should phone Cal. Only one teacher disobeyed—the history teacher, Miss Evans. She called one morning in February. "I'm a little concerned about Donny, Mrs. Coble."

"Oh, I'm sorry, Miss Evans, but Donny's tutor handles these things now . . ."

"I always deal directly with the parents. You are the parent," Miss Evans said, speaking very slowly and distinctly. "Now, here is the problem. Back when you were helping Donny with his homework, his grades rose from a D to a C, but now they've slipped back, and they're closer to an F."

"They are?"

"I think you should start overseeing his homework again."

"But Donny's tutor says . . ."

"It's nice that Donny has a tutor, but you should still be in charge of his homework. With you, he learned it. Then he passed his tests. With the tutor, well, it seems the tutor is more of a crutch. 'Donny,' I say, 'a quiz is coming up on Friday. Hadn't you better be listening instead of talking?' 'That's okay, Miss Evans,' he says. 'I have a tutor now.' Like a talisman![1] I really think you ought to take over, Mrs. Coble."

"I see," said Daisy. "Well, I'll think about that. Thank you for calling."

Hanging up, she felt a rush of anger at Donny. A talisman! For a talisman, she'd given up all luxuries, all that time with her daughter, her evenings at home!

She dialed Cal's number. He sounded muzzy. "I'm sorry if I woke you," she told him, "but Donny's history teacher just called. She says he isn't doing well."

"She should have dealt with me."

"She wants me to start supervising his homework again. His grades are slipping."

"Yes," said the tutor, "but you and I both

1. **talisman** (tăl′ĭs-mən): a thing believed to possess magic power or to bring good luck.

WORDS TO KNOW **forlorn** (fər-lôrn′) *adj.* appearing sad or lonely

know there's more to it than mere grades, don't we? I care about the *whole* child—his happiness, his self-esteem. The grades will come. Just give them time."

When she hung up, it was Miss Evans she was angry at. What a narrow woman!

It was Cal this, Cal that, Cal says this, Cal and I did that. Cal lent Donny an album by the Who.[2] He took Donny and two other pupils to a rock concert. In March, when Donny began to talk endlessly on the phone with a girl named Miriam, Cal even let Miriam come to one of the tutoring sessions. Daisy was touched that Cal would grow so involved in Donny's life, but she was also a little hurt, because she had offered to have Miriam to dinner and Donny had refused. Now he asked them to drive her to Cal's house without a qualm.

This Miriam was an unappealing girl with blurry lipstick and masses of rough red hair. She wore a short, bulky jacket that would not have been out of place on a motorcycle. During the trip to Cal's she was silent, but coming back, she was more talkative. "What a neat guy, and what a house! All those kids hanging out, like a club. And the stereo playing rock . . . gosh, he's not like grown-up at all! Married and divorced and everything, but you'd think he was our own age."

"Mr. Beadle was married?" Daisy asked.

"Yeah, to this really controlling lady. She didn't understand him a bit."

"No, I guess not," Daisy said.

Spring came, and the students who hung around at Cal's drifted out to the basketball net above the garage. Sometimes, when Daisy and Matt arrived to pick up Donny, they'd find him there with the others—spiky and excited, jittering on his toes beneath the backboard. It was staying light much longer now, and the neighboring fence cast narrow bars across the bright grass. Loud music would be spilling from Cal's windows. Once it was the Who, which Daisy recognized from the time that Donny had borrowed the album. "Teenage Wasteland,"[3] she said aloud, identifying the song, and Matt gave a short, dry laugh. "It certainly is," he said. He'd misunderstood; he thought she was commenting on the scene spread before them. In fact, she might have been. The players looked like hoodlums, even her son. Why, one of Cal's students had recently been knifed in a tavern. One had been shipped off to boarding school in midterm; two had been withdrawn by their parents. On the other hand, Donny had mentioned someone who'd been studying with Cal for five years. "Five years!" said Daisy. "Doesn't anyone ever stop needing him?"

Donny looked at her. Lately, whatever she said about Cal was read as criticism. "You're just feeling competitive," he said. "And controlling."

She bit her lip and said no more.

In April, the principal called to tell her that Donny had been expelled. There had been a locker check, and in Donny's locker they found five cans of beer and half a pack of cigarettes. With Donny's previous record, this offense meant expulsion.

Daisy gripped the receiver tightly and said, "Well, where is he now?"

"We've sent him home," said Mr. Lanham. "He's packed up all his belongings, and he's coming home on foot."

Daisy wondered what she would say to him. She felt him looming closer and closer, bringing this brand-new situation that no one had prepared her to handle. What other place would take him? Could they enter him in public school? What were the rules? She stood at the living room window, waiting for him to show up. Gradually, she realized that he was taking too long. She checked the clock. She stared up the street again.

2. **the Who:** a British rock group formed in the early 1960s.
3. **"Teenage Wasteland":** The song is actually titled "Baba O'Riley" and can be found on the album *Who's Next* (1971).

WORDS TO KNOW
qualm (kwäm) *n.* a disturbing uneasiness or doubt
looming (lo͞o′mĭng) *adj.* appearing to the mind in a large and threatening form **loom** *v.*

When an hour had passed, she phoned the school. Mr. Lanham's secretary answered and told her in a grave, sympathetic voice that yes, Donny Coble had most definitely gone home. Daisy called her husband. He was out of the office. She went back to the window and thought awhile, and then she called Donny's tutor.

"Donny's been expelled from school," she said, "and now I don't know where he's gone. I wonder if you've heard from him?"

There was a long silence. "Donny's with me, Mrs. Coble," he finally said.

"With you? How'd he get there?"

"He hailed a cab, and I paid the driver."

"Could I speak to him, please?"

There was another silence. "Maybe it'd be better if we had a conference," Cal said.

"I don't *want* a conference. I've been standing at the window picturing him dead or kidnapped or something, and now you tell me you want a—"

"Donny is very, very upset. Understandably so," said Cal. "Believe me, Mrs. Coble, this is not what it seems. Have you asked Donny's side of the story?"

"Well, of course not, how could I? He went running off to you instead."

"Because he didn't feel he'd be listened to."

"But I haven't even—"

"Why don't you come out and talk? The three of us," said Cal, "will try to get this thing in perspective."

"Well, all right," Daisy said. But she wasn't as reluctant as she sounded. Already, she felt soothed by the calm way Cal was taking this.

Cal answered the doorbell at once. He said, "Hi, there," and led her into the dining room. Donny sat slumped in a chair, chewing the knuckle of one thumb. "Hello, Donny," Daisy said. He flicked his eyes in her direction.

"Sit here, Mrs. Coble," said Cal, placing her opposite Donny. He himself remained standing, restlessly pacing. "So," he said.

Daisy stole a look at Donny. His lips were swollen, as if he'd been crying.

"You know," Cal told Daisy, "I kind of expected something like this. That's a very punitive school you've got him in—you realize that. And any half-decent lawyer will tell you they've violated his civil rights. Locker checks! Where's their search warrant?"

"But if the rule is—" Daisy said.

"Well, anyhow, let him tell you his side."

She looked at Donny. He said, "It wasn't my fault. I promise."

"They said your locker was full of beer."

"It was a put-up job! See, there's this guy that doesn't like me. He put all these beers in my locker and started a rumor going, so Mr. Lanham ordered a locker check."

"What was the boy's *name*?" Daisy asked.

"Huh?"

"Mrs. Coble, take my word, the situation is not so unusual," Cal said. "You can't imagine how vindictive kids can be sometimes."

"What was the boy's name," said Daisy, "so that I can ask Mr. Lanham if that's who suggested he run a locker check."

"You don't believe me," Donny said.

"And how'd this boy get your combination in the first place?"

"Frankly," said Cal, "I wouldn't be surprised to learn the school was in on it. Any kid that

> He did his assignments, and he earned average grades, but he gathered no friends, joined no clubs. There was something exhausted and defeated about him.

WORDS TO KNOW

punitive (pyōō'nĭ-tĭv) *adj.* punishing or having to do with punishment
vindictive (vĭn-dĭk'tĭv) *adj.* wanting revenge; bearing a grudge

marches to a different drummer,[4] why, they'd just love an excuse to get rid of him. The school is where I lay the blame."

"Doesn't *Donny* ever get blamed?"

"Now, Mrs. Coble, you heard what he—"

"Forget it," Donny told Cal. "You can see she doesn't trust me."

Daisy drew in a breath to say that of course she trusted him—a reflex. But she knew that bold-faced, wide-eyed look of Donny's. He had worn that look when he was small, denying some petty misdeed with the evidence plain as day all around him. Still, it was hard for her to accuse him outright. She temporized and said, "The only thing I'm sure of is that they've kicked you out of school, and now I don't know what we're going to do."

"We'll fight it," said Cal.

"We can't. Even you must see we can't."

"I could apply to Brantly," Donny said.

Cal stopped his pacing to beam down at him. "Brantly! Yes. They're really onto where a kid is coming from, at Brantly. Why, *I* could get you into Brantly. I work with a lot of their students."

Daisy had never heard of Brantly, but already she didn't like it. And she didn't like Cal's smile, which struck her now as feverish and avid—a smile of hunger.

On the fifteenth of April, they entered Donny in a public school, and they stopped his tutoring sessions. Donny fought both decisions bitterly. Cal, surprisingly enough, did not object. He admitted he'd made no headway with Donny and said it was because Donny was emotionally disturbed.

Donny went to his new school every morning, plodding off alone with his head down. He did his assignments, and he earned average grades, but he gathered no friends, joined no clubs. There was something exhausted and defeated about him.

The first week in June, during final exams, Donny vanished. He simply didn't come home one afternoon, and no one at school remembered seeing him. The police were reassuring, and for the first few days, they worked hard. They combed Donny's sad, messy room for clues; they visited Miriam and Cal. But then they started talking about the number of kids who ran away every year. Hundreds, just in this city. "He'll show up, if he wants to," they said. "If he doesn't, he won't."

Evidently, Donny didn't want to.

It's been three months now and still no word. Matt and Daisy still look for him in every crowd of awkward, heartbreaking teenage boys. Every time the phone rings, they imagine it might be Donny. Both parents have aged. Donny's sister seems to be staying away from home as much as possible.

At night, Daisy lies awake and goes over Donny's life. She is trying to figure out what went wrong, where they made their first mistake. Often, she finds herself blaming Cal, although she knows he didn't begin it. Then at other times she excuses him, for without him, Donny might have left earlier. Who really knows? In the end, she can only sigh and search for a cooler spot on the pillow. As she falls asleep, she occasionally glimpses something in the corner of her vision. It's something fleet[5] and round, a ball—a basketball. It flies up, it sinks through the hoop, descends, lands in a yard littered with last year's leaves and striped with bars of sunlight as white as bones, bleached and parched and cleanly picked. ❖

4. **marches to a different drummer:** thinks and acts independently; a reference to Henry David Thoreau's famous quotation (page 390).

5. **fleet:** swiftly moving; fast.

WORDS TO KNOW **temporize** (tĕm′pə-rīz′) *v.* to avoid immediate action or making a decision in order to gain time

Luther
Honors 21-22
Summer Homework

PART 6 REFLECTION PROMPT: *Teenage Wasteland*

Identify the protagonist of the story, and write a CER paragraph to defend your choice (refer to Part 2 for CER breakdown). Next, identify the antagonist of the story, and write another CER paragraph to defend your choice. You may choose the same person as protagonist and antagonist.

**This may be typed or written, and it must be double spaced.

"Why did I feel like the woman in the fairy tale who was locked in a room and ordered to spin straw into gold?"

Straw into Gold:
The Metamorphosis of the Everyday

Essay by SANDRA CISNEROS

Comparing Literature

Traditions Across Time: Continuing Transformation

In "Straw into Gold," Sandra Cisneros reviews the experiences that helped to shape her as a Latina writer. She chose to go her own way, defining herself instead of letting others define her.

Points of Comparison As you read this essay, think about ways to compare Cisneros's self-examination with Martin Luther King, Jr.'s in "Letter from Birmingham Jail" (page 1136).

Build Background

The Title of This Essay Sandra Cisneros is probably best known for *The House on Mango Street,* a book that has earned both popular and critical acclaim. She originally delivered the text of "Straw into Gold" as a speech. Her essay still retains some of the characteristics of an oral work—for example, a conversational tone and a distinctive voice. The phrase "Straw into Gold" refers to the challenge faced by the heroine in "Rumpelstiltskin." In this fairy tale, as you may recall, a miller's daughter will be put to death unless she can do the seemingly impossible—namely, spin gold out of mere straw. The word *metamorphosis* in the subtitle means "a change in form."

WORDS TO KNOW
Vocabulary Preview

avalanche
document
edible
intuitively
venture

Focus Your Reading

LITERARY ANALYSIS VOICE The term **voice** refers to a writer's unique use of language that allows a reader to "hear" a human personality in his or her writing. For example, in "Straw into Gold," Cisneros writes:

I'd never seen anybody make corn tortillas. Ever.

The use of a contraction, the everyday words, the short sentence followed by a single word, and the pauses before and after the word *ever*—all contribute to create Cisneros's voice in this essay: one that is personal, informal, almost conversational in its natural sound. Note other instances in this essay when you "hear" Cisneros behind her words.

ACTIVE READING ANALYZING STRUCTURE The structure of a literary work is the way in which it is put together—how its parts are organized. The structure of an essay is related to its purpose. For example, King's purpose in "Letter from Birmingham Jail" (page 1136) is to justify nonviolent resistance, so he builds his essay around the points supporting his argument. Cisneros's purpose in "Straw into Gold," on the other hand, is to share some of her formative experiences. She builds her essay around her recollections of growing up. Fittingly, she begins with an anecdote—a brief story that makes a point.

READER'S NOTEBOOK Read the opening anecdote about making tortillas and write a summary of it. Continue to read, summarizing Cisneros's other recollections. Then write down the connections you see between the opening anecdote and the rest of the essay.

Sandra Cisneros

Straw into Gold: The Metamorphosis of the Everyday

When I was living in an artists' colony in the south of France, some fellow Latin-Americans who taught at the university in Aix-en-Provence invited me to share a home-cooked meal with them. I had been living abroad almost a year then on an NEA[1] grant, subsisting mainly on French bread and lentils so that my money could last longer. So when the invitation to dinner arrived, I accepted without hesitation. Especially since they had promised Mexican food.

What I didn't realize when they made this invitation was that I was supposed to be involved in preparing the meal. I guess they assumed I knew how to cook Mexican food because I am Mexican. They wanted specifically tortillas, though I'd never made a tortilla in my life.

It's true I had witnessed my mother rolling the little armies of dough into perfect circles, but my mother's family is from Guanajuato; they are *provincianos,* country folk. They only know how to make flour tortillas. My father's family, on the other hand, is *chilango*[2] from Mexico City. We ate corn tortillas but we didn't make them. Someone was sent to the corner tortilleria to buy some. I'd never seen anybody make corn tortillas. Ever.

Somehow my Latino hosts had gotten a hold of a packet of corn flour, and this is what they tossed my way with orders to produce tortillas. *Así como sea.* Any ol' way, they said and went back to their cooking.

Why did I feel like the woman in the fairy tale who was locked in a room and ordered to spin straw into gold? I had the same sick feeling when I was required to write my critical essay for the MFA[3] exam—the only piece of noncreative writing necessary in order to get my graduate degree. How was I to start? There were rules involved here, unlike writing a poem or story, which I did intuitively. There was a step by step process needed and I had better know it. I felt as if making tortillas—or writing a critical paper, for that matter—were tasks so impossible I wanted to break down into tears.

Somehow though, I managed to make tortillas —crooked and burnt, but edible nonetheless. My hosts were absolutely ignorant when it came to Mexican food; they thought my tortillas were delicious. (I'm glad my mama wasn't there.) Thinking back and looking at an old photograph documenting the three of us consuming those lopsided circles I am amazed. Just as I am amazed I could finish my MFA exam.

I've managed to do a lot of things in my life I didn't think I was capable of and which many others didn't think I was capable of either. Especially because I am a woman, a Latina, an only daughter in a family of six men. My father would've liked to have seen me married long ago. In our culture men and women don't leave their father's house except by way of marriage. I crossed my father's threshold with nothing carrying me but my own two feet. A woman whom no one came for and no one chased away.

1. **NEA:** National Endowment for the Arts—a federal agency that funds artistic projects of organizations and individuals.
2. **chilango** (chē-län'gō) Mexican slang: native to Mexico City.
3. **MFA:** master of fine arts (an academic degree).

WORDS TO KNOW
intuitively (ĭn-to͞o'ĭ-tĭv-lē) *adv.* without thinking; instinctively
edible (ĕd'ə-bəl) *adj.* fit to eat

Olga (1940), Rufino Tamayo. Private Collection.

To make matters worse, I left before any of my six brothers had ventured away from home. I broke a terrible taboo.[4] Somehow, looking back at photos of myself as a child, I wonder if I was aware of having begun already my own quiet war.

I like to think that somehow my family, my Mexicanness, my poverty, all had something to do with shaping me into a writer. I like to think my parents were preparing me all along for my life as an artist even though they didn't know it. From my father I inherited a love of wandering. He was born in Mexico City but as a young man he traveled into the U.S. vagabonding. He eventually was drafted and thus became a citizen. Some of the stories he has told about his first months in the U.S. with little or no English surface in my stories in *The House on Mango Street* as well as others I have in mind to write in the future. From him I inherited a sappy heart. (He still cries when he watches Mexican soaps—especially if they deal with children who have forsaken their parents.)

My mother was born like me—in Chicago but of Mexican descent. It would be her tough street-wise voice that would haunt all my stories and poems. An amazing woman who loves to draw and read books and can sing an opera. A smart cookie.

4. **taboo:** a strict cultural rule forbidding something.

WORDS TO KNOW **venture** (vĕn'chər) *v.* to dare to go

When I was a little girl we traveled to Mexico City so much I thought my grandparents' house on La Fortuna, number 12, was home. It was the only constant in our nomadic[5] ramblings from one Chicago flat to another. The house on Destiny Street, number 12, in the colonia Tepeyac would be perhaps the only home I knew, and that nostalgia[6] for a home would be a theme that would obsess me.

My brothers also figured greatly in my art. Especially the older two; I grew up in their shadows. Henry, the second oldest and my favorite, appears often in poems I have written and in stories which at times only borrow his nickname, Kiki. He played a major role in my childhood. We were bunk-bed mates. We were co-conspirators. We were pals. Until my oldest brother came back from studying in Mexico and left me odd woman out for always.

What would my teachers say if they knew I was a writer now? Who would've guessed it? I wasn't a very bright student. I didn't much like school because we moved so much and I was always new and funny looking. In my fifth-grade report card I have nothing but an avalanche of C's and D's, but I don't remember being that stupid. I was good at art and I read plenty of library books and Kiki laughed at all my jokes. At home I was fine, but at school I never opened my mouth except when the teacher called on me.

When I think of how I see myself it would have to be at age eleven. I know I'm thirty-two on the outside, but inside I'm eleven. I'm the girl in the picture with skinny arms and a crumpled skirt and crooked hair. I didn't like school because all they saw was the outside me. School was lots of rules and sitting with your hands folded and being very afraid all the time. I liked looking out the window and thinking. I liked staring at the girl across the way writing her name over and over again in red ink. I wondered why the boy with the dirty collar in front of me didn't have a mama who took better care of him.

I think my mama and papa did the best they could to keep us warm and clean and never hungry. We had birthday and graduation parties and things like that, but there was another hunger that had to be fed. There was a hunger I didn't even have a name for. Was this when I began writing?

In 1966 we moved into a house, a real one, our first real home. This meant we didn't have to change schools and be the new kids on the block every couple of years. We could make friends and not be afraid we'd have to say goodbye to them and start all over. My brothers and the flock of boys they brought home would become important characters eventually for my stories—Louie and his cousins, Meme Ortiz and his dog with two names, one in English and one in Spanish.

My mother flourished in her own home. She took books out of the library and taught herself to garden—to grow flowers so envied we had to put a lock on the gate to keep out the midnight flower thieves. My mother has never quit gardening.

This was the period in my life, that slippery age when you are both child and woman and neither, I was to record in *The House on Mango Street.* I was still shy. I was a girl who couldn't come out of her shell.

How was I to know I would be recording and documenting the women who sat their sadness on an elbow and stared out a window? It would be the city streets of Chicago I would later record, as seen through a child's eyes.

I've done all kinds of things I didn't think I could do since then. I've gone to a prestigious[7] university, studied with famous writers, and taken an MFA degree. I've taught poetry in schools in Illinois and Texas. I've gotten an NEA grant and run away with it as far as my courage would take

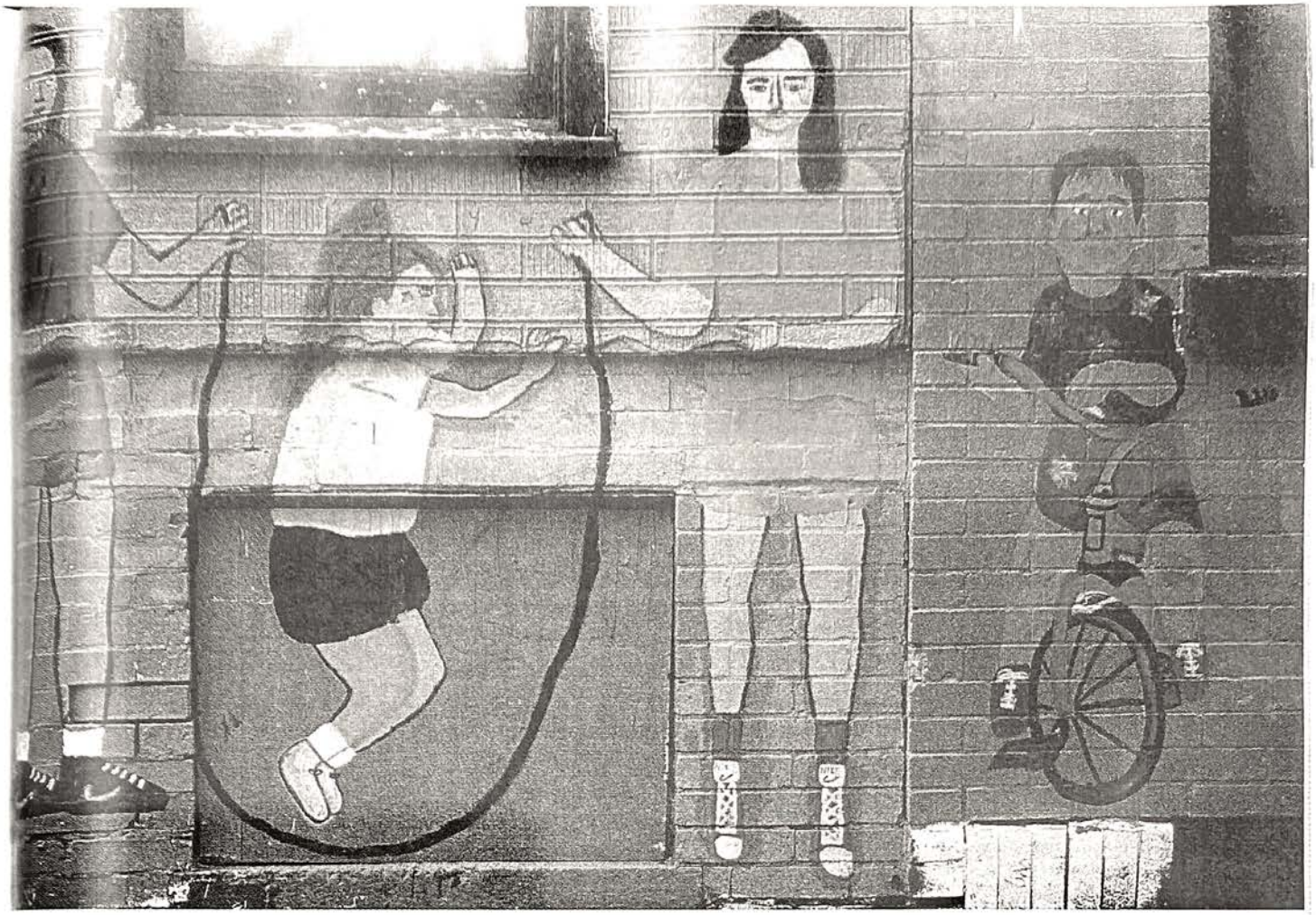
5. **nomadic:** moving from home to home; wandering.

6. **nostalgia** (nŏ-stăl′jə): a longing for things or people in the past.

7. **prestigious** (prĕ-stē′jəs): respected.

WORDS TO KNOW

avalanche (ăv′ə-lănch′) *n.* an overwhelming amount
document (dŏk′yə-mənt) *v.* to provide a detailed account of



Street mural in a Latino neighborhood of Chicago

me. I've seen the bleached and bitter mountains of the Peloponnesus.[8] I've lived on an island. I've been to Venice twice. I've lived in Yugoslavia. I've been to the famous Nice[9] flower market behind the opera house. I've lived in a village in the pre-Alps and witnessed the daily parade of promenaders.

I've moved since Europe to the strange and wonderful country of Texas, land of polaroid-blue skies and big bugs. I met a mayor with my last name. I met famous Chicana and Chicano artists and writers and *políticos*.[10]

Texas is another chapter in my life. It brought with it the Dobie-Paisano Fellowship, a six-month residency on a 265-acre ranch. But most important, Texas brought Mexico back to me.

In the days when I would sit at my favorite people-watching spot, the snakey Woolworth's counter across the street from the Alamo[11] (the Woolworth's which has since been torn down to make way for progress), I couldn't think of anything else I'd rather be than a writer. I've traveled and lectured from Cape Cod to San Francisco, to Spain, Yugoslavia, Greece, Mexico, France, Italy, and now today to Texas. Along the way there has been straw for the taking. With a little imagination, it can be spun into gold. ❖

8. **Peloponnesus** (pĕl′ə-pə-nē′səs): the peninsula forming the southern part of mainland Greece.

9. **Nice** (nēs): a port city in southern France.

10. **políticos** (pô-lē′tē-kôs) Spanish: politicians.

11. **Alamo:** a mission chapel in San Antonio, Texas—site of a famous battle in Texas's war for independence from Mexico.

Luther
Honors 21-22
Summer Homework

PART 7 REFLECTION PROMPT: *Straw Into Gold: The Metamorphosis of the Everyday*

Write a personal reflection that explains your goals for the next school year, the next five years, and the next ten years. Your response should be one paragraph in length (at least 6-7 sentences).

**This may be typed or written, and it must be double spaced.