

BUILD A STRONG

Foundation

FOR AP® SUCCESS

Foundations of Language & Literature

For Honors and Pre-AP® English Courses



Renée H. Shea • John Golden • Tracy Scholz

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INSIDE: *Sample Chapter 5—Fiction*

Foundations of Language and Literature, First Edition

Renée H. Shea • Bowie State University

John Golden • Portland Public Schools

Tracy Scholz • Alief Independent School District

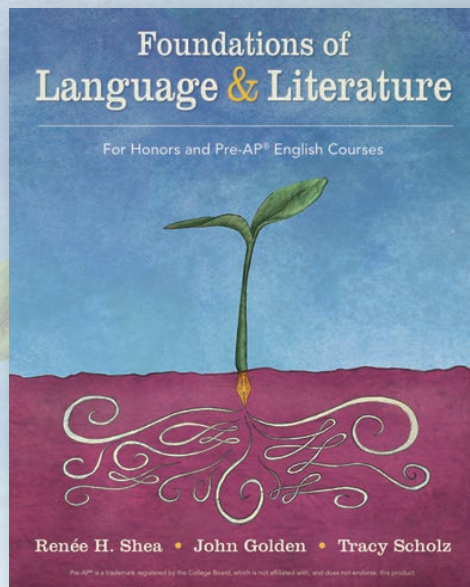
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AP® teachers know **THE ROOTS OF AP®**
SUCCESS are established in the earlier grades.

That is the idea behind *Foundations of Language & Literature*, a complete program for Ninth Grade Pre-AP® that establishes foundational skills, while challenging bright young minds.

The book is driven by the expertise of Renée Shea, John Golden, and Tracy Scholz who know that skills like reading, writing, and working with sources need careful development and constant reinforcement. This genre- and mode-based book approaches the course in exciting new ways, investigating nonfiction as well as literature, delving into fascinating argument-driven thematic units, and asking students to write in the genres, in order to read like writers.

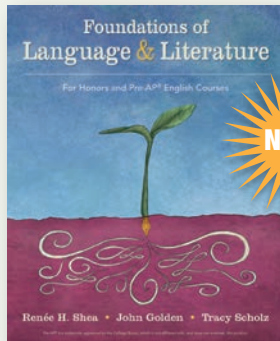
Innovative, challenging, and nurturing, *Foundations of Language & Literature* has all the support young minds need to be prepared for AP® success.



Unified Program

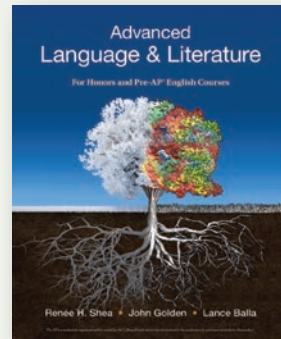
With the publication of *Foundations of Language and Literature*, BFW now offers a unified program of language and literature textbooks from grades 9 through 12, one that guides students from introduction to mastery with a consistent tone and treatment of key AP® topics:

Pre-AP® English 9



**Foundations of Language & Literature
For Honors and Pre-AP® English Courses**
Renée H. Shea • John Golden • Tracy Scholz
978-1-4576-9122-5

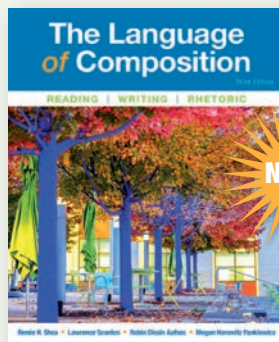
Pre-AP® English 10



**Advanced Language and Literature
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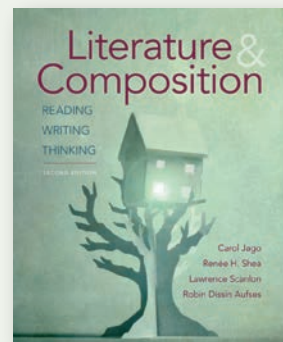
Looking for a text
that blends nonfiction
and American Literature?
CHECK OUT
***Conversations in
American Literature***

AP® Language



**The Language of Composition
Reading, Writing, Rhetoric
Third Edition**
Renée H. Shea • Lawrence Scanlon
Robin Dissin Aufses •
Megan Harowitz Pankiewicz
978-1-319-05614-8

AP® Literature



**Literature and Composition
Reading, Writing, Thinking
Second Edition**
Carol Jago • Renée H. Shea
Lawrence Scanlon • Robin Dissin Aufses
978-1-4576-8251-3

Features

Opening Chapters—An Active Approach to Foundational Skills

In the first four chapters of *Foundations of Language & Literature*, students are taught skills essential for communication in the classroom and the world: discussing ideas civilly, listening actively, writing clearly and with voice, reading actively and critically, and using sources skillfully. These skills are practiced frequently, in low-risk formative activities threaded throughout the chapters.

Chapter 1: Starting the Conversation includes instruction in developing an academic voice; listening actively; asking questions to clarify, build upon, or challenge an idea; and reaching consensus. This chapter also covers techniques for classroom presentations and public speaking.

Chapter 2: Writing asks students to consider how their voices might need to change to suit a particular subject, purpose, audience, and occasion. Those changes in voice are created through playing with word choice, sentence structure, and punctuation, and recognizing the effects. Finally, students work on creating a single coherent paragraph.

Chapter 3: Reading asks students to explore three different types of reading: Reading for Understanding, Reading for Interpretation, and Reading for Style. Students get in-context practice in skills essential to each type of reading, such as annotation, summary, finding the main idea, and finding themes. This chapter also walks students through techniques for overcoming reading challenges, such as difficult words, lack of context, complex sentence structures, and unfamiliar word order.

Chapter 4: Using Sources is an introduction to finding and using evidence. The chapter focuses heavily on reading critically in order to assess credibility, especially of online sources. The chapter then walks students through the key moves of evidence based writing: working with a range of ideas, integrating quotations, acknowledging sources, and avoiding plagiarism.

Thinking About Voice

We generally know the term “voice” as the sound we produce when we speak or sing, but there is another meaning that is relevant to this idea of a conversation. Voice can refer to the unique ways that you communicate through writing, speaking, singing, and so on. Your voice is the way you express your ideas, feelings, and experiences. For example, you probably have words, phrases, and sentences that you use often with your friends, family, teachers, or others with whom you communicate. Humans are complex, and we speak with many different voices.

ACTIVITY YOUR MANY VOICES

Describe 3-5 different voices that you use at home, outside of home, and in school, using a chart with the following categories:

Voice	When/where/why it is used	Words/phrases used

ACTIVITY CONTEXTUAL CHALLENGES

Read this poem with only the author and title provided, but without any other background information about the poem. Write down specific questions you have to understand it, specifically about the poet's use of language, using any available resources.

Alabanza: In Praise of the Home, Outside of Home, and Inside of Home

Connecting Style to Meaning

The point of reading for style is not simply to identify it, or even to explain what it means, but to explain how the author's use of style reinforces the meaning of the piece. Let's look closely at this excerpt from the autobiography *Black Boy* by Richard Wright, in which he describes his first experiences with reading. Pay close attention to the style that the author uses. Of the words highlighted in green, the syntax of the sentence, and the examples of figurative language and imagery.

ACTIVITY ENTERING THE ACADEMIC CONVERSATION

Now, you will have an opportunity to try out all of the techniques you've learned for having an effective academic conversation. Read the following article and write down some notes on why you agree or disagree with the mother's and/or daughter's conclusions about whether selfies are good or bad.

Start the dialogue by sharing with a partner or small group while practicing the active listening strategies described in the previous section (p. 000). Then, add to each other's ideas, challenge one or two, and try to find consensus on the topic, but don't worry if you do not fully agree with each other. Be sure to use the sample questions and statements to ensure that you are having a dialogue and not a debate.

Readings Chapters—Building Confidence. Exploring Ideas.

Foundational Genre/Mode Approach. The readings chapters break down the essential skills and clearly outline the expectations of working with each genre or mode:

- Chapter 5 Fiction
- Chapter 6 Argument
- Chapter 7 Poetry
- Chapter 8 Exposition
- Chapter 9 Narrative
- Chapter 10 Drama
- Chapter 11 Mythology

Genre/Mode...with a Thematic Twist

To help 9th graders engage with real ideas and wrestle with authentic complexity, each chapter includes thematic Conversation of texts extending out from ideas in the Central Text. These compact synthesis clusters deepen the teaching of the Central Text, and encourage lively and authentic discussion, thinking, and writing. For example:

- In Chapter 8 — Exposition, after reading “The Politics of the Hoodie,” students will engage in a Conversation asking “What Is the Role of Clothing in Defining Who We Are?”
- In Chapter 11 — Mythology, after reading *The Odyssey*, students read and respond to a group of texts on the question of “What Is a Hero?”

Differentiated Texts for Targeted Instruction

In each genre/mode chapter, the texts are divided into three sections for students at different preparation levels:

- Section 1 — short and approachable “foundational” texts
- Section 2 — richer texts, representing grade-level complexity for 9th graders
- Section 3 — stylistically challenging and conceptually complex “reach” texts approaching the level of challenge found in AP[®] English Language or AP[®] English Literature

Three Skill-Building Workshops per Chapter

- **Workshop 1: Essential Elements of the Genre** introduces the basic concepts students need to grasp in order to understand, analyze, and compose in the genre.
- **Workshop 2: Writing in the Genre** has students draw on the essential elements from Workshop 1 to compose a poem, an argument, a narrative, etc. and come to appreciate the choices that go into creating any text.
- **Workshop 3: Writing an Analysis of the Genre** guides students step-by-step through the process of creating compelling evidence-based analyses, clarifying the academic expectations and writing conventions of such assignments.

Features

Seeing Connections Deepen Student Thinking

Seeing Connections boxes accompany readings throughout the book. These boxes juxtapose brief texts or visuals with the main reading, offering information that supports, challenges, qualifies, or extends an idea in the main text. Seeing Connections challenge students to think critically and creatively in order to uncover the relationships connecting the two texts.

seeing connections

In 1968, author, and influential thinker in the field of creativity, George Land conducted a famous study. Land and his colleagues used a test of creative thinking developed by NASA to test a group of

1600 children at ages five, ten, and fifteen. He and his colleagues then used the same test with a very large group of adults. The results of this study are summarized in the following chart:

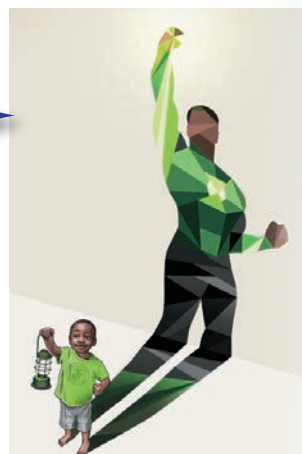
Age group tested	Number tested	Year of testing	Percent who scored in the "highly creative" range
5-year-olds	1,600 children	1968	98%
10-year-olds	1,600 children	1978	30%
15-year-olds	1,600 children	1983	12%
25+-year-olds	280,000 adults	1985	2%

What can you conclude from the data about what happens to creativity as we get

older? What factors do you think contribute to this?

Images with a Purpose

Every visual text in *Foundations of Language & Literature* serves a clear, authentic pedagogical purpose. Images were carefully selected to inform the reading of a print text, suggest new ideas, provide additional context, extend an understanding to the real world, or allow students to make interesting connections.



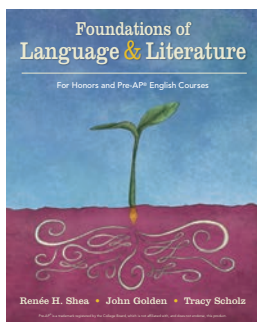
↑ What is this illustration, titled *Follow the Light*, by Jason Ratliff suggesting about the power of a child's imagination? To what extent does Bradbury make a similar or different point in this story?

bouquets, lin
veldland was
Rima was her
that it brough
George H
scene. "Go to
They ope
"You hear
They wen
sucked them
slumber room
George H
glade and pic
comer near w
slowly back to
"What is
"An old w
He show
was on it and
of saliva on it
blood smeared
He closed
In the mi
he knew his w
changed it?"
"Of course

Grammar Workshops

For those students who need more help building grammar skills, *Foundations of Language & Literature* contains brief, active grammar workshops that take students from basic understanding, to identification, to application in context, and ultimately back into their own writing to revise.

Teacher's Edition



Renée H. Shea • John Golden • Tracy Scholz
Carlos Escobar • David Hillis

Annotated Teacher's Edition

In this exceptionally valuable resource, the authors and a team of master teachers provide helpful marginal annotations on each page to support your teaching of students at all levels, including called-out passages for close reading, helpful teaching ideas, tips for avoiding common pitfalls, and more.

Teacher's Resource Flash Drive and e-Book

Additional tools for teaching with the text can be found on the Teacher's Resource Flash Drive, and embedded at point-of-use in the Teacher's Edition e-Book. Resources include suggested responses to text questions, additional assessment texts, classroom strategies and how-tos, vocabulary support, key passages for annotation, and additional audio/video/documents.



ExamView® Test Bank

Our ExamView Test Bank takes students from understanding to close rhetorical, literary, and stylistic analysis. Our authors and editors analyzed hundreds of items from national

assessments and AP® exams to target key skills. The ExamView Test Generator lets teachers quickly create paper, Internet, and LAN-based tests. Tests can be created in minutes, and the platform is fully customizable, allowing teachers to enter their own questions, edit existing questions, set time limits, incorporate multimedia, and scramble answers and change the order of questions to prevent plagiarism. Detailed results reports feed into a gradebook.

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Authors



Renée H. Shea was professor of English and Modern Languages and Director of Freshman Composition at Bowie State University in Maryland. A College Board® faculty consultant for more than 30 years in AP® Language, Literature, and Pre-AP® English, she has been a reader and question leader for both AP® English exams. Renee served as a member of the Development Committee for AP® Language and Composition, and the English Academic Advisory Committee for the College Board, as well as the SAT® Critical Reading Test Development Committee. She is coauthor of *The Language of Composition*, *Conversations in American Literature*, and *Literature & Composition* as well as two volumes in the NCTE High School Literature series (on Amy Tan and Zora Neale Hurston).



John Golden is an English teacher and instructional specialist at Cleveland High School in Portland, Oregon and is currently an advisor to the College Board®'s 6-12 English Language Arts Development Committee. An English teacher for over twenty years, John has developed curriculum and led workshops for the College Board's Pacesetter and SpringBoard® English programs. He is the author of *Reading in the Dark: Using Film as a Tool in the English Classroom* (NCTE, 2001) and *Reading in the Reel World: Teaching Documentaries and Other Nonfiction Texts* (NCTE, 2006), and the producer of *Teaching Ideas: A Video Resource for AP® English* (Bedford/St. Martin's, 2008) and The NCTE Centennial Film: *Reading the Past, Writing the Future* (2010).



Tracy Scholz has been an educator for over 20 years. She has experience as an English teacher, department specialist, and district interventionist, and served as the Associate Director for the Teacher Education Program at Rice University. She earned her doctoral degree in 2012 from the University of Houston in Curriculum and Instruction, and currently serves as the K-12 Advanced Academics Coordinator for Alief ISD.

5

Fiction



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Stories are all around us. They are in the novels we read, the movies we watch, the art we make, and even the videogames we play. There are true stories that we tell each other—what you did last summer—and there are also fictional stories that we make up or read—stories of boy wizards, dystopian girl archers, or special forces teams conducting black ops. Stories are intended to entertain us, first, but even fictional stories can reveal real-life truths, which makes them not just entertainment, but something more.

In this chapter, you will read several stories, some about subjects and people that might be familiar to you, and others on places and subjects that might be unfamiliar. Regardless of the story, you will practice how to read a piece of fiction carefully, examining the features that are important in order to understand how it was crafted and what it means. You will also have the chance to write your own piece of fiction as a way to better understand how stories are made.

There is a story →
waiting to be told in
this print by Gregory
Crewdson.
Describe what
happens next.



"Untitled," 1998, Digital Chromogenic Print, Crewdson, Gregory (b.1962)/CHRISTIES IMAGES/Private Collection/Bridgeman Images. © Gregory Crewdson. Courtesy Gagosian

Crewdson, Gregory (b.1962). Untitled. 1998 (digital print).

WORKSHOP 1

Essential Elements of Fiction

Let's begin our exploration of the tools that storytellers use to create their stories by reading the short story "Ambush," by Tim O'Brien. It is about a man recounting the time when he killed a soldier during the war in Vietnam. We will walk through each of the significant features of a work of fiction by using this story as a model.

Ambush

TIM O'BRIEN

Tim O'Brien (b. 1946) is an American writer who was drafted into the U.S. Army in 1968 and served as a soldier during the Vietnam War. Much of his work, including the memoir *If I Die in a Combat Zone, Box Me Up and Ship Me Home* (1973) and the novel *Going After Cacciato* (1978), draws on his experiences in the war. This piece is from a collection of short stories called *The Things They Carried* (1990), the title of which refers to the literal objects soldiers carry—weapons, food, water—and the metaphorical—guilt, fear, and hope.



Peter Power/Toronto Star via Getty Images

When she was nine, my daughter Kathleen asked if I had ever killed anyone. She knew about the war; she knew I'd been a soldier. "You keep writing war stories," she said, "so I guess you must've killed somebody." It was a difficult moment, but I did what seemed right, which was to say, "Of course not," and then to take her onto my lap and hold her for a while. Someday, I hope, she'll ask again. But here I want to pretend she's a grown-up. I want to tell her exactly what happened, or what I remember happening, and then I want to say to her that as a little girl she was absolutely right. This is why I keep writing war stories:

He was a short, slender young man of about twenty. I was afraid of him — afraid of something — and as he passed me on the trail I threw a grenade that exploded at his feet and killed him.

Or to go back: Shortly after midnight we moved into the ambush site outside My Khe. The whole platoon was there, spread out in the dense brush along the trail, and for five hours nothing at all happened. We were working in two-man teams — one man on guard while the other slept, switching off every two hours — and I remember it was still dark when Kiowa shook me awake for the final watch. The night was foggy and hot. For the first few moments I felt lost, not sure about directions, groping for my helmet and weapon. I reached out and found three grenades and lined them up in front of me; the pins had already been straightened for quick throwing. And then for maybe half an hour I kneeled there and waited. Very gradually, in tiny slivers, dawn began to break through the fog; and from my position in the brush I could see ten

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or fifteen meters up the trail. The mosquitoes were fierce. I remember slapping them, wondering if I should wake up Kiowa and ask for some repellent, then thinking it was a bad idea, then looking up and seeing the young man come out of the fog. He wore black clothing and rubber sandals and a gray ammunition belt. His shoulders were slightly stooped, his head cocked to the side as if listening for something. He seemed at ease. He carried his weapon in one hand, muzzle down, moving without any hurry up the center of the trail. There was no sound at all — none that I can remember. In a way, it seemed, he was part of the morning fog, or my own imagination, but there was also the reality of what was happening in my stomach. I had already pulled the pin on a grenade. I had come up to a crouch. It was entirely automatic. I did not hate the young man; I did not see him as the enemy; I did not ponder issues of morality or politics or military duty. I crouched and kept my head low. I tried to swallow whatever was rising from my stomach, which tasted like lemonade, something fruity and sour. I was terrified. There were no thoughts about killing. The grenade was to make him go away — just evaporate — and I leaned back and felt my mind go empty and then felt it fill up again. I had already thrown the grenade before telling myself to throw it. The brush was thick and I had to lob it high, not aiming, and I remember the grenade seeming to freeze above me for an instant, as if a camera had clicked, and I remember ducking down and holding my breath and seeing little wisps of fog rise from the earth. The grenade bounced once and rolled across the trail. I did not hear it, but there must've been a sound, because the young man dropped his weapon

and began to run, just two or three quick steps, then he hesitated, swiveling to his right, and he glanced down at the grenade and tried to cover his head but never did. It occurred to me then that he was about to die. I wanted to warn him. The grenade made a popping noise — not soft but not loud either — not what I'd expected — and there was a puff of dust and smoke — a small white puff — and the young man seemed to jerk upward as if pulled by invisible wires. He fell on his back. His rubber sandals had been blown off. There was no wind. He lay at the center of the trail, his right leg bent beneath him, his one eye shut, his other eye a huge star-shaped hole.

It was not a matter of live or die. There was no real peril. Almost certainly the young man would have passed by. And it will always be that way.

Later, I remember, Kiowa tried to tell me that the man would've died anyway. He told me that it was a good kill, that I was a soldier and this was a war, that I should shape up and stop staring and ask myself what the dead man would've done if things were reversed. None of it mattered. The words seemed far too complicated. All I could do was gape at the fact of the young man's body.

Even now I haven't finished sorting it out. Sometimes I forgive myself, other times I don't. In the ordinary hours of life I try not to dwell on it, but now and then, when I'm reading a newspaper or just sitting alone in a room, I'll look up and see the young man coming out of the morning fog. I'll watch him walk toward me, his shoulders slightly stooped, his head cocked to the side, and he'll pass within a few yards of me and suddenly smile at some secret thought and then continue up the trail to where it bends back into the fog.

The Characters

When you think about some of your favorite movies, TV shows, or books, you probably are drawn immediately back to the characters in those texts. Even though we know that they are fictional inventions of an author or filmmaker, the characters that we connect with the most feel very real to us.

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Simply put, a **character** is a figure in a literary work, and **characterization** refers to the methods an author uses to create the characters.

Types of Characters

The main characters of a piece of fiction are called the protagonist and the antagonist. The **protagonist** is the most prominent character in a story, whose actions or inactions often drive the story. The **antagonist** is the character who opposes the actions of the protagonist, either intentionally or unintentionally. It might be tempting to think of the protagonist as “good” and the antagonist as the “bad” character, but there are many stories in which the protagonist does some pretty bad things, including several of the texts in this chapter. Depending on the length and complexity of the piece of fiction, there could be more than a single protagonist, and there certainly can be more than one antagonist.

Other characters, called **supporting** or **minor characters**, may appear in a piece of fiction. Their roles might be to add more depth or realism to the story or to cause additional conflicts for the protagonist to face. One common type of supporting character is the **foil**. The purpose of the foil is to contrast with a main character in order to highlight an aspect or trait. If a king is very cruel, he might have a very kind butler, to highlight just how cruel the king truly is.

In the case of “Ambush,” the protagonist is the unnamed narrator because he is the most prominent character, and it is mostly his actions—killing the other soldier and choosing not to tell his daughter about it—that drive the story. He is not necessarily the “good guy,” and in some ways, we could judge his actions harshly. The soldier that he kills is the antagonist, because he opposes the protagonist’s actions to kill him. We could consider Kiowa to be a **foil**, since O’Brien includes Kiowa’s clearly stated rationalizations of the killing—he would have died anyway, it was war—to show how conflicted the narrator is by contrast. The daughter could be considered a supporting character because it is her question that causes the protagonist to try to explain and face his past.

ACTIVITY TYPES OF CHARACTERS

Identify the protagonists and antagonists or foils in two or three movies you have seen or in novels or short stories that you have read. Try to think of protagonists who are not necessarily “good” and antagonists that aren’t automatically “evil.” Explain how you know that they fit the definitions of character types above.

Character Development

The methods writers use to develop characters can generally be broken down into two categories: direct characterization and indirect characterization. In **direct characterization**, the writer tells us what a character is like. It’s a description of how the character looks or acts.

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Direct Characterization:

He wore black clothing and rubber sandals and a gray ammunition belt. His shoulders were slightly stooped, his head cocked to the side as if listening for something. He seemed at ease. He carried his weapon in one hand, muzzle down, moving without any hurry up the center of the trail.

— Tim O'Brien, "Ambush"

Indirect characterization is when the author builds the character through actions, thoughts, dialogue, or what others say about the character. Indirect characterization is a bit more subtle than direct characterization. Rather than tell us what the character is like, the writer shows us the character in action and lets us draw our own conclusions.

Indirect Characterization:

When she was nine, my daughter Kathleen asked if I had ever killed anyone. She knew about the war; she knew I'd been a soldier. "You keep writing war stories," she said, "so I guess you must've killed somebody." It was a difficult moment, but I did what seemed right, which was to say, "Of course not," and then to take her onto my lap and hold her for a while. Someday, I hope, she'll ask again.

— Tim O'Brien, "Ambush"

Neither method is better or worse than the other, and writers usually use both types of characterization within a literary work.

Characterization is often an essential way to determine the theme of a work: the ways that a character acts or responds to a situation tell the reader a lot about what the author is trying to communicate. In "Ambush," for instance, O'Brien uses the characterization of the narrator to show the challenge of facing difficult truths.

Imagine that you are writing a piece of fiction and your protagonist is the male figure in this painting, *Four Lane Road* by Edward Hopper.

Write a paragraph or more that includes the most important aspects of characterization described above, such as physical descriptions, actions, dialogue, internal thoughts, and so on. Feel free to use direct or indirect characterization. Then, write a statement that describes his or her overall character to someone who has not seen the painting. How can knowing more about this character help us to understand the meaning of the painting itself?



Edward Hopper, *Four Lane Road*. 1956. Oil on canvas.

Artefacts/Alamy

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ACTIVITY CHARACTERIZATION

Using either “Ambush” or the movies, novels, or stories you considered in the previous activity, think a bit more about how the characters are created. You should consider one or more of the following aspects:

- Physical details (age, height, gender, etc.)
- Actions, gestures, movements
- Dialogue
- How other characters talk about, think about, or behave toward a character
- Character motivations
- Character internal thoughts

Conflict and Plot

Maybe even more memorable to us than the characters of our favorite movie, film, or TV show is the story—what happens to the characters. Did the protagonist overcome the obstacles? Defeat the villain? Win the lottery? Learn an important lesson? The story is what draws us in and compels us to read on.

Conflict

One of the most important ways to talk about a story is to focus on the **conflicts** that the protagonist faces. Sometimes these conflicts are with other characters, but other times they are with larger forces, such as nature or society. Here are the main types of conflicts and how they play out in “Ambush”:

- **Character versus Another Character:** The narrator stands against the other soldier, especially if Kiowa is correct that the soldier would have killed the narrator if he had had the chance.
- **Character versus Society:** If Kiowa represents the prevailing attitude of the society and the other soldiers that are fighting the war in Vietnam—“that I was a soldier and this was a war”—then the narrator finds himself in conflict with that attitude.
- **Character versus Nature:** While the narrator is not in direct conflict with nature in this story, the morning fog, mosquitoes, dim light, and dense brush add to the confusion of the scene and contribute to the character acting before even thinking about it.
- **Character versus Self:** This really is the primary conflict of the story. The narrator clearly cannot forgive himself, even years later, for what he has done.

Not all stories have all of these conflicts, and some lean heavily on one or two, but these are the main types to keep an eye out for as you read. Also note that in “Ambush,”

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O'Brien intentionally leaves many of these conflicts, especially that of the narrator versus himself, unresolved in order to illustrate the lasting impact of war on soldiers.

ACTIVITY CONFLICT

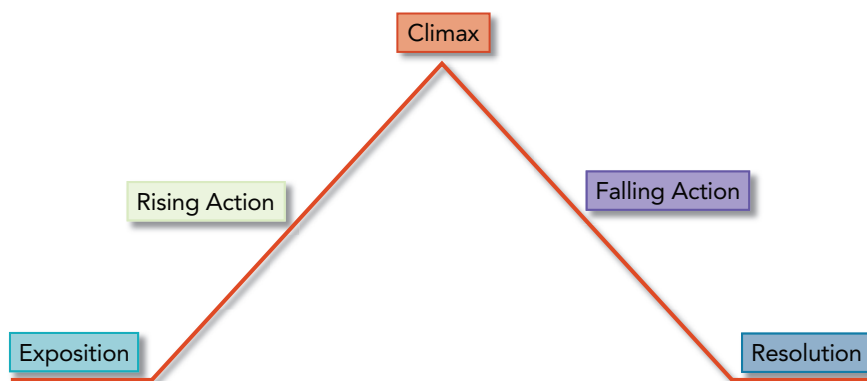
Think back on one of the films, stories, or novels you identified in the previous activities. Classify the major conflicts into one or more of the categories described in the bulleted list above.

Plot Structure

Some stories begin with “Once upon a time” and end with “they lived happily ever after,” but usually stories have more twists and turns than that. In the previous section, we talked about how stories are made up of a series of conflicts, but the order that a writer presents these conflicts is called the **plot** of a story. An author may choose to begin the story at the end, or use **flashbacks** to show earlier parts of the story. The author might include certain events in the story, but omit others. All of these intentional choices that a writer makes about the structure of the story make up the plot. Remember, a writer cannot include everything: the author must decide what to include, and what to exclude.

You likely have seen this diagram, or something similar, in previous English classes. This represents a conventional plot structure. You should know that while some plots will fit neatly into the diagram, there will be many more that are exceptions. It is important to understand this conventional structure so that you will be able to identify when—and why—an author chooses to deviate from what is expected.

Let’s walk through the parts of this conventional plot:



- **Exposition** refers to the part of the story where the author provides background information about the characters, settings, or major ideas. Exposition often occurs at the beginning of the story, which is why it is at the beginning in this diagram, but authors also weave exposition throughout a story.
- The **rising action** includes the major conflicts that the characters face. This normally makes up the majority of the action in a text.

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- The **climax** is the place where the tension of the rising action has reached its most significant place. This is where the characters face their most important conflict or make their biggest decision.
- The **falling action** includes those events immediately after the climax, during which the characters normally deal only with the results of the choices made during the climax.
- Finally, the **resolution** includes those, “So, what happened to everyone?” details. How have the events of the story wrapped up, or not wrapped up?

Let’s see how these concepts might apply to Tim O’Brien’s “Ambush”:

Exposition: This appears at the beginning of “Ambush,” when the narrator wonders whether he should tell his daughter about his killing in the war.

Rising Action: This includes the parts of the story when the narrator describes the conflicts he faces in being in the war zone—the fog, the heat, the mosquitoes, the lack of sleep.

Climax: This is when the narrator makes his choice: “I had already thrown the grenade before telling myself to throw it.”

Falling Action: This is the next section of the story, including the description of the soldier and Kiowa offering rationalizations to the narrator.

Resolution: This is the last paragraph, when the narrator reveals that he thinks about this incident almost daily and that he oftentimes wished he had let the soldier walk on by.

O’Brien intentionally begins and ends his short story with descriptions of the present day in order to show how the events of the past continue to haunt the narrator.

ACTIVITY PLOT STRUCTURE

Choose one of the texts you have thought about earlier in the activities on pages 153 and 156 and sketch out a rough plot outline, using the diagram on the previous page. Which elements fit neatly into the diagram? Which ones do not fit? Why? Are flashbacks or other shifts in time used regularly?

Point of View

The point of view (or perspective) a story is told from matters a great deal. Imagine a story of a bat hunting a moth in the dead of night. From the bat’s perspective, it might be a dramatic fighter jet adventure story, filled with details of the thrill of the chase, culminating with a dramatic maneuver that takes down the enemy. From the moth’s perspective, it might be a monster story of being hunted unmercifully with details of fear and the tricks it uses to stay alive. If told by a scientist observing the chase from afar, it might be a tale of how each of these creatures has developed skills to either

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hunt or avoid becoming prey. Those are three very different stories, because they are told from very different perspectives. The point of view in a story will generally fall into one of the following categories:

First Person

First person perspective uses “I” and is told by a character who is often, but not always, the main character in the story. This choice of narration gives us access to all of the character’s thoughts and feeling, almost as if we were reading his or her diary. This narrative choice, however, limits the reader to hearing only one side of the story, so we need to be aware that this narrator might be **biased** and could be untrustworthy. This is called an **unreliable narrator**. For instance, many stories by Edgar Allan Poe, including one found later in this chapter, are told in the first person by narrators who turn out to be murderers. Would you trust them?

Third Person

Third person perspective uses the pronouns “he,” “she,” and “they,” and the narrator is usually not a character within the story. There are a few different types of this third person narration:

- An **omniscient narrator** is one who knows what every character is thinking and can move easily through time. This type of narrator can make us aware of what each character is thinking and feeling, which can build a strong emotional connection between the reader and the characters.
- A **limited omniscient narrator** is one who can move into the thoughts of usually only one character, which creates a closeness to a single character rather than to all of the characters.
- An **objective narrator** is one who reports actions and dialogue of the characters, and describes the setting, but does not move into the thoughts of any of the characters. This can create a rather detached feeling.

Second Person

Though rarely used, second person narration is when the protagonist or another character is directly addressed, usually with the pronoun “you.” For example, look at this excerpt from the novel *Night Circus* by Erin Morgenstern.

“What kind of circus is only open at night?” people ask. No one has a proper answer, yet as dusk approaches there is a substantial crowd of spectators gathering outside the gates.

You are amongst them, of course. Your curiosity got the better of you, as curiosity is wont to do. You stand in the fading light, the scarf around your neck pulled up against the chilly evening breeze, waiting to see for yourself exactly what kind of circus only opens once the sun sets.

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One of the easiest ways to distinguish the differences between types of narration is to think about video games. The image on the top, from *Horizon Zero Dawn*, is an example of a third person perspective, since we are seeing the character from outside her perspective; whereas the image on bottom, from *Call of Duty: Modern Warfare*, is in the first person perspective, from the point of view of the person holding that gun.

How do you think the point of view in a video game affects the game play? If you are a gamer, do you prefer one type of point of view over the other? Why?



This type of narration puts the readers in a very strange situation because they are being directly addressed, but it can also create a sense of urgency with the readers being pulled directly into the action.

Tim O'Brien chose to tell "Ambush" in the first person, the point of view of an American soldier. It gives the story a personal feel, but at the same time, it is limited only to the single perspective. The reader does not, for instance, get the thoughts of the Vietnamese soldier or of the narrator's daughter. This point of view helps O'Brien illustrate the internal struggles of someone wracked with guilt.

ACTIVITY POINT OF VIEW

Rewrite one of the sections below from the story "Ambush," using a different point of view. Compare yours to the original, and to others that your classmates wrote. What has changed when the point of view changed?

1. We were working in two-man teams—one man on guard while the other slept, switching off every two hours—and I remember it was still dark when Kiowa shook me awake for the final watch. The night was foggy and hot. For the first few moments I felt lost, not sure about directions, groping for my helmet and

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weapon. I reached out and found three grenades and lined them up in front of me; the pins had already been straightened for quick throwing. And then for maybe half an hour I kneeled there and waited.

2. The mosquitoes were fierce. I remember slapping them, wondering if I should wake up Kiowa and ask for some repellent, then thinking it was a bad idea, then looking up and seeing the young man come out of the fog. He wore black clothing and rubber sandals and a gray ammunition belt. His shoulders were slightly stooped, his head cocked to the side as if listening for something. He seemed at ease. He carried his weapon in one hand, muzzle down, moving without any hurry up the center of the trail. There was no sound at all—none that I can remember. In a way, it seemed, he was part of the morning fog, or my own imagination, but there was also the reality of what was happening in my stomach.
3. The grenade bounced once and rolled across the trail. I did not hear it, but there must've been a sound, because the young man dropped his weapon and began to run, just two or three quick steps, then he hesitated, swiveling to his right, and he glanced down at the grenade and tried to cover his head but never did. It occurred to me then that he was about to die. I wanted to warn him. The grenade made a popping noise—not soft but not loud either—not what I'd expected—and there was a puff of dust and smoke—a small white puff—and the young man seemed to jerk upward as if pulled by invisible wires. He fell on his back. His rubber sandals had been blown off.
4. Even now I haven't finished sorting it out. Sometimes I forgive myself, other times I don't. In the ordinary hours of life I try not to dwell on it, but now and then, when I'm *reading a newspaper or just sitting alone* in a room, I'll look up and see the young man coming out of the morning fog. I'll watch him walk toward me, his shoulders slightly stooped, his head cocked to the side, and he'll pass within a few yards of me and suddenly smile at some secret thought and then continue up the trail to where it bends back into the fog.

Setting

Imagine picking up a book, and in the first page the sky is purple, and the trees smile and wave as the main character walks by. The setting of the story defines the world of the story—it makes the rules. This includes the physical setting, but also the culture, time period, and ground rules. The setting sets the **mood**, meaning the feelings evoked by the setting. In addition to the physical location (a room, a house, a swamp, a bus), the setting of a piece of fiction also includes when the story takes place (time of day, time of the year, historical time period).

Let's look at how setting works in "Ambush." We'll focus on one passage that describes the setting:

The night was foggy and hot. For the first few moments I felt lost, not sure about directions, groping for my helmet and weapon. I reached out and found

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Look at these two film stills →
from the 1939 film *The Wizard of Oz*, in which Dorothy travels
in a tornado from her native
Kansas (top) to the fantasy
world of Oz (bottom).

What do you notice about
each setting, and, more
important, how do the settings
contrast with each other?
What are the “rules” that
govern these two worlds?



three grenades and lined them up in front of me; the pins had already been straightened for quick throwing. And then for maybe half an hour I kneeled there and waited. Very gradually, in tiny slivers, dawn began to break through the fog; and from my position in the brush I could see ten or fifteen meters up the trail. The mosquitoes were fierce. I remember slapping them, wondering if I should wake up Kiowa and ask for some repellent, then thinking it was a bad idea, then looking up and seeing the young man come out of the fog.

Notice how the combination of heat and limited visibility caused by the fog leads to a sense of confusion where the narrator “felt lost.” The young man emerges from that fog, almost like out of a dream. The setting contributes to the helplessness the narrator felt in the face of the duty of war.

ACTIVITY SETTING

Choose one of the texts you have thought about earlier in the activities on pages 153 and 156 and describe the main setting or settings. What is the intended effect of the setting on the reader or viewer? How does it contribute to our understanding of character, conflict, or other literary elements?

Theme

When you think and write about fiction, often it is theme that you are being asked to discuss. Theme is an idea in a story that comments on life or the world. It's not the subject of the story, but it's something that the writer wants to communicate about that topic. So, a theme of "Ambush" is not war. A theme would be what O'Brien is suggesting about war. One thing to keep in mind is that there are often a lot of ideas that can be found in a story. There might be a major theme, but there is hardly ever just one theme.

Let's think about theme in "Ambush." We have a story of a soldier who lies to his daughter about killing a man in a war. We see the killing, and we feel his mixed emotions and guilt. We also hear from the character Kiowa, who dismisses that guilt. This is a summary of the literal events in the story, but what are the larger ideas at work here? The major idea is that war makes a lasting impression on soldiers. They carry the memories, and sometimes the guilt, with them for the rest of their lives. In fact, the title of the book that this story comes from is *The Things They Carried*. What are some other ideas in "Ambush" that might be themes? There is the idea of honesty, and whether we should protect our loved ones from the harsh truths of the world. From the character of Kiowa, there is the idea that war might make some people more callous toward death, or that it might be healthier to lie to oneself. There are likely even more themes in "Ambush," and it is just a very short story. A longer piece—a novel, for instance—is full of ideas about the world, though we always have to be careful to ensure that we are finding these themes in the work itself and not straying too far from the text. By keeping in mind that a piece of fiction doesn't just have one theme, you will start to see a world of opportunities for things to talk about.

ACTIVITY THEME

Return to the text(s) you have been examining in the activities above, and try your hand at identifying some possible themes. Remember, they should be ideas that are present within the text but can also comment on the world outside of the text.

Literary Elements and Theme

Throughout this workshop, you have been thinking about the key literary elements of fiction—character, conflict and plot, point of view, and setting—as a way to help you understand the tools writers use to create their stories. But just identifying these elements is not the point. The point is to think about *how* the writer used those tools to create their story and communicate their ideas. For example, writers don't create a setting randomly; they create the setting that is right for the story, and a setting is right for the story if it sets the proper backdrop to allow the author to explore the ideas they want to explore.

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Look at this summary of how the various elements help Tim O’Brien convey one theme of “Ambush”: how soldiers sometimes carry the guilt of their actions, even long after the war is over.

Literary Element in “Ambush”	Contribution to Theme
Characterization	O’Brien uses the characterization of the narrator, specifically his actions and the dialogue with his daughter, to show the difficulty of facing and revealing difficult truths. The foil Kiowa also reveals how we use rationalizations and justifications to avoid the truth.
Conflict and Plot	O’Brien intentionally leaves the internal conflict of the narrator unresolved in order to illustrate the lasting impact of war on its participants. He also begins and ends his short story with descriptions of the present day in order to show how the events of the past continue to haunt the narrator.
Point of View	The first person perspective gives the story a personal feel and allows us only inside the narrator’s thoughts and feelings. We don’t know what the young man in the fog was actually thinking, or even what Kiowa was actually thinking. We don’t even get an objective view of the main event of the story—we only see what happened from the narrator’s point of view, which shows how truth is always subjective.
Setting	The combination of heat, fog, mosquitoes, and dense brush leads to a sense of confusion where the narrator “felt lost.” We also see the peacefulness of the home setting at the beginning and end of the story. But that peacefulness is in stark contrast to the moral conflict going on inside of the narrator.

Additional Elements of Fiction

The following are additional terms that will be useful to your understanding or an appreciation for fiction and how they are constructed. Return to either text and try to identify the use of these secondary features in the text(s).

- **Foreshadowing:** The introduction early in a story of verbal and dramatic hints that suggest what is to come later. Horror films do this with suspenseful music, and writers do so with a line like, “Sailors have a curious dread of the place. I don’t know why,” which is from “The Most Dangerous Game,” a story in this chapter.
- **Symbol:** A person, object, image, word, or event that evokes a range of additional meaning beyond, and is usually more abstract than, its literal significance. Symbols are devices for communicating complex ideas without including explanations that would make a story more like an essay than an experience. Some conventional symbols have meanings that are widely recognized by a society or culture, such as certain colors, fire, water, and

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darkness and light; and sometimes they are specific to an individual text, such as in the film *Citizen Kane* when a sled stands as a symbol of the protagonist's lost childhood.

- **Irony:** A literary device that reveals a reality different from what appears to be true.
 - *Verbal irony* is a figure of speech that occurs when a person says one thing but means the opposite. Sarcasm is one form of verbal irony that is sometimes intended to hurt someone through, for example, false praise.
 - *Situational irony* is when an event or action is unexpected. It is situational irony when a firehouse burns down or a police station is burglarized.
 - *Dramatic irony* creates a discrepancy between what a character does, believes, or says and what the reader or audience member knows to be true. Sometimes this is played for humor, as when the audience knows there is a surprise party for the character who is still dressed in his pajamas; but it can be more serious, as when the audience knows that a murderer is in the house with the character completely unaware.

KEY CONCEPTS

Character

- Protagonist
- Antagonist
- Supporting characters
- Foil
- Indirect characterization
- Direct characterization

Conflict/Plot

- Flashbacks
- Exposition
- Rising action
- Climax
- Falling action
- Resolution

Point of View

- First person
 - Unreliable narrator
- Third person
 - Omniscient narrator
 - Limited omniscient narrator
 - Objective narrator
- Second person

Setting

- Mood

Theme

Foreshadowing

Symbol

Irony

Ray Bradbury, <i>The Veldt</i>	165
Sherman Alexie, <i>Reindeer Games</i>	176
Lena Coakley, <i>Mirror Image</i>	184

The Veldt

RAY BRADBURY

Ray Bradbury (1920–2012) was one of the most widely read authors in the world. While he is often thought of as a science fiction writer, he published poems, plays, short stories, essays, and novels in many different genres, including fantasy, horror, and cultural criticism. Some of his best-known novels are *Fahrenheit 451*, *The Martian Chronicles*, *The Illustrated Man*, and *Something Wicked This Way Comes*, all of which have been adapted into films or television shows.

Perhaps more accurate than referring to Bradbury as a science fiction writer is to call him a speculative fiction writer, which means that he imagines a futuristic setting to comment on present circumstances. In *Fahrenheit 451*, for instance, he pictures a time when all books were banned and burned, to call attention to the dangers of censorship. Published in 1950, long before the invention of the Internet, online gaming, and virtual reality, “The Veldt” presents a dark vision of technology’s effects on the young.



Louis MONIER/Getty Images

“George, I wish you’d look at the nursery.”

“What’s wrong with it?”

“I don’t know.”

“Well, then.”

“I just want you to look at it, is all, or call a psychologist in to look at it.”

“What would a psychologist want with a nursery?”

“You know very well what he’d want.” His wife paused in the middle of the kitchen and watched the stove busy humming to itself, making supper for four.

“It’s just that the nursery is different now than it was.”

“All right, let’s have a look.”

They walked down the hall of their soundproofed Happylife Home, which had cost them thirty thousand dollars installed, this house which clothed and fed and rocked them to sleep and played and sang and was good to them.

Their approach sensitized a switch somewhere and the nursery light flicked on when they came within ten feet of it. Similarly, behind them, in the halls, lights went on and off as they left them behind, with a soft automaticity.

"Well," said George Hadley.

They stood on the thatched floor of the nursery. It was forty feet across by forty feet long and thirty feet high; it had cost half again as much as the rest of the house. "But nothing's too good for our children," George had said.

The nursery was silent. It was empty as a jungle glade at hot high noon. The walls were blank and two dimensional. Now, as George and Lydia Hadley stood in the center of the room, the walls began to purr and recede into crystalline distance, it seemed, and presently an African veldt appeared, in three dimensions, on all sides, in color reproduced to the final pebble and bit of straw. The ceiling above them became a deep sky with a hot yellow sun.

George Hadley felt the perspiration start on his brow.

"Let's get out of this sun," he said. "This is a little too real. But I don't see anything wrong."

"Wait a moment, you'll see," said his wife.

Now the hidden odorophonics were beginning to blow a wind of odor at the two people in the middle of the baked veldtland. The hot straw smell of lion grass, the cool green smell of the hidden water hole, the great rusty smell of animals, the smell of dust like a red paprika in the hot air. And now the sounds: the thump of distant antelope feet on grassy sod, the papery rustling of vultures. A shadow passed through the sky. The shadow flickered on George Hadley's upturned, sweating face.

"Filthy creatures," he heard his wife say.

"The vultures."

10 "You see, there are the lions, far over, that way. Now they're on their way to the water hole. They've just been eating," said Lydia. "I don't know what."

"Some animal." George Hadley put his hand up to shield off the burning light from his squinted eyes. "A zebra or a baby giraffe, maybe."

"Are you sure?" His wife sounded peculiarly tense.

"No, it's a little late to be sure," he said, amused. "Nothing over there I can see but cleaned bone, and the vultures dropping for what's left."

"Did you hear that scream?" she asked.

"No."

"About a minute ago?"

"Sorry, no."

The lions were coming. And again George Hadley was filled with admiration for the mechanical genius who had conceived this room. A miracle of efficiency selling for an absurdly low price. Every home should have one. Oh, occasionally they frightened you with their clinical accuracy, they startled you, gave you a twinge, but most of the time what fun for everyone, not only your own son and daughter, but for yourself when you felt like a quick jaunt to a foreign land, a quick change of scenery. Well, here it was!

And here were the lions now, fifteen feet 30 away, so real, so feverishly and startlingly real that you could feel the prickling fur on your hand, and your mouth was stuffed with the dusty upholstery smell of their heated pelts, and the yellow of them was in your eyes like the yellow of an exquisite French tapestry, the yellows of lions and summer grass, and the sound of the matted lion lungs exhaling on the silent noontide, and the smell of meat from the panting, dripping mouths.

The lions stood looking at George and Lydia Hadley with terrible green-yellow eyes.

"Watch out!" screamed Lydia.

The lions came running at them.

Lydia bolted and ran. Instinctively, George 20 sprang after her. Outside, in the hall, with the

door slammed he was laughing and she was crying, and they both stood appalled at the other's reaction.

"George!"

"Lydia! Oh, my dear poor sweet Lydia!"

"They almost got us!"

"Walls, Lydia, remember; crystal walls, that's all they are. Oh, they look real, I must admit — Africa in your parlor — but it's all dimensional, superreactionary, supersensitive color film and mental tape film behind glass screens. It's all odorophonics and sonics, Lydia. Here's my handkerchief."

"I'm afraid." She came to him and put her body against him and cried steadily. "Did you see? Did you feel? It's too real."

"Now, Lydia . . ."

"You've got to tell Wendy and Peter not to read any more on Africa."

"Of course — of course." He patted her.

"Promise?"

"Sure."

"And lock the nursery for a few days until I get my nerves settled."

"You know how difficult Peter is about that. When I punished him a month ago by locking the nursery for even a few hours — the tantrum he threw! And Wendy too. They live for the nursery."

"It's got to be locked, that's all there is to it."

"All right." Reluctantly he locked the huge door. "You've been working too hard. You need a rest."

"I don't know — I don't know," she said, blowing her nose, sitting down in a chair that immediately began to rock and comfort her. "Maybe I don't have enough to do. Maybe I have time to think too much. Why don't we shut the whole house off for a few days and take a vacation?"

"You mean you want to fry my eggs for me?"

"Yes." She nodded.

"And darn my socks?"

"Yes." A frantic, watery-eyed nodding.

"And sweep the house?"

"Yes, yes — oh, yes!"

"But I thought that's why we bought this house, so we wouldn't have to do anything?"

"That's just it. I feel like I don't belong here. The house is wife and mother now, and nursemaid. Can I compete with an African veldt? Can I give a bath and scrub the children as efficiently or quickly as the automatic scrub bath can? I cannot. And it isn't just me. It's you. You've been awfully nervous lately."

"I suppose I have been smoking too much."

"You look as if you didn't know what to do with yourself in this house, either. You smoke a little more every morning and drink a little more every afternoon and need a little more sedative every night. You're beginning to feel unnecessary too."

"Am I?" He paused and tried to feel into himself to see what was really there.

"Oh, George!" She looked beyond him, at the nursery door. "Those lions can't get out of there, can they?"

He looked at the door and saw it tremble as if something had jumped against it from the other side.

"Of course not," he said.

At dinner they ate alone, for Wendy and Peter were at a special plastic carnival across town and had televised home to say they'd be late, to go ahead eating. So George Hadley, bemused, sat watching the dining-room table produce warm dishes of food from its mechanical interior.

"We forgot the ketchup," he said.

"Sorry," said a small voice within the table, and ketchup appeared.

As for the nursery, thought George Hadley, it won't hurt for the children to be locked out of it awhile. Too much of anything isn't good for anyone. And it was clearly indicated that the children had been spending a little too much time on Africa. That sun. He could feel it on his neck, still, like a hot paw. And the lions. And the smell of blood. Remarkable how the nursery caught the telepathic emanations of the children's minds

and created life to fill their every desire. The children thought lions, and there were lions. The children thought zebras, and there were zebras. Sun — sun. Giraffes — giraffes. Death and death.

That last. He chewed tastelessly on the meat that the table had cut for him. Death thoughts. They were awfully young, Wendy and Peter, for death thoughts. Or, no, you were never too young, really. Long before you knew what death was you were wishing it on someone else. When you were two years old you were shooting people with cap pistols.

But this — the long, hot African veldt — the awful death in the jaws of a lion. And repeated again and again.

"Where are you going?"

He didn't answer Lydia. Preoccupied, he let the lights glow softly on ahead of him, extinguish behind him as he padded to the nursery door. He listened against it. Far away, a lion roared.

He unlocked the door and opened it. Just before he stepped inside, he heard a faraway scream. And then another roar from the lions, which subsided quickly.

He stepped into Africa. How many times in the last year had he opened this door and found Wonderland, Alice, the Mock Turtle, or Aladdin and his Magical Lamp, or Jack Pumpkinhead of Oz, or Dr. Doolittle, or the cow jumping over a very real-appearing moon — all the delightful contraptions of a make-believe world. How often had he seen Pegasus flying in the sky ceiling, or seen fountains of red fireworks, or heard angel voices singing. But now, is yellow hot Africa, this bake oven with murder in the heat. Perhaps Lydia was right. Perhaps they needed a little vacation from the fantasy which was growing a bit too real for ten-year-old children. It was all right to exercise one's mind with gymnastic fantasies, but when the lively child mind settled on one pattern . . . ? It seemed that, at a distance, for the past month, he had heard lions roaring, and smelled their strong odor seeping as far away as his study door. But, being busy, he had paid it no attention.

George Hadley stood on the African grassland alone. The lions looked up from their feeding, watching him. The only flaw to the illusion was the open door through which he could see his wife, far down the dark hall, like a framed picture, eating her dinner abstractedly.

"Go away," he said to the lions.

They did not go.

He knew the principle of the room exactly. You sent out your thoughts. Whatever you thought would appear. "Let's have Aladdin and his lamp," he snapped. The veldtland remained; the lions remained.

"Come on, room! I demand Aladdin!" he said.

Nothing happened. The lions mumbled in their baked pelts.

"Aladdin!"

He went back to dinner. "The fool room's out of order," he said. "It won't respond."

"Or — "

"Or what?"

"Or it can't respond," said Lydia, "because the children have thought about Africa and lions and killing so many days that the room's in a rut."

"Could be."

"Or Peter's set it to remain that way."

"Set it?"

"He may have got into the machinery and fixed something."

"Peter doesn't know machinery."

"He's a wise one for ten. That I.Q. of his — "

"Nevertheless — "

"Hello, Mom. Hello, Dad."

The Hadleys turned. Wendy and Peter were coming in the front door, cheeks like peppermint candy, eyes like bright blue agate marbles, a smell of ozone on their jumpers from their trip in the helicopter.

"You're just in time for supper," said both parents.

"We're full of strawberry ice cream and hot dogs," said the children, holding hands. "But we'll sit and watch."

"Yes, come tell us about the nursery," said George Hadley.

The brother and sister blinked at him and then at each other. "Nursery?"

"All about Africa and everything," said the father with false joviality.

"I don't understand," said Peter.

"Your mother and I were just traveling through Africa with rod and reel; Tom Swift and his Electric Lion," said George Hadley.

"There's no Africa in the nursery," said Peter simply.

"Oh, come now, Peter. We know better."

"I don't remember any Africa," said Peter to Wendy. "Do you?"

"No."

"Run see and come tell."

She obeyed.



Jason Ratliff

↑ What is this illustration, "Follow the Light" by Jason Ratliff, suggesting about the power of a child's imagination? To what extent does Bradbury make a similar or different point in this story?

"Wendy, come back here!" said George Hadley, but she was gone. The house lights followed her like a flock of fireflies. Too late, he realized he had forgotten to lock the nursery door after his last inspection.

"Wendy'll look and come tell us," said Peter.

"She doesn't have to tell me. I've seen it."

100 "I'm sure you're mistaken, Father."

110

"I'm not, Peter. Come along now."

But Wendy was back. "It's not Africa," she said breathlessly.

"We'll see about this," said George Hadley, and they all walked down the hall together and opened the nursery door.

There was a green, lovely forest, a lovely river, a purple mountain, high voices singing, and Rima, lovely and mysterious, lurking in the trees with colorful flights of butterflies, like animated bouquets, lingering in her long hair. The African veldtland was gone. The lions were gone. Only Rima was here now, singing a song so beautiful that it brought tears to your eyes.

George Hadley looked in at the changed scene. "Go to bed," he said to the children.

They opened their mouths.

"You heard me," he said.

They went off to the air closet, where a wind sucked them like brown leaves up the flue to their slumber rooms.

George Hadley walked through the singing glade and picked up something that lay in the corner near where the lions had been. He walked slowly back to his wife.

"What is that?" she asked.

120

"An old wallet of mine," he said.

He showed it to her. The smell of hot grass was on it and the smell of a lion. There were drops of saliva on it, it had been chewed, and there were blood smears on both sides.

He closed the nursery door and locked it, tight.

In the middle of the night he was still awake and he knew his wife was awake. "Do you think Wendy changed it?" she said at last, in the dark room.

"Of course."

125

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"Made it from a veldt into a forest and put Rima there instead of lions?"

"Yes."

"Why?"

"I don't know. But it's staying locked until I find out."

"How did your wallet get there?"

130

"I don't know anything," he said, "except that I'm beginning to be sorry we bought that room for the children. If children are neurotic at all, a room like that —"

"It's supposed to help them work off their neuroses in a healthful way."

"I'm starting to wonder." He stared at the ceiling.

"We've given the children everything they ever wanted. Is this our reward — secrecy, disobedience?"

"Who was it said, 'Children are carpets, they should be stepped on occasionally'? We've never lifted a hand. They're insufferable — let's admit it. They come and go when they like; they treat us as if we were offspring. They're spoiled and we're spoiled."

135

"They've been acting funny ever since you forbade them to take the rocket to New York a few months ago."

"They're not old enough to do that alone, I explained."

"Nevertheless, I've noticed they've been decidedly cool toward us since."

"I think I'll have David McClean come tomorrow morning to have a look at Africa."

"But it's not Africa now, it's Green Mansions country and Rima."

140

"I have a feeling it'll be Africa again before then."

A moment later they heard the screams.

Two screams. Two people screaming from downstairs. And then a roar of lions.

"Wendy and Peter aren't in their rooms," said his wife.

He lay in his bed with his beating heart. "No," he said. "They've broken into the nursery."

145

"Those screams — they sound familiar."

"Do they?"

"Yes, awfully."

And although their beds tried very hard, the two adults couldn't be rocked to sleep for another hour. A smell of cats was in the night air.

"Father?" said Peter.

150

"Yes."

Peter looked at his shoes. He never looked at his father any more, nor at his mother. "You aren't going to lock up the nursery for good, are you?"

"That all depends."

"On what?" snapped Peter.

"On you and your sister. If you intersperse this Africa with a little variety — oh, Sweden perhaps, or Denmark or China —"

"I thought we were free to play as we wished."

"You are, within reasonable bounds."

"What's wrong with Africa, Father?"

"Oh, so now you admit you have been conjuring up Africa, do you?"

"I wouldn't want the nursery locked up," said Peter coldly. "Ever."

160

"Matter of fact, we're thinking of turning the whole house off for about a month. Live sort of a carefree one-for-all existence."

"That sounds dreadful! Would I have to tie my own shoes instead of letting the shoe tier do it? And brush my own teeth and comb my hair and give myself a bath?"

"It would be fun for a change, don't you think?"

"No, it would be horrid. I didn't like it when you took out the picture painter last month."

"That's because I wanted you to learn to paint all by yourself, son."

165

"I don't want to do anything but look and listen and smell; what else is there to do?"

"All right, go play in Africa."

"Will you shut off the house sometime soon?"

"We're considering it."

"I don't think you'd better consider it any more, Father."

170

"I won't have any threats from my son!"

"Very well." And Peter strolled off to the nursery.

seeing connections

Read the following student reactions about an experiment called the Tech Timeout Academic Challenge. The challenge is to go three full days with no digital devices, such as computers, tablets, or phones. Afterward, students talked about their experience:

"I feel very addicted to social media and stuff, or dependent is a better way to describe it," [Eli] Horowitz said. "It's like habitual dependency, and I feel like I could do without that. It was really relieving for me to not have my technology and my phone on me."

"On the bus home it was getting late," said [Ryley] Aceret. "And just that

temptation on the bus, [there was] no one to talk to, and so I had to pull out my phone, turn it on for the first time, rip open the seal," he said.

"I felt normal again," Aceret said of regaining his phone. "When I wasn't with my phone I felt different, like I was naked all the time." His phone makes him feel secure. He was also imagining that his friends had already caved and were back on social media without him — he had the fear of missing out.

How regularly do you interact with technology? Would you voluntarily go three days without it? Why or why not? If you have before, what were the results? If you have not, what would you expect the results to be?

"Am I on time?" said David McClean.

"Breakfast?" asked George Hadley.

"Thanks, had some. What's the trouble?"

"David, you're a psychologist."

"I should hope so."

"Well, then, have a look at our nursery. You saw it a year ago when you dropped by; did you notice anything peculiar about it then?"

"Can't say I did; the usual violences, a tendency toward a slight paranoia here or there, usual in children because they feel persecuted by parents constantly, but, oh, really nothing."

They walked down the ball. "I locked the nursery up," explained the father, "and the children broke back into it during the night. I let them stay so they could form the patterns for you to see."

There was a terrible screaming from the nursery.

"There it is," said George Hadley. "See what you make of it."

They walked in on the children without rapping. The screams had faded. The lions were feeding.

"Run outside a moment, children," said

George Hadley. "No, don't change the mental combination. Leave the walls as they are. Get!"

With the children gone, the two men stood studying the lions clustered at a distance, eating with great relish whatever it was they had caught.

"I wish I knew what it was," said George Hadley. "Sometimes I can almost see. Do you think if I brought high-powered binoculars here and —"

David McClean laughed dryly. "Hardly." He turned to study all four walls. "How long has this been going on?"

"A little over a month."

"It certainly doesn't feel good."

"I want facts, not feelings."

"My dear George, a psychologist never saw a fact in his life. He only hears about feelings; vague things. This doesn't feel good, I tell you.

Trust my hunches and my instincts. I have a nose for something bad. This is very bad. My advice to you is to have the whole damn room torn down and your children brought to me every day during the next year for treatment."

"Is it that bad?"

"I'm afraid so. One of the original uses of these nurseries was so that we could study the patterns left on the walls by the child's mind, study at our leisure, and help the child. In this case, however, the room has become a channel toward destructive thoughts, instead of a release away from them."

"Didn't you sense this before?"

"I sensed only that you had spoiled your children more than most. And now you're letting them down in some way. What way?"

"I wouldn't let them go to New York."

"What else?"

"I've taken a few machines from the house and threatened them, a month ago, with closing up the nursery unless they did their homework. I did close it for a few days to show I meant business."

"Ah, ha!"

"Does that mean anything?"

"Everything. Where before they had a Santa Claus now they have a Scrooge. Children prefer Santas. You've let this room and this house replace you and your wife in your children's affections. This room is their mother and father, far more important in their lives than their real parents. And now you come along and want to shut it off. No wonder there's hatred here. You can feel it coming out of the sky. Feel that sun. George, you'll have to change your life. Like too many others, you've built it around creature comforts. Why, you'd starve tomorrow if something went wrong in your kitchen. You wouldn't know how to tap an egg. Nevertheless, turn everything off. Start new. It'll take time. But we'll make good children out of bad in a year, wait and see."

"But won't the shock be too much for the children, shutting the room up abruptly, for good?"

"I don't want them going any deeper into this, that's all."

The lions were finished with their red feast.

The lions were standing on the edge of the clearing watching the two men.

"Now I'm feeling persecuted," said McClean.

"Let's get out of here. I never have cared for these damned rooms. Make me nervous."

"The lions look real, don't they?" said George Hadley. I don't suppose there's any way — "

"What?"

"— that they could become real?"

"Not that I know."

"Some flaw in the machinery, a tampering or something?"

"No."

They went to the door.

"I don't imagine the room will like being turned off," said the father.

"Nothing ever likes to die — even a room."

"I wonder if it hates me for wanting to switch it off?"

"Paranoia is thick around here today," said David McClean. "You can follow it like a spoon. Hello." He bent and picked up a bloody scarf. "This yours?"

"No." George Hadley's face was rigid. "It belongs to Lydia."

They went to the fuse box together and threw the switch that killed the nursery.

The two children were in hysterics. They screamed and pranced and threw things. They yelled and sobbed and swore and jumped at the furniture.

"You can't do that to the nursery, you can't!"

"Now, children."

The children flung themselves onto a couch, weeping.

"George," said Lydia Hadley, "turn on the nursery, just for a few moments. You can't be so abrupt."

"No."

"You can't be so cruel . . ."

"Lydia, it's off, and it stays off. And the whole damn house dies as of here and now. The more I see of the mess we've put ourselves in, the more it sickens me. We've been contemplating our mechanical, electronic navels for too long. My God, how we need a breath of honest air!"

And he marched about the house turning off the voice clocks, the stoves, the heaters, the shoe shiners, the shoe lacers, the body scrubbers and swabbers and massagers, and every other machine he could put his hand to.

The house was full of dead bodies, it seemed. It felt like a mechanical cemetery. So silent. None of the humming hidden energy of machines waiting to function at the tap of a button.

"Don't let them do it!" wailed Peter at the ceiling, as if he was talking to the house, the nursery. "Don't let Father kill everything." He turned to his father. "Oh, I hate you!"

"Insults won't get you anywhere."

"I wish you were dead!"

"We were, for a long while. Now we're going to really start living. Instead of being handled and massaged, we're going to *live*."

Wendy was still crying and Peter joined her again. "Just a moment, just one moment, just another moment of nursery," they wailed.

"Oh, George," said the wife, "it can't hurt."

"All right — all right, if they'll only just shut up. One minute, mind you, and then off forever."

"Daddy, Daddy, Daddy!" sang the children, smiling with wet faces.

"And then we're going on a vacation. David McClean is coming back in half an hour to help us move out and get to the airport. I'm going to dress. You turn the nursery on for a minute, Lydia, just a minute, mind you."

And the three of them went babbling off while he let himself be vacuumed upstairs through the air flue and set about dressing himself. A minute later Lydia appeared.

"I'll be glad when we get away," she sighed.

"Did you leave them in the nursery?"

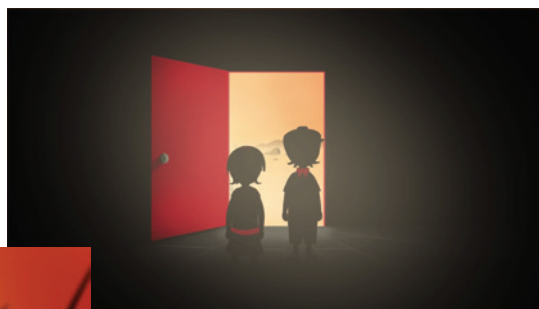
"I wanted to dress too. Oh, that horrid Africa. What can they see in it?"

"Well, in five minutes we'll be on our way to Iowa. Lord, how did we ever get in this house? What prompted us to buy a nightmare?"

"Pride, money, foolishness."

seeing connections

The Canadian electronic producer and performer deadmau5 wrote a song based on "The Veldt." Look at these screenshots from the video for the song.



How do the images from the video reflect the themes expressed in the story? What is different?

"I think we'd better get downstairs before those kids get engrossed with those damned beasts again."

Just then they heard the children calling, "Daddy, Mommy, come quick — quick!"

They went downstairs in the air flue and ran down the hall. The children were nowhere in sight. "Wendy? Peter!"

They ran into the nursery. The veldtland was empty save for the lions waiting, looking at them. "Peter, Wendy?"

The door slammed.

"Wendy, Peter!"

George Hadley and his wife whirled and ran back to the door.

"Open the door!" cried George Hadley, trying the knob. "Why, they've locked it from the outside! Peter!" He beat at the door. "Open up!"

He heard Peter's voice outside, against the door.

"Don't let them switch off the nursery and the house," he was saying.

Mr. and Mrs. George Hadley beat at the door. "Now, don't be ridiculous, children. It's time to go. Mr. McClean'll be here in a minute and ..."

And then they heard the sounds.

The lions on three sides of them, in the yellow veldt grass, padding through the dry straw, rumbling and roaring in their throats.

The lions.

Mr. Hadley looked at his wife and they turned and looked back at the beasts edging slowly forward crouching, tails stiff.

Mr. and Mrs. Hadley screamed.

And suddenly they realized why those other screams had sounded familiar.

"Well, here I am," said David McClean in the nursery doorway, "Oh, hello." He stared at the two children seated in the center of the open glade eating a little picnic lunch. Beyond them was the water hole and the yellow veldtland; above was the hot sun. He began to perspire. "Where are your father and mother?"

The children looked up and smiled. "Oh, they'll be here directly."

"Good, we must get going." At a distance Mr. McClean saw the lions fighting and clawing and then quieting down to feed in silence under the shady trees.

He squinted at the lions with his hand up to his eyes.

Now the lions were done feeding. They moved to the water hole to drink.

A shadow flickered over Mr. McClean's hot face. Many shadows flickered. The vultures were dropping down the blazing sky.

"A cup of tea?" asked Wendy in the silence.

UNDERSTANDING AND INTERPRETING

1. Summarize the intended benefits of the technology of the Happylife Home in which the family lives. What dangers have the parents begun to recognize at the beginning of the story?
2. How does Lydia view the technology differently from her husband George at the beginning of the story? How does this conflict move the plot?
3. Describe—or draw a picture of—the African veldt as presented in the story.
4. Describe George and Lydia as parents. How does Bradbury use characterization to illustrate their strengths and weaknesses?
5. What exactly happened at the end of the story? What is going to happen next? What evidence from the text leads to your inference?
6. What is the purpose of the inclusion of David McClean, the psychologist? What role does he play in the story and how is the reader supposed to view him?

- Based on this story, what are some ideas about technology that Bradbury might be putting forward? Consider how we distinguish between reality and virtual reality, or how deeply we integrate technology into our lives. What does he include in this story to communicate these ideas?

ANALYZING LANGUAGE, STYLE, AND STRUCTURE

- Vocabulary in Context.** The virtual world where the children spend their time is called the *veldt*. Bradbury could have used a lot of words to describe the plains of Africa (*savannah*, for instance). What is the effect of this particular word on the reader, as well as on the parents in the story?
- Vocabulary in Context.** Bradbury invents a word for his story, *odorophonics* (par. 38). Using context clues and knowledge of word roots, write a definition for the word. What leads you to this definition?
- Vocabulary in Context.** What does the word *gymnastic* mean in the context of the sentence in paragraph 73? How is this use different from other uses of the word?
- The story begins with the parents arguing about the effects of the technology in the nursery on their children. What is the effect of beginning with this scene? Why not begin with the children interacting with the nursery?
- Reread the section near the end when the parents return to the nursery for the last time and look closely at the syntax that Bradbury uses, especially the varying sentence length. What effect is achieved through some of the shorter sentences?
- An “allusion” in a text is a reference to a person, place, or idea that the author expects the reader to recognize. Wendy and Peter, the children in this story, are also two of the main characters in the story of *Peter Pan*. How does this allusion to *Peter Pan* help Bradbury to communicate an idea about childhood and growing up?
- We never really see the children using the African scene in the nursery. Why do you think the author chose to keep this from his readers?
- Look back through the story to find the points at which you felt that things were probably going to end badly. What is the effect of the foreshadowing that the author included?
- The ending, especially what happened to the parents, is implied, rather than explicitly stated. Why do you think Bradbury chose an ending like this? What would have been the effect on the reader of a more clearly stated ending?

TOPICS FOR COMPOSING

- Analysis.** A central conflict in this story is between the adults, who don’t understand the technology they have installed, and the children, who seem to understand the hidden power of it and use it to their advantage. Write a response in which you explain what Bradbury might be suggesting about children and parents, especially considering how the story ends.
- Argument.** The children are clearly addicted to the technology in the nursery, and the parents respond by cutting off all technology. In real life, do you think there is a middle ground in the use of technology that Bradbury has not presented? Are the dangers that Bradbury warns of in “The Veldt” real?
- Research.** The nursery contains a fully immersive virtual reality program. How close are we currently to having that level of realism in the visual, sound, and smells as presented in the story? What is still in the realm of “science fiction”?
- Exposition.** Interview someone significantly older or younger than you about their use of technology. What did they use as children that seems different from your use? What is similar? How are your current uses similar to or different from your interview subject’s use? Why do you think this is?
- Personal.** If the virtual reality technology of “The Veldt” really existed, what would you like to do with it? Where would you visit? Why?

Reindeer Games

SHERMAN ALEXIE

Sherman Alexie (b. 1966) is an American author, screenwriter, filmmaker, and stand-up comedian who grew up on the Spokane/Coeur d'Alene Indian Reservation in Washington State. This piece is one chapter from his novel *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian*, which was published in 2007.



Chris Felver/Getty Images

Key Context The novel's protagonist, Arnold Spirit, called "Junior," transferred from his Wellpinit High School, on the Indian reservation where he lives, to a primarily white public school 20 miles from the reservation in Reardan, Washington. Prior to the events in this excerpt, Arnold has experienced racism from the white students and faculty at his new school and has endured resentment from his friends he left at the reservation, including from his best friend, Rowdy.

I almost didn't try out for the Reardan basketball team. I just figured I wasn't going to be good enough to make even the C squad. And I didn't want to get cut from the team. I didn't think I could live through that humiliation.

But my dad changed my mind.

"Do you know about the first time I met your mother?" he asked.

"You're both from the rez," I said. "So it was on the rez. Big duh."

"But I only moved to this rez when I was five years old."

"So your mother is eight years older than me."

"And there's a partridge in the pear tree. Get to the point, Dad."

"Your mother was thirteen and I was five when we first met. And guess how we first met?"

"How?"

"She helped me get a drink from a water fountain."

"Well, that just seems sort of gross," I said.

"I was tiny," Dad said. "And she boosted me up so I could get a drink. And imagine, all these years later and we're married and have two kids."

"What does this have to do with basketball?"

"You have to dream big to get big."

"That's pretty dang optimistic for you, Dad."

"Well, you know, your mother helped me get a drink from the water fountain last night, if you know what I mean."

And all I could say to my father was, "Ewwwwwwwwwwww."

That's one more thing people don't know about Indians: we love to talk dirty.

Anyway, I signed up for basketball.

On the first day of practice, I stepped onto the court and felt short, skinny, and slow.

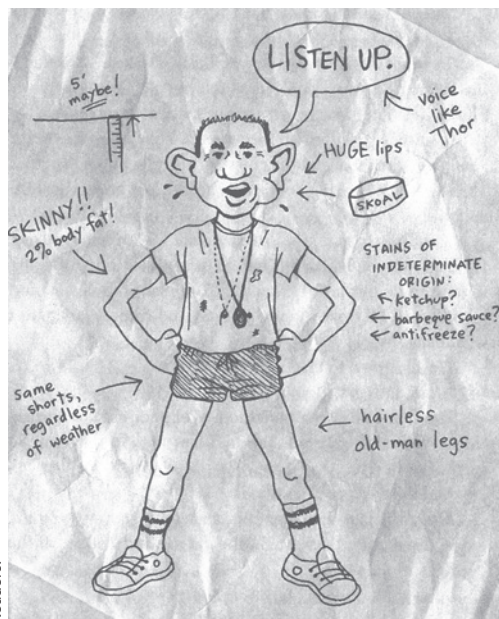
All of the white boys were good. Some were great.

I mean, there were some guys who were 6 foot 6 and 6 foot 7.

Roger the Giant was strong and fast and could dunk.

I tried to stay out of way. I figured I'd die if he ran me over. But he just smiled all the time, played hard, and slapped me hard on the back.

We all shot basketballs for a while. And then Coach stepped onto the court.



Forty kids IMMEDIATELY stopped bouncing and shooting and talking. We were silent; SNAP, just like that.

"I want to thank you all for coming out today," Coach said.

"There are forty of you. But we only have room for twelve on the varsity and twelve on the junior varsity."

I knew I wouldn't make those teams. I was C squad material, for sure.

"In other years, we've also had a twelve-man C squad," Coach said. "But we don't have the budget for it this year. That means I'm going to have to cut sixteen players today."

Twenty boys puffed up their chests. They knew they were good enough to make either the varsity or the junior varsity.

The other twenty shook their heads. We knew we were cuttable.

"I really hate to do this," Coach said. "If it were up to me, I'd keep everybody. But it's not up to me. So we're just going to have to do our best here, okay? You play with dignity and respect, and I'll treat you with dignity and respect, no matter what happens, okay?"

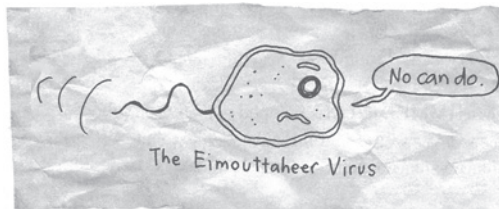
We all agreed to that.

"Okay, let's get started," Coach said.

The first drill was a marathon. Well, not exactly a marathon. We had to run one hundred laps around the gym. So forty of us ran.

And thirty-six of us finished.

After fifty laps, one guy quit, and since quitting is contagious, three other boys caught the disease and walked off the court, too.



I didn't understand. Why would you try out for a basketball team if you didn't want to run?

I didn't mind. After all, that meant only twelve more guys had to be cut. I only had to be better than twelve other guys.

Well, we were good and tired after that run.

And then Coach immediately had us playing full-court one-on-one.

That's right.

FULL-COURT ONE-ON-ONE.

That was torture.

Coach didn't break it down by position. So quick guards had to guard power forwards, and vice versa. Seniors had to guard freshmen, and vice versa. All-stars had to guard losers like me, and vice versa.

Coach threw me the ball and said, "Go."

So I turned and dribbled straight down the court.

A mistake.

Roger easily poked the ball away and raced 50 down toward his basket.

Ashamed, I was frozen.

"What are you waiting for?" Coach asked me. "Play some D."

Awake, I ran after Roger, but he clunked it before I was even close.

"Go again," Coach said.

This time, Roger tried to dribble down the 55 court. And I played defense. I crouched clown low, spread my arms and legs high and wide, and gritted my teeth.

And then Roger ran me over. Just sent me sprawling.

He raced down and clunked it again while I lay still on the floor.

Coach walked over and looked down at me.

"What's your name, kid?" he asked.

"Arnold," I said.

"You're from the reservation?" 60

"Yes."

"Did you play basketball up there?"

"Yes. For the eighth-grade team."

Coach studied my face.

"I remember you," he said. "You were a good shooter."

"Yeah," I said.

Coach studied my face some more, as if he were searching for something.

"Roger is a big kid," he said.

"He's huge," I said.

"You want to take him on again? Or do you need a break?"

Ninety percent of me wanted to take the break. But I knew if I took that break I would never make the team.

"I'll take him on again," I said.

Coach smiled.

"All right, Roger," he said. "Line up again." 75

I stood up again. Coach threw me the ball. And Roger came for me. He screamed and laughed like a crazy man. He was having a great time. And he was trying to intimidate me.

He did intimidate me.

I dribbled with my right hand toward Roger, knowing that he was going to try to steal the ball.

If he stayed in front of me and reached for the ball with his left hand, then there was no way I could get past him. He was too big and strong, too immovable. But he reached for the ball with his right hand, and that put him a little off balance, so I spun-dribbled around him, did a 360, and raced down the court. He was right behind me. I thought I could outrun him, but he caught up to me and just blasted me. Just me skidding across the floor again. The ball went bouncing into the stands.

I should have stayed down. 80

But I didn't.

Instead, I jumped up, ran into the stands, grabbed the loose ball, and raced toward Roger standing beneath the basket.

I didn't even dribble.

I just ran like a fullback.

Roger crouched, ready to tackle me like he 85 was a middle linebacker.

He screamed; I screamed.

And then I stopped short, about fifteen feet from the hoop, and made a pretty little jump shot. Everybody in the gym yelled and clapped and stomped their feet.

Roger was mad at first, but then he smiled, grabbed the ball, and dribbled toward his hoop.

He spun left, right, but I stayed with him.

He bumped me, pushed me, and elbowed 90 me, but I stayed with him. He went up for a layup and I fouled him. But I'd learned there are NO FOULS CALLED IN FULLCOURT ONE-ON-ONE, so I grabbed the loose ball and raced for my end again.

But Coach blew the whistle.

"All right, all right, Arnold, Roger," Coach said.
 "That's good, that's good. Next two, next two."

I took my place at the back of the line and
 Roger stood next to me.

"Good job," he said and offered his fist.

I bumped his fist with mine. I was a warrior!

95



And that's when I knew I was going to make
 the team.

Heck, I ended up on the varsity. As a
 freshman. Coach said I was the best shooter
 who'd ever played for him. And I was going to be
 his secret weapon. I was going to be his Weapon
 of Mass Destruction.

Coach sure loved those military metaphors.

Two weeks later, we traveled up the road for
 our first game of the season. And our first game
 was against Wellpinit High School.

Yep.

It was like something out of Shakespeare.

The morning of the game, I'd woken up
 in my rez house, so my dad could drive me
 the twenty-two miles to Reardan, so I could
 get on the team bus for the ride back to the
 reservation.

Crazy.

Do I have to tell you that I was absolutely sick
 with fear? I vomited four times that day.

When our bus pulled into the high school
 parking lot, we were greeted by some rabid

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elementary school kids. Some of those little
 dudes and dudettes were my cousins.

They pelted our bus with snowballs.
 And some of those snowballs were filled
 with rocks.

As we got off the bus and walked toward the
 gym, I could hear the crowd going crazy inside.

They were chanting something.

I couldn't make it out.

And then I could.

110

The rez basketball fans were chanting,
 "Ar-nold sucks! Ar-nold sucks! Ar-nold sucks!"

They weren't calling me by my rez name, Junior.
 Nope, they were calling me by my Reardan name.

I stopped.

Coach looked back at me.

"Are you okay?" he asked.

115

"No," I said.

"You don't have to play this one," he said.

"Yes, I do," I said.

Still, I probably would have turned around
 if I hadn't seen my mom and dad and grandma
 waiting at the front door.

I know they'd been pitched just as much crap as
 I was. And there they were, ready to catch more crap
 for me. Ready to walk through the crap with me.

Two tribal cops were also there.

I guess they were for security. For whose
 security, I don't know. But they walked with our
 team, too.

So we walked through the front and into the
 loud gym.

Which immediately went silent.

Absolutely quiet.

125

My fellow tribal members saw me and they all
 stopped cheering, talking, and moving.

I think they stopped breathing.

And, then, as one, they all turned their backs
 on me.

It was a fricking awesome display of
 contempt.

I was impressed. So were my teammates.
 Especially Roger.

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He just looked at me and whistled.

I was mad.

If these dang Indians had been this organized when I went to school here, maybe I would have had more reasons to stay.

That thought made me laugh.

So I laughed.

And my laughter was the only sound in the gym.

And then I noticed that the only Indian who hadn't turned his back on me was Rowdy. He was standing, on the other end of the court. He passed a basketball around his back, around his back, around his back, like a clock. And he glared at me.

He wanted to play.

He didn't want to turn his back on me.

He wanted to kill me, face-to-face.

That made me laugh some more.

And then Coach started laughing with me.

And so did my teammates.

And we kept laughing as we walked into the locker room to get ready for the game.

Once inside the locker room, I almost passed out. I slumped against a locker. I felt dizzy and weak. And then I cried, and felt ashamed of my tears.

But Coach knew exactly what to say.

"It's okay," Coach said to me, but he was talking to the whole team. "If you care about something enough, it's going to make you cry. But you have to use it. Use your tears. Use your pain. Use your fear. Get mad, Arnold, get mad."

And so I got mad.

And I was still mad and crying when we ran out for warmups.

And I was still mad when the game started. I was on the bench. I didn't think I was going to play much. I was only a freshman.

But halfway through the first quarter, with the score tied at 10, Coach sent me in.

And as I ran onto the court, somebody in the crowd threw a quarter at me. AND HIT ME IN THE FRICKING FOREHEAD!

They drew blood.

I was bleeding. So I couldn't play.

Bleeding and angry, I glared at the crowd.

They taunted me as I walked into the locker room.

I bled alone, until Eugene, my dad's best friend, walked in. He had just become an EMT for the tribal clinic.

"Let me look at that," he said, and poked at my wound.

"You still got your motorcycle?" I asked.

"Nah, I wrecked that thing," he said, and dabbed antiseptic on my cut. "How does this feel?"

"It hurts."

"Ah, it's nothing," he said. "Maybe three stitches. I'll drive you to Spokane to get it fixed up."

"Do you hate me, too?" I asked Eugene.

"No, man, you're cool," he said.

"Good," I said.

"It's too bad you didn't get to play," Eugene said. "Your dad says you're getting pretty good."

"Not as good as you," I said.

Eugene was a legend. People say he could have played in college, but people also say Eugene couldn't read.

You can't read, you can't ball.

"You'll get them next time," Eugene said.

"You stitch me up," I said.

"What?"

"You stitch me up. I want to play tonight."

"I can't do that, man. It's your face. I might leave a scar or something."

"Then I'll look tougher," I said. "Come on, man."

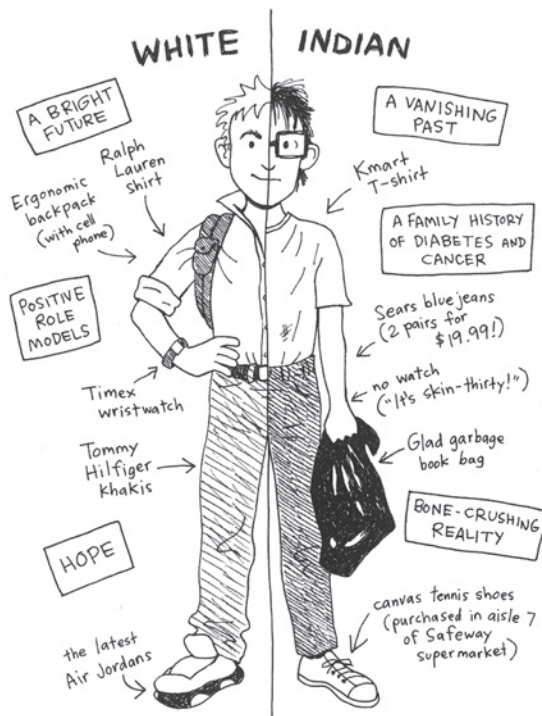
So Eugene did it. He gave me three stitches in my forehead and it hurt like crazy, but I was ready to play the second half.

We were down by five points.

Rowdy had been an absolute terror, scoring twenty points, grabbing ten rebounds, and stealing the ball seven times.

seeing connections

This is an image that appears in an earlier part of the novel.



From The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian by Sherman Alexie. Copyright © 2007 by Sherman Alexie. Used by permission of Little Brown Books for Young Readers.

↑ What does this image reveal about the inner and outer conflicts that Arnold faces? Create an image of your own that shows the inner and outer conflicts you face.

"That kid is good," Coach said.

"He's my best friend," I said. "Well, he used to be my best friend."

"What is he now?"

"I don't know."

We scored the first five points of the third quarter, and then Coach sent me into the game.

I immediately stole a pass and drove for a layup.

Rowdy was right behind me.

I jumped into the air, heard the curses of two hundred Spokanes, and then saw only a bright light as Rowdy smashed his elbow into my head and knocked me unconscious.

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Okay, I don't remember anything else from that night. So everything I tell you now is secondhand information.

After Rowdy knocked me out, both of our teams got into a series of shoving matches and push-fights.

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The tribal cops had to pull twenty or thirty adult Spokanes off the court before any of them assaulted a teenage white kid.

Rowdy was given a technical foul.

So we shot two free throws for that.

I didn't shoot them, of course, because I was already in Eugene's ambulance, with my mother and father, on the way to Spokane.

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After we shot the technical free throws, the two referees huddled. They were two white dudes from Spokane who were absolutely terrified of the wild Indians in the crowd and were willing to do ANYTHING to make them happy. So they called technical fouls on four of our players for leaving the bench and on Coach for unsportsmanlike conduct.

Yep, five technicals. Ten free throws.

After Rowdy hit the first six free throws, Coach cursed and screamed, and was thrown out of the game.

Wellpinit ended up winning by thirty points.

I ended up with a minor concussion.

Yep, three stitches and a bruised brain.

My mother was just beside herself. She thought I'd been murdered.

"I'm okay," I said. "Just a little dizzy."

"But your hydrocephalus," she said. "Your brain is already damaged enough."

"Gee, thanks, Mom," I said.

Of course, I was worried that I'd further damaged my already damaged brain; the doctors said I was fine.

Mostly fine.

Later that night, Coach talked his way past the nurses and into my room. My mother and father and grandma were asleep in their chairs, but I was awake.

"Hey, kid," Coach said, keeping his voice low so he wouldn't wake my family.

"Hey, Coach," I said.

"Sorry about that game," he said.

"It's not your fault."

"I shouldn't have played you. I should have canceled the whole game. It's my fault."

"I wanted to play. I wanted to win."

"It's just a game," he said. "It's not worth all this."

But he was lying. He was just saying what he thought he was supposed to say. Of course, it was not just a game. Every game is important. Every game is serious.

"Coach," I said. "I would walk out of this hospital and walk all the way back to Wellpinit to play them right now if I could."

Coach smiled.

"Vince Lombardi used to say something I like," he said.

"It's not whether you win or lose," I said. "It's how you play the game."

"No, but I like that one," Coach said. "But Lombardi didn't mean it. Of course, it's better to win."

We laughed.

"No, I like this other one more," Coach said.

"The quality of a man's life is in direct proportion to his commitment to excellence, regardless of his chosen field of endeavor."

"That's a good one."

"It's perfect for you. I've never met anybody as committed as you."

"Thanks, Coach."

"You're welcome. Okay, kid, you take care of your head. I'm going to get out of here so you can sleep."

"Oh, I'm not supposed to sleep. They want to keep me awake to monitor my head. Make sure I don't have some hidden damage or something."



↑ During the 2010 NCAA Men's Basketball Tournament, West Virginia University star Da'Sean Butler severely injured his knee. His coach Bob Huggins immediately went on the court to comfort him. This photograph was widely reprinted and discussed afterward.

What does this photo seem to capture about the relationship between the player and coach? How does this relationship compare to the original drawing of Arnold's coach on page 177, and what is it like at the end of the story?

Raleigh News & Observer/Getty Images

"Oh, okay," Coach said. "Well, how about I stay and keep you company, then?"

"Wow, that would be great."

So Coach and I sat awake all night.

We told each other many stories.

But I never repeat those stories.

That night belongs to just me and my coach.

UNDERSTANDING AND INTERPRETING

1. What does the dialogue between Arnold and his father at the beginning of the chapter reveal about their relationship?
2. Trace Arnold's changing character by writing a word or phrase directly from the text that best describes him at the following points. Then, write an interpretative statement about how and why Arnold has changed over the course of the piece.
 - a. At the start of the tryouts
 - b. In the middle of the tryouts during the one-on-one with Roger
 - c. Before the game at the reservation has started
 - d. At the hospital
3. What does the dialogue between Arnold and his coach at the end of the piece reveal about their relationship?
4. Before the game starts, Arnold says that the Indians "weren't calling me by my rez name, Junior. Nope, they were calling me by my Reardan name" (par. 112). What does this reveal about the internal and external conflicts Arnold is facing in this story?
5. At the end, Arnold and Coach trade statements about the value of winning, losing, and playing. How does each character really feel about winning?
6. In this story, Arnold crosses cultures by going from the reservation to Reardan. What themes does Alexie explore through Arnold's transition from one setting to another?

ANALYZING LANGUAGE, STYLE, AND STRUCTURE

1. Look back through the images that are included in the text. Though they were drawn

by illustrator Ellen Forney, the idea within the novel is that these are drawings that Arnold makes in his diary. How do the illustrations help to support the language included in the print text, and in what ways do they go beyond?

2. There are times that Alexie uses all capital letters. What is the function of this choice, and what patterns do you recognize for their use?
3. Alexie is intentionally using a conversational, casual tone in his story to mimic what might be included in a diary. Locate an example from the text that reflects this tone and explain how his word choice and/or syntax helps to create that tone.
4. Carefully reread paragraphs 98 to 148 when Arnold and his team arrive at the Wellpinit gym for the first time. What feelings does Alexie create through his use of syntax, specifically sentence length?

TOPICS FOR COMPOSING

1. **Analysis.** Write a response in which you explain a point that Alexie might be suggesting about the value of winning and losing. Be sure to use specific evidence from the text to support your interpretation of this theme.
2. **Multimodal.** Create a drawing of a character or scene from this chapter that takes a similar tone as the illustrations in the story. Be sure to include text as well. Write an explanation of what specific words or phrases from the story influenced you to draw it the way you did.
3. **Argument.** Coach says in paragraph 213, "It's just a game. It's not worth all this." To you, is what Arnold went through in this chapter "worth it"? Why or why not?
4. **Personal.** Compare an experience that you had that is similar to the basketball tryout that Arnold experienced. How were your feelings similar to and different from his?

Mirror Image

LENA COAKLEY

Lena (pronounced LAY-na) Coakley (b. 1967) is a young-adult novelist who lives in Toronto, Canada, and is the author of the fantasy novels *Witchlanders* (2011) and *Worlds of Ink and Shadow: A Novel of the Brontës* (2016). “Mirror Image” is Coakley’s first published story from 2001. Coakley calls the story “a meditation on identity and body image from the point of view of a teen girl.”



Lena Coakley

If only there were no mirrors, Alice sometimes thought, although she carried one in her backpack wherever she went. It was a silver-plated mirror her father had given her with the initials ACS on the back. Just you, Alice, she would say to herself, looking the way you’ve always looked. Then she’d pull out the mirror. The surprise and disbelief at seeing the reflection was a joke she played on herself over and over.

It was disquieting, however, to come upon a mirror without warning. She would say “excuse me” to her own reflection in shop windows. Mirrors in unexpected places would make her start and lose her nerve. She avoided the girls’ bathroom altogether.

Alice took to wearing sunglasses all the time, to remind herself, to keep something constantly in front of her eyes that would remind her that she looked different. Her teachers let her wear them. Maybe the word had come down from the top that she wasn’t to be hassled for a while, but Alice thought it was more than that. She thought they were all a little afraid of her.

Of course her mind learned to ignore the glasses. The human mind is incredibly adaptable. Her mother was always telling her that.

“Do you think I move differently?” she asked her twin, Jenny, once identical. “Look how my feet kind of roll when I walk. And my hips, my hips feel totally different.” Alice walked across the bedroom like a fashion model, wearing nothing but black bikini underwear. “Actually, as bodies go, this one is a lot better. I mean, check it out,” Alice grabbed a chunk of her thigh, “no cellulite.”

Jenny watched from inside her own body. “You looked okay before.”

“Sorry, I didn’t mean . . . You’re pretty. I can see that now. But I never used to think that I was. You know, my old body used to weigh much less than this body weighs but I still wouldn’t have been able to walk around naked in it. No one has ever told me that this body is ugly. For all I know it’s never had zits. I haven’t had one yet. I feel like I could do anything in this body. Hey, did I show you, I can almost touch my foot to the back of my head.”

Alice had to re-learn how to move in the hospital, and to speak. At first the world was nothing but a mush of dark images, disconnected voices and prickly feelings all over her skin. If someone touched her arm she wasn’t sure from

which part of her body the sensation came. Colors seemed different. People's voices were pitched a tone higher. When she tried to speak she bit her tongue, which seemed enormous in her mouth and tasted funny. When she finally learned, the tone was different, but the inflections and the slight Maritime accent were the same. She'd had an accident, they said. But long before the psychiatrist told her, she knew. These weren't her hands. This wasn't her breath.

"Let me read your diary."

Alice and Jenny lay on top of their beds supposedly doing homework. Above each bed hung a charcoal portrait their father had drawn. He had finished them just before he died. Now, only Jenny's was a good likeness.

"Not now," said Jenny, closing the book and capping her ball point pen.

"You can read mine."

"I know what your diary says — Ooh, I found a new mole today on my new body. Ooh, don't my new armpits smell divine?"

"Come on. What do you have, some big secret in there? We've always read each other's diaries."

"I have to get to know you better." Jenny slipped her diary between her mattress and box spring.

"Yeah, right," Alice laughed. Then she realized her sister wasn't joking. "What, fourteen years wasn't enough?"

"You were in the hospital a long time, that's all I mean."

Alice swung her legs over the side of her bed and looked at Jenny. At one time looking at her was like looking in the mirror, and Alice still found her sister's coppery red hair and masses of freckles more familiar than her own reflection. "Jenny, we're still twins. I have the same memories: Camp Wasaga, moving to Toronto . . . Dad. You know, when I draw I can still make the shadows, just the way he showed us. Isn't that amazing? Even though I have a different hand.

And my signature is the same too. This is me in here, Jenny. My brain is me."

Jenny rolled over on her bed. "Whatever. You still can't read it."

Alice was in the hospital for months. She saw doctors, interns, psychiatrists, physical therapists, speech therapists. Once a reporter, who had actually scaled the building, poked his head through the window to ask, "Hey, Alice, how do you feel?" and snapped a few photos.

All the mirrors had been removed, of course, from her room and bathroom, but Jenny and her mother brought the hand mirror with her initials when the doctors thought Alice was ready.

"They couldn't have saved your old body," her mother said. "This was the only way to keep you alive."

"No one knows what it will be like," said Jenny. "You're the only one who's ever survived before."

"I know all that," Alice slurred. The doctors had taken the precaution of giving her a mild sedative. It made her feel like everything was happening to someone else, far away. She held the silver mirror in one hand. With the other, she pulled at her face, squeezed it as if it were clay. Alice was mesmerized by the unfamiliar eyes, big and brown and dark. Whenever her father painted her he'd spend most of his time on the eyes. The eyes are the mirror of the soul, he used to say. Whose soul is that? Alice wondered. For a moment she considered screaming, but it was too much trouble. Besides, it wouldn't be her scream.

"It's okay, Mom," she said. "Maybe I'll start looking like myself again. If I try hard enough. If I concentrate hard enough. Very slowly, over the course of years, my eyes will change color . . . my face. It might . . ."

Alice's mother stroked her hair. "We'll get through this," she said, "the human mind is incredibly adaptable."

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"Mrs. Jarred's on TV again," Alice called.

"Turn it off," her mother said, "it's time for birthday cake," but Alice and Jenny kept watching. Above the television, the faces of the family portrait Alice's father had painted smiled out into the room.

"A new development in the story of Girl X," said the newscaster, "first surviving recipient of a brain transplant . . ."

Alice's mother stood in the doorway wiping 30 her hands on a tea towel. She had fewer freckles than Jenny, and the long braid which hung down her back wasn't quite so bright a red, but the family resemblance was unmistakable. "I don't want you to worry about the Jarreds, girls. My lawyer says they don't have a legal leg to stand on."

Mrs. Jarred, a middle-aged woman in a red checked coat, stood on a suburban lawn. She had dark hair just beginning to gray and Alice's large, dark eyes. A short man with a pot belly smiled self-consciously beside her.

"Is that your family?" Jenny asked.

"I don't even know them."

"Mrs. Jarred," said a female reporter with a microphone, "has science gone too far?"

"She's our daughter," the woman replied 35 with emotion. "When we signed the release form donating her body, we didn't know they were going to bring her back to life with some new brain. Our Gail is alive and living somewhere in Toronto and I'm not even allowed to see her."

Mrs. Jarred began to cry and the camera cut away to Alice and her mother leaving the hospital amid crowds of journalists. Since she was under eighteen, Alice's face was covered with a round, black dot. The girls had both seen this footage many times before.

"Gail. Wow. That's so weird."

"That's not my name."

The TV flashed pictures of the Jarreds before the accident. A girl with a dog. A smiling teenager wearing a party dress.

"Ooh, nice outfit, Gail."

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HEISENBERG'S MAGIC MIRROR OF UNCERTAINTY



Alice can never be sure with any certainty which reflection of herself she will see in the mirror.



The act of looking in the mirror affects which image she will see.

Uncertainty permits the possibility of anything and everything.

Duane Michals, Dr. Heisenberg's Magic Mirror of Uncertainty, 1998 © Duane Michals. Courtesy of DC Moore Gallery, New York

↑ This series of photographs by Duane Michals plays with the idea that our identity changes based on how we see ourselves.

Which of these images most closely portrays the conflicts Alice faces? What textual evidence from the story leads you to these connections?

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"Darn those TV people," said Alice's mother. "They protect our privacy by not showing what you look like, and then they show pictures of your body before the accident. That makes a lot of sense."

"The Jarreds probably gave permission," said Alice. "Anyway, it doesn't matter. Everyone at school knows. The whole world knows."

Alice's mother continued as if she was talking to herself. "Those Jarreds . . . If we start having reporters all over the lawn again . . ." She twisted her face in disgust, strode across the room, and turned off the television with a sharp flick of her wrist.

"Hey."

"Come on, cake time. I made it from scratch. 45 Alice's favourite, chocolate with mocha cream."

In the dining room a huge and elaborate cake was waiting on the table. Rich, white chocolate piping swirled over dark mocha. Ornate candy violets decorated the cake's tall sides.

"Awesome, Mom," said Alice. She couldn't remember her mother ever making a homemade cake before. "You blow first," she said to Jenny as she sat down. "You're the oldest."

"By two minutes," said Jenny, "and anyway, maybe I'm not the oldest anymore."

"What do you mean?"

"You might be older than me now with your 50 new body. You might be old enough to drive for all we know."

Alice's brown eyes widened. "Mom, if my body is sixteen, does that mean I can get my license?"

"Forget it," her mother said as she lit the cake. "You could barely walk six months ago." She switched out the lights.

In the yellow glow of the candles Alice and Jenny followed a tradition that their father had started long ago. First Alice and her mother sang Happy Birthday to Jenny. Then, after Jenny had blown them out, the candles were lit again for Alice, and the song was sung a second time.

Alice blinked and squinted when the lights came on again. "I forgot to make a wish," she said.

Her mother smiled and handed a slice of the 55 beautiful cake to each of the girls. "I guess you have to share your wish with Jenny."

Alice and Jenny laughed. One year, when they were little girls, the suggestion that they would have to share a wish sent them into fits of crying which their parents could only resolve by fitting the cake slices back into the cake and lighting the candles for a third and fourth time.

Alice cut the cake with the edge of her fork, happy that the tension brought on by the newscast had begun to melt away. She put a large bite into her mouth. Bitter. Alice tried hard to swallow, tried hard not to let her face show any reaction to the cake, but the taste of the mocha forced her mouth into a grimace. Jenny didn't miss it.

"I guess Gail doesn't like chocolate with mocha cream."

"No, it's good," said Alice, forcing it down.

Jenny pushed her own piece away. "I'm not 60 hungry."

"Jeez, Jenny, why are you angry at me for not liking a piece of cake? I can't help it."

"Who's angry?"

"I have different taste buds now, and they're sending different messages to my brain. They're saying, this cake tastes gross. Sorry Mom."

"Okay," said Jenny. "You're always saying that you are still you because you have the same brain, but who is to say that your whole personality is in your head?"

"Where else would it be?" 65

"I don't know; maybe there was some other part of your body where part of your self lived. Maybe it was your big toe."

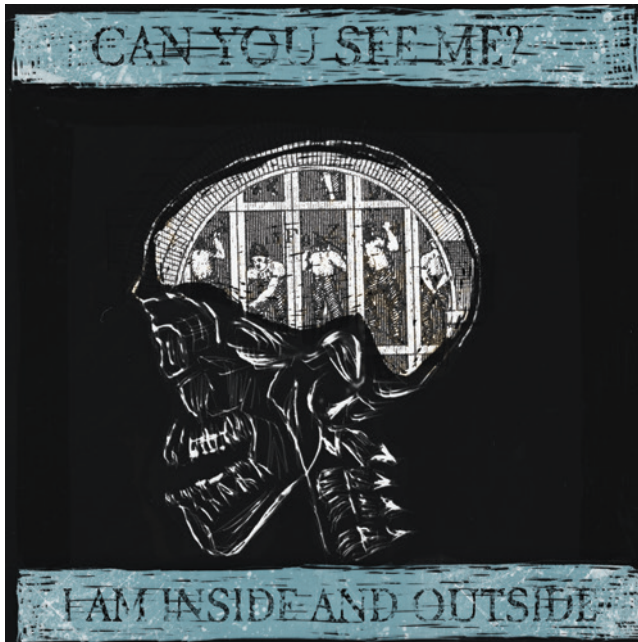
Alice's mother set down her fork. "Jenny, people have their big toes cut off and they're still themselves. People have heart transplants and they're still themselves."

"Right," said Alice. She smiled at her mother, but her mother looked away.

"Maybe not," Jenny said, "maybe they're a little bit different but they just don't notice. You're a lot different. You're a morning person. You never see your old friends. You hang out with Imogen Smith and those snobs. Now you're going out for cheerleading, for goodness sake. And what is with those sunglasses? Sometimes . . . I don't know . . . Sometimes I think my sister is dead." Jenny pushed her chair back and ran out of the room.

Alice sat where she was, poking at her cake with her fork, trying not to cry. 70

Her mother got up and began to gather the plates. "I think," she began, her voice wavering, "I think cheerleading would be very good for your coordination."



Cogito Ergo Sum 3.1, 2006 (archival pigment digital print)/Aldworth, Susan/Susan Aldworth/Private Collection/Bridgeman Images

↑ This piece by Susan Aldworth titled *Cogito Ergo Sum 3.1*, refers to the famous statement made by philosopher Rene Descartes to prove our own existence: "I think, therefore I am."

In what ways does the image and Descartes's statement relate to the inner and outer conflicts that Alice is facing in this story?

Alice stared at her mother, but again her mother avoided her eyes. Suddenly Alice thought she understood the elaborate cake. She made it because she felt guilty, Alice thought, guilty for thinking, way down deep, that I'm not really the same daughter she knew before.

The first thing Alice saw when her eyes could focus was the white hospital ceiling, but the white had a slightly unnatural blueness to it, the way white looks on TV. Sometimes things were exquisitely clear and sharp, although she wasn't wearing her contacts, and she hadn't yet learned to ignore her eyelashes which seemed longer and darker than they had been before. When Alice saw her mother for the first time she cried and cried. Her skin had a different texture. Her hair hardly seemed red at all. She even had a different smell.

And Jenny. Why was everyone she knew so different? Why wasn't her father there? Would he be different too?

When Alice met Mr. Jarred, it was in the middle of the street. A new sidewalk had just been poured on Bedford Avenue, so Alice had to walk in the street to go around the construction on the way home from school. A light rain was falling, preventing the concrete from setting. Mr. Jarred held an oversized umbrella, striped red and yellow, above his head. He might have walked right by her, but Alice was staring hard at him trying to remember something — anything — about him besides the newscast.

"Gail," he said in a soft mumble and then, "I'm sorry . . . I mean Alice . . . Do you know me?"

"I saw you on TV."

"Ah, yes." The two stood in silence for a moment.

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"You should have an umbrella," he said. "This one's a ridiculous thing, my wife's. Here."

"No, no, it's just sprinkling, really," but Alice took the umbrella Mr. Jarred offered her, holding it upside down, its point in the road.

"This is very strange for me, very strange," he said, staring at her. "We knew you were in Toronto, but, well, to be honest, it was my wife who wanted to contact you. I . . . I thought it would be better not to see you. It's very

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seeing connections

Lena Coakley possibly had *Alice in Wonderland* in mind when she named her protagonist Alice. Read this excerpt by Lewis Carroll, which is about a young girl named Alice who goes down a rabbit hole and finds a world very different from her own. In trying to find her way home, she has many conversations similar to this one with a talking caterpillar:

from *Alice in Wonderland*
LEWIS CARROLL

"Who are YOU?" said the Caterpillar.

This was not an encouraging opening for a conversation. Alice replied, rather shyly, "I—I hardly know, sir, just at present—at least I know who I WAS when I got up this morning, but I think I must have been changed several times since then."

"What do you mean by that?" said the Caterpillar sternly. "Explain yourself!"

"I can't explain MYSELF, I'm afraid, sir," said Alice, "because I'm not myself, you see."

"I don't see," said the Caterpillar.

"I'm afraid I can't put it more clearly," Alice replied very politely, "for I can't understand it myself to begin with; and being so many different sizes in a day is very confusing."

"It isn't," said the Caterpillar.

"Well, perhaps you haven't found it so yet," said Alice; "but when you have to turn into a chrysalis—you will some day, you



Advice from a Caterpillar, 1999 (oil on canvas)/Barry, Jonathan (Contemporary Artist)/JONATHAN BARRY (CONTEMPORARY ARTIST)/Private Collection/ Bridgeman Images

know—and then after that into a butterfly, I should think you'll feel it a little queer, won't you?"

"Not a bit," said the Caterpillar.

"Well, perhaps your feelings may be different," said Alice; "all I know is, it would feel very queer to ME."

"You!" said the Caterpillar contemptuously. "Who are YOU?"

Which brought them back again to the beginning of the conversation.

In what way is the identity crisis that this Alice faces similar to or different from that of Alice in "Mirror Image"?

strange,” he repeated, then added, “You look so different.”

“I do?”

“Your hair. The way you stand, even. Our Gail, she was an early bloomer, always slouched. Your accent is different too.” He paused. “I understand, you know. My wife, she thinks our daughter is still alive, but I . . . I know.” A car turned onto the street and honked at them. “I’d better go.”

On impulse, Alice grabbed Mr. Jarred’s hand. It was warm and big and rough and Alice knew she had never felt it before. “I knew I wouldn’t remember you,” she said, “but I was hoping, when you walked by, that I’d know you somehow.”

Mr. Jarred took his hand away. “But you don’t.”

“No.” Alice slid her dark glasses to the top of her head. “My dad—I guess you know he died in the accident.”

“Yes.”

“Sometimes I think if he were alive, he would just look into my eyes and know who was in here.” The two stood in silence. Then Alice said, “What will you tell your wife?”

“I’ll tell her,” Mr. Jarred’s voice began to falter, but he looked at her straight on, “I’ll tell her I looked into your eyes and that I didn’t see my daughter.”

“I’m sorry,” said Alice. She didn’t ask the question that immediately came to her, but the words rang in her mind: who did you see?

Alice gripped the umbrella as she watched Mr. Jarred hurry around the corner. She stepped up to the curb and pressed her waist to the wooden barrier that protected the sidewalk. Then she folded the umbrella and secured the strap. In a small corner of the sidewalk she wrote her initials, ACS, with the tip of the umbrella.

Alice was here, she thought. And then she walked towards home.

UNDERSTANDING AND INTERPRETING

1. Summarize what you know about the story of Alice’s accident, the transplant, and Gail’s family.
2. Explain the main conflict between Alice and her sister, Jenny. What lines from the text most demonstrate this conflict?
3. What does Alice seem to want from her father? Why does she need this?
4. What is Alice’s central internal conflict? How is it resolved—or not—by the end of the story?
5. The point of view of this story is third person limited, in this case limited to Alice’s perspective. Why do you think that Coakley chose this type of narration, and how might the story have been different if it were a different point of view?

ANALYZING LANGUAGE, STYLE, AND STRUCTURE

1. **Vocabulary in Context.** At the beginning of paragraph 2, Coakley writes, “It was

disquieting, however, to come upon a mirror without warning.” The word “disquieting” probably seems like a familiar word, but is not likely one that you use regularly. Using only context clues and word parts, what do you think the word means? More important, why is it an effective word to use at this point in the story?

2. Reread or skim through the first seven paragraphs of the story. Notice how Coakley does not directly come out and state that Alice had a brain transplant. Identify two to three places in this first section where Coakley’s use of details and language point to this conclusion.
3. What effect is created by Coakley’s choice to start the story with Alice thinking about mirrors?
4. There are a few flashbacks to the time when Alice was in the hospital recovering from the accident. Why are these flashbacks placed where they are in the plot, and what does each reveal about Alice?
5. The word “new” is used repeatedly throughout this story. How is it used differently by different characters?

TOPICS FOR COMPOSING

1. **Analysis.** Write a response in which you explain what Coakley might be suggesting to the reader about identity in this story? What evidence from the text supports your assertion of this theme?
2. **Argument.** In paragraph 64, Jenny says, "You're always saying that you are still you because you have the same brain, but who is to say that your whole personality is in your head?" To what extent do you agree or disagree with Jenny's assertion that Alice is not, in fact, the same person? Outside of the context of this story, do you think our personalities have to do with more than just our brains? Why or why not?
3. **Research.** Conduct research on just how close we are technologically to being able to transplant a brain from one person into the body of another. If it were possible to do, would it be ethical to do? Why or why not?
4. **Personal.** Obviously, no one—yet—has had the exact experience that Alice has, but in what ways are her inner conflicts about her identity or conflicts with parent or siblings similar to something you have experienced?

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What, of This Goldfish, Would You Wish?

ETGAR KERET

Born in Ramat Gan, Israel, Etgar Keret (b. 1967) is a best-selling author and award-winning filmmaker whose work continues to gain international notoriety. His many awards include the Cannes Film Festival Palm d'Or award for his movie *Jellyfish* (2007) and France's prestigious Chevalier de l'Ordre des Arts et des Lettres in 2010. He currently writes a regular column for *Tablet* magazine and is a lecturer at Ben-Gurion University in Beer Sheva, Israel. "What, of This Goldfish, Would You Wish?," from his collection of short stories *Suddenly, a Knock on the Door* (2012), is a surreal tale of a man and his best friend: his goldfish.

Key Context This story alludes to the Grimm's fairy tale "The Fisherman and His Wife." In that tale, a poor fisherman catches a golden fish that claims to be an enchanted prince. The fish asks the fisherman to release him, and he gladly does. But when he tells his wife, she says that he should go back and demand that the fish grant him a wish in return for his good deed. The wife says to wish for a bigger house. The fisherman returns to the sea and summons the fish, which instantly grants the wish. This cycle continues, with each wish from the wife getting grander and grander: next wishing for a castle, then for her to be king, then emperor, then pope, and finally God. Upon this final wish, the fish returns the fisherman and his wife to living in a pig-sty.



Ulf Andersen/Getty Images

Yonatan had a brilliant idea for a documentary. He'd knock on doors. Just him. No camera crew, no nonsense. Just Yonatan, on his own, a small camera in hand, asking, "If you found a talking goldfish that granted you three wishes, what would you wish for?"

Folks would give their answers, and Yoni would edit them down and make clips of the more surprising responses. Before every set of answers, you'd see the person standing stock-still in the entrance to his house. Onto this shot he'd superimpose the subject's name, family situation, monthly income, and maybe even the party he'd voted for in the last election. All that, combined with the three wishes, and maybe he'd end up with a poignant piece of social commentary, a testament to the massive rift between our dreams and the often compromised reality in which we live.

It was genius, Yoni was sure. And, if not, at least it was cheap. All he needed was a door to knock on and a heart beating on the other side. With a little decent footage, he was sure he'd be able to sell it to Channel 8 or Discovery in a flash, either as a film or as a bunch of vignettes, little cinematic corners, each with that singular soul standing in a doorway, followed by three killer wishes, precious, every one.

Even better, maybe he'd cash out, package it with a slogan and sell it to a bank or cellular phone company. Maybe tag it with something like "Different dreams, different wishes, one bank." Or "The bank that makes dreams come true."

No prep, no plotting, natural as can be, Yoni grabbed his camera and went out knocking on doors. In the first neighborhood he went to, the kindly folk that took part generally requested the foreseeable things: health, money, bigger apartments, either to shave off a couple of years or a couple of pounds. But there were also powerful moments. One drawn, wizened old lady asked simply for a child. A Holocaust survivor with a number on his arm asked very slowly, in a quiet voice — as if he'd been waiting for Yoni to come, as if it weren't an exercise at all — he'd

been wondering (if this fish didn't mind), would it be possible for all the Nazis left living in the world to be held accountable for their crimes? A cocky, broad-shouldered lady-killer put out his cigarette and, as if the camera wasn't there, wished he were a girl. "Just for a night," he added, holding a single finger right up to the lens.

And these were wishes from just one short block in one small, sleepy suburb of Tel Aviv.

Yonatan could hardly imagine what people were dreaming of in the development towns and the collectives along the northern border, in the West Bank settlements and Arab villages, the immigrant absorption centers full of broken trailers and tired people left to broil out in the desert sun.

Yonatan knew that if the project was going to have any weight, he'd have to get to everyone, to the unemployed, to the ultrareligious, to the Arabs and Ethiopians and American expats. He began to plan a shooting schedule for the coming days: Jaffa, Dimona, Ashdod, Sderot, Taibe, Talpiot. Maybe Hebron, even. If he could sneak past the wall, Hebron would be great. Maybe somewhere in that city some beleaguered Arab man would stand in his doorway and, looking through Yonatan and his camera, looking out into nothingness, just pause for a minute, nod his head, and wish for peace — that would be something to see.

Sergei Goralick doesn't much like strangers banging on his door. Especially when those strangers are asking him questions. In Russia, when Sergei was young, it happened plenty. The KGB felt right at home knocking on his door. His father had been a Zionist, which was pretty much an invitation for them to drop by any old time.

When Sergei got to Israel and then moved to Jaffa, his family couldn't wrap their heads around it. They ask him, "What are you looking to find in a place like that? There's no one there but addicts and Arabs and pensioners." But what is most excellent about addicts and Arabs and pensioners is that they don't come around knocking on Sergei's door. That way Sergei can get his sleep, and get up when it's still dark. He can take his little boat out into the

sea and fish until he's done fishing. By himself. In silence. The way it should be. The way it was.

Until one day some kid with a ring in his ear, looking a little bit homosexual, comes knocking. Hard like that — rapping at his door. Just the way Sergei doesn't like. And he says, this kid, that he has some questions he wants to put on the TV.

Sergei tells the boy, tells him in what he thinks is a straightforward manner, that he doesn't want it. Not interested. Sergei gives the camera a shove, to help make it clear. But the earring boy is stubborn. He says all kinds of things, fast things. And it's hard for Sergei to follow; his Hebrew isn't so good.

The boy slows down, tells Sergei he has a strong face, a nice face, and that he simply has to have him for this movie picture. Sergei can also slow down, he can also make clear. He tells the kid to f*** off. But the kid is slippery, and somehow between saying no and pushing the door closed, Sergei finds that the kid is in his house. He's already making his movie, running his camera without any permission, and from

behind the camera he's still telling Sergei about his face, that it's full of feeling, that it's tender. Suddenly the kid spots Sergei's goldfish flitting around in its big glass jar in his kitchen.

The kid with the earring starts screaming, "Goldfish, goldfish!" he's so excited. And this, this really pressures Sergei, who tells the kid, "It's nothing, just a regular goldfish, stop filming it. Just a goldfish," Sergei tells him, just something he found flapping around in the net, a deep-sea goldfish. But the boy isn't listening. He's still filming and getting closer and saying something about talking and fish and a magic wish.

Sergei doesn't like this, doesn't like that the boy is almost at it, already reaching for the jar. In this instant Sergei understands the boy didn't come for television, what he came for, specifically, is to snatch Sergei's fish, to steal it away. Before the mind of Sergei Goralick really understands what it is his body has done, he seems to have taken the burner off the stove and hit the boy in the head. The boy falls. The camera falls with him. The camera breaks open on the

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↑ How do Calvin and Hobbes look at the idea of wishing for something differently? What point is the cartoon making in the last panel?

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seeing connections

In his groundbreaking 2000 book *Bowling Alone*, Harvard political scientist Robert D. Putnam argued that connections to other people play the largest role in determining our overall happiness and well-being.

from *Bowling Alone*

ROBERT D. PUTNAM

Countless studies document the link between society and psyche: people who have close friends and confidants, friendly neighbors, and supportive coworkers are less likely to experience sadness, loneliness, low self-esteem, and problems with eating and sleeping. Married people are consistently happier than people who are unattached, all else being equal. These findings

will hardly surprise most Americans, for in study after study people themselves report that good relationships with family members, friends, or romantic partners — far more than money or fame — are prerequisites for their happiness. The single most common finding from a half century's research on the correlates of life satisfaction, not only in the United States but around the world, is that happiness is best predicted by the breadth and depth of one's social connections.

Based on your reading of this story, how happy is Sergei? What evidence in the text can you use to support your interpretation? What role do you think social connection plays in making him either happy or unhappy?

floor, along with the boy's skull. There's a lot of blood coming out of the head, and Sergei really doesn't know what to do.

That is, he knows exactly what to do, but it really would complicate things. Because if he takes this kid to the hospital, people are going to ask what happened, and it would take things in a direction Sergei doesn't want to go.

"No reason to take him to the hospital anyway," says the goldfish, in Russian. "That one's already dead."

"He can't be dead," Sergei says, with a moan. "I barely touched him. It's only a burner. Only a little thing." Sergei holds it up to the fish, taps it against his own skull to prove it. "It's not even that hard."

"Maybe not," says the fish. "But, apparently, it's harder than that kid's head."

"He wanted to take you from me," Sergei says, 20 almost crying.

"Nonsense," the fish says. "He was only here to make a little something for TV."

"But he said —"

"He said," says the fish, interrupting, "exactly what he was doing. But you didn't get it.

Honestly, your Hebrew, it's terrible."

"Yours is better?" Sergei says. "Yours is so 25 great?"

"Yes. Mine's supergreat," the goldfish says, sounding impatient. "I'm a magic fish. I'm fluent in everything." All the while the puddle of blood from the earring kid's head is getting bigger and bigger and Sergei is on his toes, up against the kitchen wall, desperate not to step in it, not to get blood on his feet.

"You do have one wish left," the fish reminds Sergei. He says it easy like that, as if Sergei doesn't know — as if either of them ever loses count.

"No," Sergei says. He's shaking his head from side to side. "I can't," he says. "I've been saving it. Saving it for something."

"For what?" the fish says.

But Sergei won't answer. 30

That first wish, Sergei used up when they discovered a cancer in his sister. A lung cancer, the kind you don't get better from. The fish undid

it in an instant — the words barely out of Sergei's mouth. The second wish Sergei used up five years ago, on Sveta's boy. The kid was still small then, barely three, but the doctors already knew something in her son's head wasn't right. He was going to grow big but not in the brain. Three was about as smart as he'd get. Sveta cried to Sergei in bed all night. Sergei walked home along the beach when the sun came up, and he called to the fish, asked the goldfish to fix it as soon as he'd crossed through the door. He never told Sveta. And a few months later she left him for some cop, a Moroccan with a shiny Honda. In his heart, Sergei kept telling himself it wasn't for Sveta that he'd done it, that he'd wished his wish purely for the boy. In his mind, he was less sure, and all kinds of thoughts about other things he could have done with that wish continued to gnaw at him, half driving him mad. The third wish, Sergei hadn't yet wished for.

"I can restore him," says the goldfish. "I can bring him back to life."

"No one's asking," Sergei says.

"I can bring him back to the moment before," the goldfish says. "To before he knocks on your door. I can put him back to right there. I can do it. All you need to do is ask."

"To wish my wish," Sergei says. "My last."

The fish swishes his fish tail back and forth in the water, the way he does, Sergei knows, when he's truly excited. The goldfish can already taste freedom. Sergei can see it on him.

After the last wish, Sergei won't have a choice. He'll have to let the goldfish go. His magic goldfish. His friend.

"Fixable," Sergei says. "I'll just mop up the blood. A good sponge and it'll be like it never was."

That tail just goes back and forth, the fish's head steady.

Sergei takes a deep breath. He steps out into the middle of the kitchen, out into the puddle. "When I'm fishing, while it's dark and the world's asleep," he says, half to himself and half to the fish, "I'll tie the kid to a rock and dump him in the sea. Not a chance, not in a million years, will anyone ever find *him*."

"You killed him, Sergei," the goldfish says. "You murdered someone — but you're not a murderer." The goldfish stops swishing his tail. "If, on this, you won't waste a wish, then tell me, Sergei, what is it good for?"

It was in Bethlehem, actually, that Yonatan found his Arab, a handsome man who used his first wish for peace. His name was Munir; he was fat with a big white mustache. Superphotogenic.

It was moving, the way he said it. Perfect, the way in which Munir wished his wish. Yoni knew even as he was filming that this guy would be his promo for sure.

Either him or that Russian. The one with the faded tattoos that Yoni had met in Jaffa. The one that looked straight into the camera and said, if he ever found a talking goldfish, he wouldn't ask of it a single thing. He'd just stick it on a shelf in a big glass jar and talk to him all day, it didn't matter about what. Maybe sports, maybe politics, whatever a goldfish was interested in chatting about.

Anything, the Russian said, not to be alone.

UNDERSTANDING AND INTERPRETING

1. The opening paragraphs share Yonatan's motivation for creating his documentary. Based on these lines and his predictions for people's responses to his question, how would you characterize him?
2. Why did Keret make Sergei a Russian who moved to Israel? What is the significance of
3. How does the language barrier between Sergei and Yonatan complicate the conflict?
4. Based on the brief conversations that they have, what can you infer about the relationship between Sergei and the goldfish?

5. What do Sergei's first two wishes reveal about the kind of person he is? Why does Sergei hesitate to make the third wish? What evidence from the story supports your ideas?
6. How would you define Yonatan's relationships with the people he interviews for his documentary? What evidence from the story leads you to this conclusion?
7. What is the author's purpose for ending the story with "Anything . . . not to be alone"? How does this line underscore a theme in the story?
8. From what point of view is the story told? What other "points of view" are revealed through Yonatan's project?

ANALYZING LANGUAGE, STYLE, AND STRUCTURE

1. **Vocabulary in Context.** Explain the meaning and connotations of the underlined words as they are used in the context of this sentence from paragraph 2. What tone is the author creating, and how does that tone characterize Yonatan and his project?

All that, combined with the three wishes, and maybe he'd end up with a poignant piece of social commentary, a testament to the massive rift between our dreams and the often compromised reality in which we live.

2. Look at the sentences at the end of paragraph 10. What tone do these lines evoke? How does Keret create the tone in these lines by what he writes and how he writes it?
3. How does the author create tension when Sergei and Yonatan meet in paragraphs 11–15?
4. At the beginning, Sergei claims to have moved to Tel Aviv to get away from people, yet at the end of the story he makes the comment that he wants "anything . . . not to be alone." What is ironic about his conflicted emotions? What evokes Sergei's fears of being alone, despite his earlier experiences?
5. What is the effect of the structural shift in time and point of view between paragraph 41 and paragraph 42?

6. In literature, magical realism blends realistic elements with magical elements to present truths about reality. How does the use of magical realism help him to communicate an idea about human nature?

TOPICS FOR COMPOSING

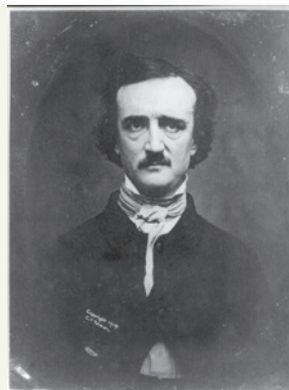
1. **Analysis.** Write a response in which you explain what Keret is suggesting about happiness in this story. Be sure to include text evidence that supports your assertion of this theme.
2. **Comparison.** Research other stories that contain wish-granting elements. What commonalities do they share? What lesson or moral do these tales seem to share, and why do you think that moral is important to understand?
3. **Personal.** Have you ever been conflicted about helping someone over helping yourself? Under what circumstances do our needs come first? Under what circumstances should we put others' needs before our own? Write a journal response in which you explore these circumstances and the outcome.
4. **Personal.** In the story, the language barrier between Yonatan and Sergei complicates the situation. What experiences or situations have you been involved with or observed in which language played a role in complicating an issue? How, if at all, was it resolved?
5. **Argument.** Sergei shares his motivation for moving to Tel Aviv, which includes the opportunity to distance himself from others. Yet he kills to hang on to his only friend—the goldfish. Do we have an innate need to be connected to other people? Or is it possible to find happiness in solitude? Why or why not?
6. **Multimodal.** Create a documentary of your own portraying what people would wish for if they were granted three wishes. Like Yonatan, consider how you would set up your interviews. Would it be spontaneous? Planned? How you would pull the information together to make a statement. Finally, create a title or tagline for your project.

The Cask of Amontillado

EDGAR ALLAN POE

Edgar Allan Poe (1809–1849) was an American author who wrote poetry, literary criticism, and short stories, including many well-known ones that focus on murder, death, torture, and crime, such as “The Fall of the House of Usher,” “The Black Cat,” “The Pit and the Pendulum,” and “The Tell-tale Heart.” Because of the topics of many of his stories and poems, and because of the unusual nature of his death, the cause of which is still unknown, Poe’s reputation as a drug-addicted madman has survived to this day. Unfortunately, a lot of this sordid reputation is undeserved and is due to the initial obituary and later biography of Poe by a man, Rufus Griswold, whom Poe considered a colleague. “The Cask of Amontillado” (1846) is a dark and grisly tale of revenge, and one of Poe’s most famous stories.

Key Context This story takes place in Venice, Italy, at the height of the carnival season, a time of costumes, parades, music, and entertainment similar to a Mardi Gras celebration in New Orleans.



Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division

The thousand injuries of Fortunato I had borne as I best could, but when he ventured upon insult I vowed revenge. You, who so well know the nature of my soul, will not suppose, however, that I gave utterance to a threat. At length I would be avenged; this was a point definitely, settled — but the very definitiveness with which it was resolved precluded the idea of risk. I must not only punish but punish with impunity. A wrong is unredressed when retribution overtakes its redresser. It is equally unredressed when the avenger fails to make himself felt as such to him who has done the wrong.

It must be understood that neither by word nor deed had I given Fortunato cause to doubt my good will. I continued, as was my wont, to smile in his face, and he did not perceive that my smile now was at the thought of his immolation.

He had a weak point — this Fortunato — although in other regards he was a man to be respected and even feared. He prided himself on his connoisseurship in wine. Few Italians have the true virtuoso spirit. For the most part their enthusiasm is adopted to suit the time and opportunity, to practise imposture upon the British and Austrian millionaires. In painting and gemmery,¹ Fortunato, like his countrymen, was a quack, but in the matter of old wines he was sincere. In this respect I did not differ from him materially; — I was skilful in the Italian vintages myself, and bought largely whenever I could.

It was about dusk, one evening during the supreme madness of the carnival season, that I encountered my friend. He accosted me with excessive warmth, for he had been drinking much. The man wore motley. He had on a tight-fitting parti-striped dress, and his head was

¹ Gemmery: the study of gems. — Eds.

seeing connections

Read through the following excerpt from an obituary published immediately after Poe's death by Rufus Griswold, a sometime supporter of Poe's work, though he clearly harbored significant dislike for Poe, which he kept concealed while Poe was alive. Griswold's obituary, and a damaging biography that he published later, helped to cement Poe's reputation as a drug-addicted madman.

from **Death of Edgar A. Poe** RUFUS GRISWOLD

Edgar Allan Poe is dead. He died in Baltimore the day before yesterday. This announcement will startle many, but few will be grieved by it. . . .

He was at times a dreamer, dwelling in ideal realms, in heaven or hell, peopled with creations and the accidents of his brain. . . . He seemed, except when some fitful pursuit subjected his will and engrossed his faculties, always to bear the memory of some controlling sorrow. . . .

Passion, in him, comprehended many of the worst emotions, which militate against human happiness . . . Irascible, envious, bad enough, but not the worst, for these salient angles were all varnished over with a cold repellant cynicism while his passions vented themselves in sneers.

There seemed to him no moral susceptibility. And what was more remarkable in a proud nature, little or nothing of the true point of honor. He had, to a morbid excess, that desire to rise which is vulgarly called ambition, but no wish for the esteem or the love of his species, only the hard wish to succeed, not shine, not serve, but succeed, that he might have the right to despise a world which galled his self-conceit.

How does Griswold characterize Poe in this obituary? Why do you think that this characterization of Poe has lasted throughout the 150 years since his death?

surmounted by the conical cap and bells. I was so pleased to see him that I thought I should never have done wringing his hand.

I said to him — "My dear Fortunato, you are 5
luckily met. How remarkably well you are looking to-day. But I have received a pipe² of what passes for Amontillado, and I have my doubts."

"How?" said he. "Amontillado, A pipe? Impossible! And in the middle of the carnival!"

"I have my doubts," I replied; "and I was silly enough to pay the full Amontillado price without

consulting you in the matter. You were not to be found, and I was fearful of losing a bargain."

"Amontillado!"

"I have my doubts."

"Amontillado!" 10

"And I must satisfy them."

"Amontillado!"

"As you are engaged, I am on my way to Luchresi. If any one has a critical turn it is he. He will tell me — "

"Luchresi cannot tell Amontillado from Sherry."

"And yet some fools will have it that his taste 15
is a match for your own.

"Come, let us go."

"Whither?"

² Pipe: a large wine barrel, holding about 120 gallons. Borrowed from the Portuguese word *pipa*, which means *barrel*. Amontillado is an expensive Portuguese port wine that is traditionally aged and transported in pipas, or *pipes*. —Eds.

"To your vaults."

"My friend, no; I will not impose upon your good nature. I perceive you have an engagement. Luchresi —"

"I have no engagement; — come."

"My friend, no. It is not the engagement, but the severe cold with which I perceive you are afflicted. The vaults are insufferably damp. They are encrusted with nitre."³

"Let us go, nevertheless. The cold is merely nothing. Amontillado! You have been imposed upon. And as for Luchresi, he cannot distinguish Sherry from Amontillado."

Thus speaking, Fortunato possessed himself of my arm; and putting on a mask of black silk and drawing a roquelaire⁴ closely about my person, I suffered him to hurry me to my palazzo.

There were no attendants at home; they had absconded to make merry in honour of the time. I had told them that I should not return until the morning, and had given them explicit orders not to stir from the house. These orders were sufficient, I well knew, to insure their immediate disappearance, one and all, as soon as my back was turned.

I took from their sconces two flambeaux, and giving one to Fortunato, bowed him through several suites of rooms to the archway that led into the vaults. I passed down a long and winding staircase, requesting him to be cautious as he followed. We came at length to the foot of the descent, and stood together upon the damp ground of the catacombs of the Montresors.

The gait of my friend was unsteady, and the bells upon his cap jingled as he strode.

"The pipe," he said.

"It is farther on," said I; "but observe the white web-work which gleams from these cavern walls."

He turned towards me, and looked into my eyes with two filmy orbs that distilled the rheum of intoxication.

"Nitre?" he asked, at length.

"Nitre," I replied. "How long have you had that cough?"

"Ugh! ugh! ugh! — ugh! ugh! ugh! — ugh! ugh! ugh! — ugh! ugh! ugh! — ugh! ugh! ugh!"

My poor friend found it impossible to reply for many minutes.

"It is nothing," he said, at last.

"Come," I said, with decision, "we will go back; your health is precious. You are rich, respected, admired, beloved; you are happy, as once I was. You are a man to be missed. For me it is no matter. We will go back; you will be ill, and I cannot be responsible. Besides, there is Luchresi —"

"Enough," he said; "the cough's a mere nothing; it will not kill me. I shall not die of a cough."

"True — true," I replied; "and, indeed, I had no intention of alarming you unnecessarily — but you should use all proper caution. A draught of this Medoc will defend us from the damp."

Here I knocked off the neck of a bottle which I drew from a long row of its fellows that lay upon the mould.

"Drink," I said, presenting him the wine.

He raised it to his lips with a leer. He paused and nodded to me familiarly, while his bells jingled.

"I drink," he said, "to the buried that repose around us."

"And I to your long life."

He again took my arm, and we proceeded.

"These vaults," he said, "are extensive."

"The Montresors," I replied, "were a great and numerous family."

"I forget your arms."

"A huge human foot d'or,⁵ in a field azure; the foot crushes a serpent rampant⁶ whose fangs are imbedded in the heel."

³ Nitre: a term for potassium nitrate, also called saltpeter, a key ingredient in gunpowder. Nitre is often found as a deposit left on cavern walls by seeping groundwater. —Eds.

⁴ Roquelaire: a knee-length cloak. —Eds.

⁵ French: *of gold*. —Eds.

⁶ When used in the context of a coat-of-arms (called *heraldry*), a "rampant" animal is one that is rearing up to strike. —Eds.

seeing connections

Read the first few pages of a graphic novel adaptation of "The Cask of Amontillado."

from **The Cask of Amontillado**

ERICA JANG AND JASON STRUTZ



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What changes and adaptations did the author and illustrator of this version make? How do these changes affect what the reader knows and feels about Montresor and Fortunato at this point in the story? How do their visualizations of the text compare to your own?

"And the motto?"

"Nemo me impune lacessit."⁷

"Good!" he said.

The wine sparkled in his eyes and the bells jingled. My own fancy grew warm with the Medoc. We had passed through long walls of piled skeletons, with casks and puncheons⁸ intermingling, into the inmost recesses of the catacombs. I paused again, and this time I made bold to seize Fortunato by an arm above the elbow.

"The nitre!" I said; "see, it increases. It hangs like moss upon the vaults. We are below the river's bed. The drops of moisture trickle among the bones. Come, we will go back ere it is too late. Your cough —"

"It is nothing," he said; "let us go on. But first, another draught of the Medoc."

I broke and reached him a flagon of De Grave. He emptied it at a breath. His eyes flashed with a fierce light. He laughed and threw the bottle upwards with a gesticulation I did not understand.

I looked at him in surprise. He repeated the movement — a grotesque one.

"You do not comprehend?" he said.

"Not I," I replied.

"Then you are not of the brotherhood."

"How?"

"You are not of the masons."

"Yes, yes," I said; "yes, yes."

"You? Impossible! A mason?"

"A mason," I replied.

"A sign," he said, "a sign."

"It is this," I answered, producing from beneath the folds of my roquelaire a trowel.

"You jest," he exclaimed, recoiling a few paces. "But let us proceed to the Amontillado."

"Be it so," I said, replacing the tool beneath the cloak and again offering him my arm. He leaned upon it heavily. We continued our route in search of the Amontillado. We passed through a range of low arches, descended, passed on, and descending again, arrived at a deep crypt, in which the foulness of the air caused our flambeaux rather to glow than flame.

At the most remote end of the crypt there appeared another less spacious. Its walls had been lined with human remains, piled to the vault overhead, in the fashion of the great catacombs of Paris. Three sides of this interior crypt were still ornamented in this manner. From the fourth side the bones had been thrown down, and lay promiscuously upon the earth, forming at one point a mound of some size. Within the wall thus exposed by the displacing of the bones, we perceived a still interior crypt or recess, in depth about four feet, in width three, in height six or seven. It seemed to have been constructed for no especial use within itself, but formed merely the interval between two of the colossal supports of the roof of the catacombs, and was backed by one of their circumscribing walls of solid granite.

It was in vain that Fortunato, uplifting his dull torch, endeavoured to pry into the depth of the recess. Its termination the feeble light did not enable us to see.

"Proceed," I said; "herein is the Amontillado. As for Luchresi —"

"He is an ignoramus," interrupted my friend, as he stepped unsteadily forward, while I followed immediately at his heels. In niche, and finding an instant he had reached the extremity of the niche, and finding his progress arrested by the rock, stood stupidly bewildered. A moment more and I had fettered him to the granite. In its surface were two iron staples, distant from each other about two feet, horizontally. From one of these depended a short chain, from the other a padlock. Throwing the links about his waist, it

⁷ Latin: "No one can cut me and go unpunished." Motto of the Stuart royal family of Scotland. —Eds.

⁸ Puncheon: a smaller type of wine barrel, holding about 80 gallons. —Eds.

was but the work of a few seconds to secure it. He was too much astounded to resist. Withdrawing the key I stepped back from the recess.

"Pass your hand," I said, "over the wall; you cannot help feeling the nitre. Indeed, it is very damp. Once more let me implore you to return. No? Then I must positively leave you. But I must first render you all the little attentions in my power."

"The Amontillado!" ejaculated my friend, not yet recovered from his astonishment.

"True," I replied; "the Amontillado."

As I said these words I busied myself among the pile of bones of which I have before spoken. Throwing them aside, I soon uncovered a quantity of building stone and mortar. With these materials and with the aid of my trowel, I began vigorously to wall up the entrance of the niche.

I had scarcely laid the first tier of the masonry when I discovered that the intoxication of Fortunato had in a great measure worn off. The earliest indication I had of this was a low moaning cry from the depth of the recess. It was not the cry of a drunken man. There was then a long and obstinate silence. I laid the second tier, and the third, and the fourth; and then I heard the furious vibrations of the chain. The noise lasted for several minutes, during which, that I might hearken to it with the more satisfaction, I ceased my labours and sat down upon the bones. When at last the clanking subsided, I resumed the trowel, and finished without interruption the fifth, the sixth, and the seventh tier. The wall was now nearly upon a level with my breast. I again paused, and holding the flambeaux over the mason-work, threw a few feeble rays upon the figure within.

A succession of loud and shrill screams, bursting suddenly from the throat of the chained form, seemed to thrust me violently back. For a brief moment I hesitated, I trembled. Unsheathing my rapier, I began to grope with it about the recess; but the thought of an instant reassured me. I placed my hand upon the solid fabric of the catacombs, and felt satisfied. I

reapproached the wall; I replied to the yells of him who clamoured. I re-echoed, I aided, I surpassed them in volume and in strength. I did this, and the clamourer grew still.

It was now midnight, and my task was drawing to a close. I had completed the eighth, the ninth and the tenth tier. I had finished a portion of the last and the eleventh; there remained but a single stone to be fitted and plastered in. I struggled with its weight; I placed it partially in its destined position. But now there came from out the niche a low laugh that erected the hairs upon my head. It was succeeded by a sad voice, which I had difficulty in recognizing as that of the noble Fortunato. The voice said —

"Ha! ha! ha! — he! he! he! — a very good joke, indeed — an excellent jest. We will have many a rich laugh about it at the palazzo — he! he! he! — over our wine — he! he! he!"

"The Amontillado!" I said.

"He! he! he! — he! he! he! — yes, the Amontillado. But is it not getting late? Will not they be awaiting us at the palazzo, the Lady Fortunato and the rest? Let us be gone."

"Yes," I said, "let us be gone."

"For the love of God, Montresor!"

"Yes," I said, "for the love of God!"

But to these words I hearkened in vain for a reply. I grew impatient. I called aloud —

"Fortunato!"

No answer. I called again —

"Fortunato!"

No answer still. I thrust a torch through the remaining aperture and let it fall within. There came forth in return only a jingling of the bells. My heart grew sick; it was the dampness of the catacombs that made it so. I hastened to make an end of my labour. I forced the last stone into its position; I plastered it up. Against the new masonry I re-erected the old rampart of bones. For the half of a century no mortal has disturbed them. In pace requiescat!⁹

⁹ Latin: Rest in peace. —Eds

seeing connections

Look carefully at the following depictions of the final scene in this story.



Culture Club/Getty Images



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xcutHEREx/DeviantArt

What is in common among the images and what is different? What textual evidence from the story likely led to each depiction? Which one is closest or furthest away from your own imagining of the scene?

UNDERSTANDING AND INTERPRETING

1. Reread the first paragraph. Why does the narrator—Montresor—want to get revenge on Fortunato? Paraphrase what he says about what else must happen to have revenge be truly successful.
2. How does Montresor manipulate Fortunato into the catacombs and keep him moving further down? Be sure to use textual evidence to support your response.
3. Setting plays a significant part in this story. Describe the different settings identified below and explain how the changing settings create tension and/or other effects:
 - a. Outside on the street when they first meet (pars. 4–23)
 - b. When they first enter the catacombs (pars. 24–42)
 - c. When they progress deeper into the catacombs (pars. 43–70)
 - d. At the niche where Fortunato is bound and walled in (pars. 71–89)
4. At the beginning of the story, Montresor says that when Fortunato “ventured upon insult, I vowed revenge.” On rereading, what additional motives does Montresor hint at for his desire to kill Fortunato?
5. This story is written in the first person. What is the effect of knowing the thoughts of a murderer? Is Montresor’s telling of the story to be trusted? Why or why not?
6. Reread the last paragraph of the story. Is Montresor successful in achieving the kind of revenge he set out to do? How does he feel about the revenge? What evidence supports your interpretation?

ANALYZING LANGUAGE, STYLE, AND STRUCTURE

1. **Vocabulary in Context.** Reread the first paragraph. There are a number of words that Poe uses that might be familiar but are not often used, such as “precluded,” “impunity,” “unredressed,” and “avenger.” Using context clues and word parts, try to define the meanings of the unfamiliar words and explain what many of these words have in common.
2. **Vocabulary in Context.** Near the beginning of the story, Montresor says, “I continued, as was my wont, to smile in his face, and he did not perceive that my smile now was at the thought of his immolation.” Using context clues, what does the word “immolation” likely mean? Why is this such an appropriate word choice for the narrator to use here?
3. In the first paragraph, Montresor addresses the reader, “You, who so know the nature of my soul.” What effect is created with this direct address, which never happens again in the story?
4. On rereading the text, what do you make of Poe’s choice to have Fortunato dressed in “motley” or to have named him “Fortunato”?
5. Near the end of the story, as they have progressed deeper into the crypt, Poe writes, “Three sides of this interior crypt were still ornamented in this manner. From the fourth side the bones had been thrown down, and lay promiscuously upon the earth, forming at one point a mound of some size” (par. 68). The word “promiscuously” can have multiple meanings. How is it used in this context, and what is the effect of that particular word choice on the reader’s understanding of the setting?
6. At the very end of the story, Poe writes, “I had finished a portion of the last and the eleventh; there remained but a single stone to be fitted and plastered in. I struggled with its weight; I placed it partially in its destined position” (par. 78). What is the meaning of the word “destined” in this context, and why is it such an effective word choice?
7. Skim back through the story and identify as many words or phrases that refer to or describe “death.” What is the cumulative effect of so many references on the reader?
8. Many language choices that you may have understood on the first reading take on a

greater significance once you know that Montresor is planning to kill Fortunato. What effect is created by the following choices in light of the story's ending:

- a. "'Enough,' [Fortunato] said, 'the cough is a mere nothing; it will not kill me. I shall not die of a cough.'"
"True—true,' I replied" (par. 37–38).
- b. "'And I [drink] to your long life'" (par. 42).
- c. "I broke and reached him a flagon of De Grave. He emptied it at a breath" (par. 54).
- d. "'It is this,' I answered, producing from beneath the folds of my roquelaire a trowel" (par. 65).
- e. "'Let us be gone.'
'Yes,' I said, 'let us be gone.'
'For the love of God, Montresor!'
'Yes,' I said. 'For the love of God!'" (pars. 81–84)

TOPICS FOR COMPOSING

1. **Analysis.** Write a response in which you closely examine the setting in "The Cask of Amontillado" and explain how the setting contributes to a theme that Poe expresses in the story.
2. **Argument.** Imagine that you were a psychologist treating Montresor. Is he insane? A sociopath? Does he feel any guilt or remorse for his actions? Does he have a motive for his actions that could be used to justify his actions? Explain your diagnosis.
3. **Argument.** A study by psychologist Kevin Carlsmith and his colleagues determined that those who took revenge tended to be less happy than those who did not. The team's explanation reads:

Punishing others can cause people to continue to think about (rather than to forget) those whom they have punished.

As Sir Francis Bacon noted more than three centuries ago, "A man that studieth revenge, keeps his own wounds green, which otherwise would heal, and do well" (1858).

Given this information, why do you think people retain the impulse for revenge? What makes it difficult sometimes for us to let go of a desire for revenge?

4. **Creative.** Retell a portion of this story from a third person omniscient point of view. What changes when we get multiple perspectives on the scene?
5. **Analysis.** Look over the following quotations about revenge. Choose one that reflects your attitude toward the topic and explain whether Montresor would agree with it or not:
 - a. An eye for an eye will only make the whole world blind. — Mahatma Gandhi
 - b. My name is Inigo Montoya, you killed my father, prepare to die! — William Goldman, *The Princess Bride*
 - c. Revenge, the sweetest morsel to the mouth that ever was cooked in hell. — Walter Scott, *The Heart of Mid-Lothian*
 - d. The best revenge is not to be like your enemy. — Marcus Aurelius, *Meditations*
 - e. When you begin a journey of revenge, start by digging two graves: one for your enemy, and one for yourself. — Jodi Picoult, *Nineteen Minutes*
 - f. I'm a fighter. I believe in the eye-for-an-eye business. I'm no cheek turner. I got no respect for a man who won't hit back. You kill my dog, you better hide your cat. — Muhammad Ali, *The Greatest: My Own Story*
 - g. To exact revenge for yourself or your friends is not only a right, it's an absolute duty. — Stieg Larsson

The Most Dangerous Game

RICHARD CONNELL

Richard Connell (1893–1949) first began his writing career at the age of ten by covering baseball games for his hometown newspaper, the *Press*, in Poughkeepsie, New York. After graduating from Harvard University in 1915 and serving in the army during World War I, he began his work as a freelance writer in 1919 in New York and proceeded to publish over 300 short stories, four novels, and 13 screenplays. He eventually relocated to Hollywood, California, and worked with major film studios. In 1942, he won an Academy Award for best original story for the movie *Meet John Doe*. “The Most Dangerous Game,” which was adapted three times for film, was first published in 1925 and continues to be one of his most well-known short stories. Influenced in part by Connell’s experiences in World War I, “The Most Dangerous Game” tells the story of a renowned big-game hunter washed up on a mysterious island.



Fotosearch/Getty Images

“Off there to the right — somewhere — is a large island,” said Whitney. “It’s rather a mystery —”

“What island is it?” Rainsford asked.

“The old charts call it ‘Ship-Trap Island,’”

Whitney replied. “A suggestive name, isn’t it? Sailors have a curious dread of the place. I don’t know why. Some superstition —”

“Can’t see it,” remarked Rainsford, trying to peer through the dank tropical night that was palpable as it pressed its thick warm blackness in upon the yacht.

“You’ve good eyes,” said Whitney, with a laugh, “and I’ve seen you pick off a moose moving in the brown fall bush at four hundred yards, but even you can’t see four miles or so through a moonless Caribbean night.”

“Nor four yards,” admitted Rainsford. “Ugh! It’s like moist black velvet.”

“It will be light enough in Rio,” promised Whitney. “We should make it in a few days. I hope

the jaguar guns have come from Purdey’s. We should have some good hunting up the Amazon. Great sport, hunting.”

“The best sport in the world,” agreed Rainsford.

“For the hunter,” amended Whitney. “Not for the jaguar.”

“Don’t talk rot, Whitney,” said Rainsford. “You’re a big-game hunter, not a philosopher. Who cares how a jaguar feels?”

“Perhaps the jaguar does,” observed Whitney.

“Bah! They’ve no understanding.”

“Even so, I rather think they understand one thing — fear. The fear of pain and the fear of death.”

“Nonsense,” laughed Rainsford. “This hot weather is making you soft, Whitney. Be a realist. The world is made up of two classes — the hunters and the huntees. Luckily, you and I are hunters. Do you think we’ve passed that island yet?”



Buffalo and Lion Before the Fight, (oil on canvas)/Kuhnert, Wilhelm (1865–1926)/CHRISTIES IMAGES/Private Collection/Bridgeman Images

↑ As “king of the jungle,” the lion is often considered the greatest hunter in the world.

How does the purpose of the lion’s hunting differ from the purpose that is depicted in the dialogue between Rainsford and Whitney? Is the sort of hunting that Rainsford and Whitney do “natural”?

“I can’t tell in the dark. I hope so.”

“Why?” asked Rainsford.

“The place has a reputation — a bad one.”

“Cannibals?” suggested Rainsford.

“Hardly. Even cannibals wouldn’t live in such a God-forsaken place. But it’s gotten into sailor lore, somehow. Didn’t you notice that the crew’s nerves seemed a bit jumpy today?”

“They were a bit strange, now you mention it. 20 Even Captain Nielsen — ”

“Yes, even that tough-minded old Swede, who’d go up to the devil himself and ask him for a light. Those fishy blue eyes held a look I never saw there before. All I could get out of him was ‘This place has an evil name among seafaring men, sir.’ Then he said to me, very gravely, ‘Don’t you feel anything?’ — as if the air about us was actually poisonous. Now, you mustn’t laugh when I tell you this — I did feel something like a sudden chill.

“There was no breeze. The sea was as flat as a plate-glass window. We were drawing near the

15 island then. What I felt was a — a mental chill; a sort of sudden dread.”

“Pure imagination,” said Rainsford.

“One superstitious sailor can taint the whole ship’s company with his fear.”

“Maybe. But sometimes I think sailors have 25 an extra sense that tells them when they are in danger. Sometimes I think evil is a tangible thing — with wave lengths, just as sound and light have. An evil place can, so to speak, broadcast vibrations of evil. Anyhow, I’m glad we’re getting out of this zone. Well, I think I’ll turn in now, Rainsford.”

“I’m not sleepy,” said Rainsford. “I’m going to smoke another pipe up on the afterdeck.”

“Good night, then, Rainsford. See you at breakfast.”

“Right. Good night, Whitney.”

There was no sound in the night as Rainsford sat there but the muffled throb of the engine that drove the yacht swiftly through the darkness, and the swish and ripple of the wash of the propeller.

Rainsford, reclining in a steamer chair, indolently puffed on his favorite brier. The sensuous drowsiness of the night was on him. "It's so dark," he thought, "that I could sleep without closing my eyes; the night would be my eyelids —"

An abrupt sound startled him. Off to the right he heard it, and his ears, expert in such matters, could not be mistaken. Again he heard the sound, and again. Somewhere, off in the blackness, someone had fired a gun three times.

Rainsford sprang up and moved quickly to the rail, mystified. He strained his eyes in the direction from which the reports had come, but it was like trying to see through a blanket. He leaped upon the rail and balanced himself there, to get greater elevation; his pipe, striking a rope, was knocked from his mouth. He lunged for it; a short, hoarse cry came from his lips as he realized he had reached too far and had lost his balance. The cry was pinched off short as the blood-warm waters of the Caribbean Sea dosed over his head.

He struggled up to the surface and tried to cry out, but the wash from the speeding yacht slapped him in the face and the salt water in his open mouth made him gag and strangle. Desperately he struck out with strong strokes after the receding lights of the yacht, but he stopped before he had swum fifty feet. A certain coolheadedness had come to him; it was not the first time he had been in a tight place. There was a chance that his cries could be heard by someone aboard the yacht, but that chance was slender and grew more slender as the yacht raced on. He wrestled himself out of his clothes and shouted with all his power. The lights of the yacht became faint and ever-vanishing fireflies; then they were blotted out entirely by the night.

Rainsford remembered the shots. They had come from the right, and doggedly he swam in that direction, swimming with slow, deliberate strokes, conserving his strength. For a seemingly

30 endless time he fought the sea. He began to count his strokes; he could do possibly a hundred more and then —

Rainsford heard a sound. It came out of the 35 darkness, a high screaming sound, the sound of an animal in an extremity of anguish and terror.

He did not recognize the animal that made the sound; he did not try to; with fresh vitality he swam toward the sound. He heard it again; then it was cut short by another noise, crisp, staccato.

"Pistol shot," muttered Rainsford, swimming on.

Ten minutes of determined effort brought another sound to his ears — the most welcome he had ever heard — the muttering and growling of the sea breaking on a rocky shore. He was almost on the rocks before he saw them; on a night less calm he would have been shattered against them. With his remaining strength he dragged himself from the swirling waters. Jagged crags appeared to jut up into the opaqueness; he forced himself upward, hand over hand. Gasping, his hands raw, he reached a flat place at the top. Dense jungle came down to the very edge of the cliffs. What perils that tangle of trees and underbrush might hold for him did not concern Rainsford just then. All he knew was that he was safe from his enemy, the sea, and that utter weariness was on him. He flung himself down at the jungle edge and tumbled headlong into the deepest sleep of his life.

When he opened his eyes he knew from the position of the sun that it was late in the afternoon. Sleep had given him new vigor; a sharp hunger was picking at him. He looked about him, almost cheerfully.

"Where there are pistol shots, there are men. 40 Where there are men, there is food," he thought. But what kind of men, he wondered, in so forbidding a place? An unbroken front of snarled and ragged jungle fringed the shore.

He saw no sign of a trail through the closely knit web of weeds and trees; it was easier to go along the shore, and Rainsford floundered along by the water. Not far from where he landed, he stopped.

Some wounded thing — by the evidence, a large animal — had thrashed about in the underbrush; the jungle weeds were crushed down and the moss was lacerated; one patch of weeds was stained crimson. A small, glittering object not far away caught Rainsford's eye and he picked it up. It was an empty cartridge.

"A twenty-two," he remarked. "That's odd. It must have been a fairly large animal too. The hunter had his nerve with him to tackle it with a light gun. It's clear that the brute put up a fight. I suppose the first three shots I heard was when the hunter flushed his quarry and wounded it. The last shot was when he trailed it here and finished it."

He examined the ground closely and found what he had hoped to find — the print of hunting boots. They pointed along the cliff in the direction he had been going. Eagerly he hurried along, now slipping on a rotten log or a loose stone, but making headway; night was beginning to settle down on the island.

Bleak darkness was blacking out the sea and 45 jungle when Rainsford sighted the lights. He came upon them as he turned a crook in the coast line; and his first thought was that he had come upon a village, for there were many lights. But as he forged along he saw to his great astonishment that all the lights were in one enormous building — a lofty structure with pointed towers plunging upward into the gloom. His eyes made out the shadowy outlines of a palatial chateau; it was set on a high bluff, and on three sides of it cliffs dived down to where the sea licked greedy lips in the shadows.

"Mirage," thought Rainsford. But it was no mirage, he found, when he opened the tall spiked iron gate. The stone steps were real enough; the massive door with a leering gargoyle for a knocker

was real enough; yet above it all hung an air of unreality.

He lifted the knocker, and it creaked up stiffly, as if it had never before been used. He let it fall, and it startled him with its booming loudness. He thought he heard steps within; the door remained closed. Again Rainsford lifted the heavy knocker, and let it fall. The door opened then — opened as suddenly as if it were on a spring — and Rainsford stood blinking in the river of glaring gold light that poured out. The first thing Rainsford's eyes discerned was the largest man Rainsford had ever seen — a gigantic creature, solidly made and black bearded to the waist. In his hand the man held a long-barreled revolver, and he was pointing it straight at Rainsford's heart.

Out of the snarl of beard two small eyes regarded Rainsford.

"Don't be alarmed," said Rainsford, with a smile which he hoped was disarming. "I'm no robber. I fell off a yacht. My name is Sanger Rainsford of New York City."

The menacing look in the eyes did not 50 change. The revolver pointing as rigidly as if the giant were a statue. He gave no sign that he understood Rainsford's words, or that he had even heard them. He was dressed in uniform — a black uniform trimmed with gray astrakhan.

"I'm Sanger Rainsford of New York," Rainsford began again. "I fell off a yacht. I am hungry."

The man's only answer was to raise with his thumb the hammer of his revolver. Then Rainsford saw the man's free hand go to his forehead in a military salute, and he saw him click his heels together and stand at attention. Another man was coming down the broad marble steps, an erect, slender man in evening clothes. He advanced to Rainsford and held out his hand.

In a cultivated voice marked by a slight accent that gave it added precision and deliberateness, he said, "It is a very great pleasure and honor to welcome Mr. Sanger Rainsford, the celebrated hunter, to my home."

Automatically Rainsford shook the man's hand.

"I've read your book about hunting snow leopards in Tibet, you see," explained the man. "I am General Zaroff."

Rainsford's first impression was that the man was singularly handsome; his second was that there was an original, almost bizarre quality about the general's face. He was a tall man past middle age, for his hair was a vivid white; but his thick eyebrows and pointed military mustache were as black as the night from which Rainsford had come. His eyes, too, were black and very

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bright. He had high cheekbones, a sharp cut nose, a spare, dark face — the face of a man used to giving orders, the face of an aristocrat. Turning to the giant in uniform, the general made a sign. The giant put away his pistol, saluted, withdrew.

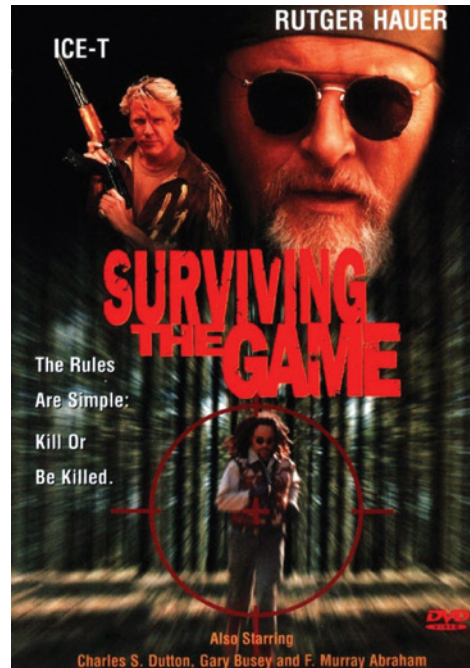
"Ivan is an incredibly strong fellow," remarked the general, "but he has the misfortune to be deaf and dumb. A simple fellow, but, I'm afraid, like all his race, a bit of a savage."

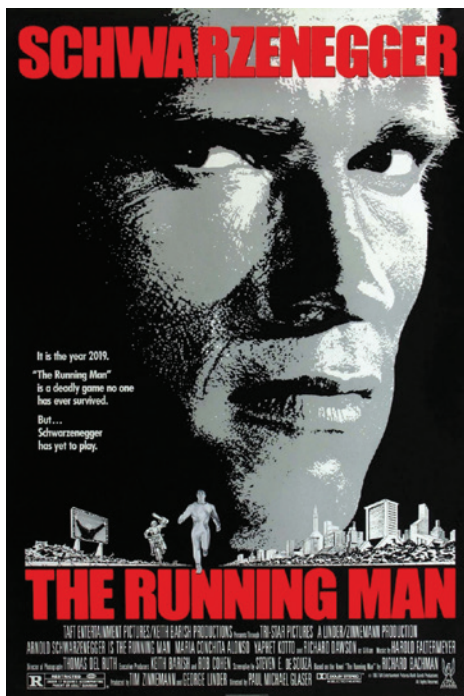
"Is he Russian?"

"He is a Cossack," said the general, and his smile showed red lips and pointed teeth. "So am I."

seeing connections

The purpose of a movie poster is to use attention-grabbing images and graphics to entice people to want to see the movie. The visual elements of the poster can give hints or insight into the plot, characters, and themes of the story.





How do these posters entice audiences to see these films, which were adapted from or inspired by Connell's short story? What elements hint at the plots, characters, or themes of these movies, and how do those elements seem to compare to Connell's story?

"Come," he said, "we shouldn't be chatting here. We can talk later. Now you want clothes, food, rest. You shall have them. This is a most-restful spot."

Ivan had reappeared, and the general spoke to him with lips that moved but gave forth no sound.

"Follow Ivan, if you please, Mr. Rainsford," said the general. "I was about to have my dinner when you came. I'll wait for you. You'll find that my clothes will fit you, I think."

It was to a huge, beam-ceilinged bedroom with a canopied bed big enough for six men that

60 Rainsford followed the silent giant. Ivan laid out an evening suit, and Rainsford, as he put it on, noticed that it came from a London tailor who ordinarily cut and sewed for none below the rank of duke.

The dining room to which Ivan conducted him was in many ways remarkable. There was a mediæval magnificence about it; it suggested a baronial hall of feudal times with its oaken panels, its high ceiling, its vast refectory tables where twoscore men could sit down to eat. About the hall were mounted heads of many animals — lions, tigers, elephants, moose, bears; larger or more perfect specimens Rainsford had

never seen. At the great table the general was sitting, alone.

"You'll have a cocktail, Mr. Rainsford," he suggested. The cocktail was surpassingly good; and, Rainsford noted, the table appointments were of the finest — the linen, the crystal, the silver, the china.

They were eating *borsch*, the rich, red soup with whipped cream so dear to Russian palates. Half apologetically General Zaroff said, "We do our best to preserve the amenities of civilization here. Please forgive any lapses. We are well off the beaten track, you know. Do you think the champagne has suffered from its long ocean trip?"

"Not in the least," declared Rainsford. He was finding the general a most thoughtful and affable host, a true cosmopolite. But there was one small trait of the general's that made Rainsford uncomfortable. Whenever he looked up from his plate he found the general studying him, appraising him narrowly.

"Perhaps," said General Zaroff, "you were surprised that I recognized your name. You see, I read all books on hunting published in English, French, and Russian. I have but one passion in my life, Mr. Rainsford, and it is the hunt."

"You have some wonderful heads here," said Rainsford as he ate a particularly well-cooked filet mignon. "That Cape buffalo is the largest I ever saw."

"Oh, that fellow. Yes, he was a monster."

"Did he charge you?"

"Hurled me against a tree," said the general. "Fractured my skull. But I got the brute."

"I've always thought," said Rainsford, "that the Cape buffalo is the most dangerous of all big game."

For a moment the general did not reply; he was smiling his curious red-lipped smile. Then he said slowly, "No. You are wrong, sir. The Cape buffalo is not the most dangerous big game." He sipped his wine. "Here in my preserve on this

island," he said in the same slow tone, "I hunt more dangerous game."

Rainsford expressed his surprise. "Is there big game on this island?"

The general nodded. "The biggest."

"Really?"

"Oh, it isn't here naturally, of course. I have to stock the island."

"What have you imported, general?"

Rainsford asked. "Tigers?"

The general smiled. "No," he said. "Hunting tigers ceased to interest me some years ago. I exhausted their possibilities, you see. No thrill left in tigers, no real danger. I live for danger, Mr. Rainsford."

The general took from his pocket a gold cigarette case and offered his guest a long black cigarette with a silver tip; it was perfumed and gave off a smell like incense.

"We will have some capital hunting, you and I," said the general. "I shall be most glad to have your society."

"But what game — " began Rainsford.

"I'll tell you," said the general. "You will be amused, I know. I think I may say, in all modesty, that I have done a rare thing. I have invented a new sensation. May I pour you another glass of port?"

"Thank you, general."

The general filled both glasses, and said, "God makes some men poets. Some He makes kings, some beggars. Me He made a hunter. My hand was made for the trigger, my father said. He was a very rich man with a quarter of a million acres in the Crimea, and he was an ardent sportsman. When I was only five years old he gave me a little gun, specially made in Moscow for me, to shoot sparrows with. When I shot some of his prize turkeys with it, he did not punish me; he complimented me on my marksmanship. I killed my first bear in the Caucasus when I was ten. My whole life has been one prolonged hunt. I went into the army — it was expected of noblemen's

sons — and for a time commanded a division of Cossack cavalry, but my real interest was always the hunt. I have hunted every kind of game in every land. It would be impossible for me to tell you how many animals I have killed.”

The general puffed at his cigarette.

“After the debacle in Russia I left the country, for it was imprudent for an officer of the Czar to stay there. Many noble Russians lost everything. I, luckily, had invested heavily in American securities, so I shall never have to open a tearoom in Monte Carlo or drive a taxi in Paris. Naturally, I continued to hunt — grizzlies in your Rockies, crocodiles in the Ganges, rhinoceroses in East Africa. It was in Africa that the Cape buffalo hit me and laid me up for six months. As soon as I recovered I started for the Amazon to hunt jaguars, for I had heard they were unusually cunning. They weren’t.” The Cossack sighed. “They were no match at all for a hunter with his wits about him, and a high-powered rifle. I was bitterly disappointed. I was lying in my tent with a splitting headache one night when a terrible thought pushed its way into my mind. Hunting was beginning to bore me! And hunting, remember, had been my life. I have heard that in America businessmen often go to pieces when they give up the business that has been their life.”

“Yes, that’s so,” said Rainsford.

The general smiled. “I had no wish to go to pieces,” he said. “I must do something. Now, mine is an analytical mind, Mr. Rainsford. Doubtless that is why I enjoy the problems of the chase.”

“No doubt, General Zaroff.”

“So,” continued the general, “I asked myself why the hunt no longer fascinated me. You are much younger than I am, Mr. Rainsford, and have not hunted as much, but you perhaps can guess the answer.”

“What was it?”

“Simply this: hunting had ceased to be what you call ‘a sporting proposition.’ It had become

too easy. I always got my quarry. Always. There is no greater bore than perfection.”

The general lit a fresh cigarette.

“No animal had a chance with me anymore.

That is no boast; it is a mathematical certainty. The animal had nothing but his legs and his instinct. Instinct is no match for reason. When I thought of this it was a tragic moment for me, I can tell you.”

Rainsford leaned across the table, absorbed in what his host was saying.

“It came to me as an inspiration what I must do,” the general went on.

“And that was?”

The general smiled the quiet smile of one who has faced an obstacle and surmounted it with success. “I had to invent a new animal to hunt,” he said.

“A new animal? You’re joking.”

“Not at all,” said the general. “I never joke about hunting. I needed a new animal. I found one. So I bought this island, built this house, and here I do my hunting. The island is perfect for my purposes — there are jungles with a maze of traits in them, hills, swamps — ”

“But the animal, General Zaroff?”

“Oh,” said the general, “it supplies me with the most exciting hunting in the world. No other hunting compares with it for an instant. Every day I hunt, and I never grow bored now, for I have a quarry with which I can match my wits.”

Rainsford’s bewilderment showed in his face.

“I wanted the ideal animal to hunt,” explained the general. “So I said, ‘What are the attributes of an ideal quarry?’ And the answer was, of course, ‘It must have courage, cunning, and, above all, it must be able to reason.’”

“But no animal can reason,” objected Rainsford.

“My dear fellow,” said the general, “there is one that can.”

“But you can’t mean — ” gasped Rainsford.

“And why not?”

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Adam Zygals/The Buffalo News



↑ While most agree that hunting for food is a natural, traditional, and ethical practice, some draw the line at big game hunting for sport. This cartoon makes such an argument.

Think of one argument in support of big game hunting and one against big game hunting, and come up with one proposal that is a creative compromise on the issue. What side of this issue do the themes of "The Most Dangerous Game" seem to take?

"I can't believe you are serious, General Zaroff. This is a grisly joke."

"Why should I not be serious? I am speaking of hunting."

"Hunting? Great Guns, General Zaroff, what you speak of is murder."

The general laughed with entire good nature. He regarded Rainsford quizzically. "I refuse to believe that so modern and civilized a young man as you seem to be harbors romantic ideas about the value of human life. Surely your experiences in the war —"

"Did not make me condone cold-blooded murder," finished Rainsford stiffly.

Laughter shook the general. "How extraordinarily droll you are!" he said. "One does not expect nowadays to find a young man of the educated class, even in America, with such a naive, and, if I may say so, mid-Victorian point of view. It's like finding a snuffbox in a limousine. Ah, well, doubtless you had Puritan ancestors. So many Americans appear to have had. I'll

wager you'll forget your notions when you go hunting with me. You've a genuine new thrill in store for you, Mr. Rainsford."

"Thank you, I'm a hunter, not a murderer."

"Dear me," said the general, quite unruffled, "again that unpleasant word. But I think I can show you that your scruples are quite ill founded."

"Yes?"

"Life is for the strong, to be lived by the strong, and, if needs be, taken by the strong. The weak of the world were put here to give the strong pleasure. I am strong. Why should I not use my gift? If I wish to hunt, why should I not? I hunt the scum of the earth: sailors from tramp ships — lassars, blacks, Chinese, whites, mongrels — a thoroughbred horse or hound is worth more than a score of them."

"But they are men," said Rainsford hotly.

"Precisely," said the general. "That is why I use them. It gives me pleasure. They can reason, after a fashion. So they are dangerous."

"But where do you get them?"

The general's left eyelid fluttered down in a wink. "This island is called Ship Trap," he answered. "Sometimes an angry god of the high seas sends them to me. Sometimes, when Providence is not so kind, I help Providence a bit. Come to the window with me."

Rainsford went to the window and looked out toward the sea.

"Watch! Out there!" exclaimed the general, pointing into the night. Rainsford's eyes saw only blackness, and then, as the general pressed a button, far out to sea Rainsford saw the flash of lights.

The general chuckled. "They indicate a channel," he said, "where there's none; giant rocks with razor edges crouch like a sea monster

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with wide-open jaws. They can crush a ship as easily as I crush this nut." He dropped a walnut on the hardwood floor and brought his heel grinding down on it. "Oh, yes," he said, casually, as if in answer to a question, "I have electricity. We try to be civilized here."

"Civilized? And you shoot down men?"

A trace of anger was in the general's black eyes, but it was there for but a second; and he said, in his most pleasant manner, "Dear me, what a righteous young man you are! I assure you I do not do the thing you suggest. That would be barbarous. I treat these visitors with every consideration. They get plenty of good food and exercise. They get into splendid physical condition. You shall see for yourself tomorrow."

"What do you mean?"

"We'll visit my training school," smiled the general. "It's in the cellar. I have about a dozen pupils down there now. They're from the Spanish bark *San Lucar* that had the bad luck to go on the rocks out there. A very inferior lot, I regret to say. Poor specimens and more accustomed to the deck than to the jungle." He raised his hand, and Ivan, who served as waiter, brought thick Turkish coffee. Rainsford, with an effort, held his tongue in check.

"It's a game, you see," pursued the general blandly. "I suggest to one of them that we go hunting. I give him a supply of food and an excellent hunting knife. I give him three hours' start. I am to follow, armed only with a pistol of the smallest caliber and range. If my quarry eludes me for three whole days, he wins the game. If I find him" — the general smiled — "he loses."

"Suppose he refuses to be hunted?"

"Oh," said the general, "I give him his option, of course. He need not play that game if he doesn't wish to. If he does not wish to hunt, I turn him over to Ivan. Ivan once had the honor of serving as official knouter¹ to the Great White Czar, and he has his own ideas of sport.

Invariably, Mr. Rainsford, invariably they choose the hunt."

"And if they win?"

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The smile on the general's face widened. "To date I have not lost," he said. Then he added, hastily: "I don't wish you to think me a braggart, Mr. Rainsford. Many of them afford only the most elementary sort of problem. Occasionally I strike a tartar. One almost did win. I eventually had to use the dogs."

"The dogs?"

"This way, please. I'll show you."

The general steered Rainsford to a window. The lights from the windows sent a flickering illumination that made grotesque patterns on the courtyard below, and Rainsford could see moving about there a dozen or so huge black shapes; as they turned toward him, their eyes glittered greenly.

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"A rather good lot, I think," observed the general. "They are let out at seven every night. If anyone should try to get into my house — or out of it — something extremely regrettable would occur to him." He hummed a snatch of song from the *Folies Bergere*.²

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"And now," said the general, "I want to show you my new collection of heads. Will you come with me to the library?"

"I hope," said Rainsford, "that you will excuse me tonight, General Zaroff. I'm really not feeling well."

"Ah, indeed?" the general inquired solicitously. "Well, I suppose that's only natural, after your long swim. You need a good, restful night's sleep. Tomorrow you'll feel like a new man, I'll wager. Then we'll hunt, eh? I've one rather promising prospect — " Rainsford was hurrying from the room.

"Sorry you can't go with me tonight," called the general. "I expect rather fair sport — a big,

¹ In Russia, a knouter is a person who whips criminals with a lash of leather thongs, called a knout. —Eds.

² A cabaret, or nightclub, in Paris, France, that was founded in 1869 and is still open today. —Eds.

strong, black. He looks resourceful — Well, good night, Mr. Rainsford; I hope you have a good night's rest."

The bed was good, and the pajamas of the softest silk, and he was tired in every fiber of his being, but nevertheless Rainsford could not quiet his brain with the opiate of sleep. He lay, eyes wide open. Once he thought he heard stealthy steps in the corridor outside his room. He sought to throw open the door; it would not open. He went to the window and looked out. His room was high up in one of the towers. The lights of the chateau were out now, and it was dark and silent; but there was a fragment of sallow moon, and by its wan light he could see, dimly, the courtyard. There, weaving in and out in the pattern of shadow, were black, noiseless forms; the hounds heard him at the window and looked up, expectantly, with their green eyes. Rainsford went back to the bed and lay down. By many methods he tried to put himself to sleep. He had achieved a doze when, just as morning began to come, he heard, far off in the jungle, the faint report of a pistol.

General Zaroff did not appear until luncheon. He was dressed faultlessly in the tweeds of a country squire. He was solicitous about the state of Rainsford's health.

"As for me," sighed the general, "I do not feel so well. I am worried, Mr. Rainsford. Last night I detected traces of my old complaint."

To Rainsford's questioning glance the general said, "Ennui. Boredom."

Then, taking a second helping of crepes Suzette, the general explained: "The hunting was not good last night. The fellow lost his head. He made a straight trail that offered no problems at all. That's the trouble with these sailors; they have dull brains to begin with, and they do not know how to get about in the woods. They do excessively stupid and obvious things. It's most annoying. Will you have another glass of Chablis, Mr. Rainsford?"

"General," said Rainsford firmly, "I wish to leave this island at once."

The general raised his thickets of eyebrows; he seemed hurt. "But, my dear fellow," the general protested, "you've only just come. You've had no hunting — "

"I wish to go today," said Rainsford. He saw the dead black eyes of the general on him, studying him. General Zaroff's face suddenly brightened.

He filled Rainsford's glass with venerable Chablis from a dusty bottle.

"Tonight," said the general, "we will hunt — you and I."

Rainsford shook his head. "No, general," he said. "I will not hunt."

The general shrugged his shoulders and delicately ate a hothouse grape. "As you wish, my friend," he said. "The choice rests entirely with you. But may I not venture to suggest that you will find my idea of sport more diverting than Ivan's?"

He nodded toward the corner to where the giant stood, scowling, his thick arms crossed on his hogshead of chest.

"You don't mean — " cried Rainsford.

"My dear fellow," said the general, "have I not told you I always mean what I say about hunting? This is really an inspiration. I drink to a foeman worthy of my steel — at last." The general raised his glass, but Rainsford sat staring at him.

"You'll find this game worth playing," the general said enthusiastically. "Your brain against mine. Your woodcraft against mine. Your strength and stamina against mine. Outdoor chess! And the stake is not without value, eh?"

"And if I win — " began Rainsford huskily.

"I'll cheerfully acknowledge myself defeat if I do not find you by midnight of the third day," said General Zaroff. "My sloop will place you on the mainland near a town." The general read what Rainsford was thinking.

"Oh, you can trust me," said the Cossack.

"I will give you my word as a gentleman and a sportsman. Of course you, in turn, must agree to say nothing of your visit here."

"I'll agree to nothing of the kind," said Rainsford.

"Oh," said the general, "in that case . . . But why discuss that now? Three days hence we can discuss it over a bottle of Veuve Cliquot, unless . . ."

The general sipped his wine.

Then a businesslike air animated him. "Ivan," he said to Rainsford, "will supply you with hunting clothes, food, a knife. I suggest you wear moccasins; they leave a poorer trail. I suggest, too, that you avoid the big swamp in the southeast corner of the island. We call it Death Swamp. There's quicksand there. One foolish fellow tried it. The deplorable part of it was that Lazarus followed him. You can imagine my feelings, Mr. Rainsford. I loved Lazarus; he was the finest hound in my pack. Well, I must beg you to excuse me now. I always take a siesta after lunch. You'll hardly have time for a nap, I fear. You'll want to start, no doubt. I shall not follow till dusk. Hunting at night is so much more exciting than by day, don't you think? Au revoir, Mr. Rainsford, au revoir." General Zaroff, with a deep, courtly bow, strolled from the room.

From another door came Ivan. Under one arm he carried khaki hunting clothes, a haversack of food, a leather sheath containing a long-bladed hunting knife; his right hand rested on a cocked revolver thrust in the crimson sash about his waist.

Rainsford had fought his way through the bush for two hours. "I must keep my nerve. I must keep my nerve," he said through tight teeth.

He had not been entirely clearheaded when the chateau gates snapped shut behind him. His whole idea at first was to put distance between himself and General Zaroff; and, to this end, he had plunged along, spurred on by the sharp rowers of something very like panic. Now he had got a grip on himself, had stopped, and was taking stock of himself and the situation. He saw that straight flight was futile; inevitably it would bring him face to face with the sea. He was in a

picture with a frame of water, and his operations, clearly, must take place within that frame.

"I'll give him a trail to follow," muttered Rainsford, and he struck off from the rude path he had been following into the trackless wilderness. He executed a series of intricate loops; he doubled on his trail again and again, recalling all the lore of the fox hunt, and all the dodges of the fox. Night found him leg-weary, with hands and face lashed by the branches, on a thickly wooded ridge. He knew it would be insane to blunder on through the dark, even if he had the strength. His need for rest was imperative and he thought, "I have played the fox, now I must play the cat of the fable." A big tree with a thick trunk and outspread branches was near by, and, taking care to leave not the slightest mark, he climbed up into the crotch, and, stretching out on one of the broad limbs, after a fashion, rested. Rest brought him new confidence and almost a feeling of security. Even so zealous a hunter as General Zaroff could not trace him there, he told himself; only the devil himself could follow that complicated trail through the jungle after dark. But perhaps the general was a devil—

An apprehensive night crawled slowly by like a wounded snake and sleep did not visit Rainsford, although the silence of a dead world was on the jungle. Toward morning when a dingy gray was varnishing the sky, the cry of some startled bird focused Rainsford's attention in that direction. Something was coming through the bush, coming slowly, carefully, coming by the same winding way Rainsford had come. He flattened himself down on the limb and, through a screen of leaves almost as thick as tapestry, he watched. . . . That which was approaching was a man.

It was General Zaroff. He made his way along with his eyes fixed in utmost concentration on the ground before him. He paused, almost beneath the tree, dropped to his knees and studied the ground. Rainsford's impulse was to hurl himself down like a panther, but he saw that the general's

David Borchert The New Yorker Collection/
The Cartoon Bank



↑ What statement does this cartoon make about man's ability as a hunter? How does this cartoon contradict the idea that man's reasoning skills make him the most dangerous game?

right hand held something metallic — a small automatic pistol.

The hunter shook his head several times, as if he were puzzled. Then he straightened up and took from his case one of his black cigarettes; its pungent incenselike smoke floated up to Rainsford's nostrils.

Rainsford held his breath. The general's eyes had left the ground and were traveling inch by inch up the tree. Rainsford froze there, every muscle tensed for a spring. But the sharp eyes of the hunter stopped before they reached the limb where Rainsford lay; a smile spread over his brown face. Very deliberately he blew a smoke ring into the air; then he turned his back on the tree and walked carelessly away, back along the trail he had come. The swish of the underbrush against his hunting boots grew fainter and fainter.

The pent-up air burst hotly from Rainsford's lungs. His first thought made him feel sick and numb. The general could follow a trail through the woods at night; he could follow an extremely difficult trail; he must have uncanny powers; only by the merest chance had the Cossack failed to see his quarry.

Rainsford's second thought was even more terrible. It sent a shudder of cold horror through his whole being. Why had the general smiled? Why had he turned back?

Rainsford did not want to believe what his reason told him was true, but the truth was as evident as the sun that had by now pushed through the morning mists. The general was playing with him! The general was saving him for another day's sport! The Cossack was the cat; he was the mouse. Then it was that Rainsford knew the full meaning of terror.

"I will not lose my nerve. I will not."

He slid down from the tree, and struck off again into the woods. His face was set and he forced the machinery of his mind to function. Three hundred yards from his hiding place he stopped where a huge dead tree leaned precariously on a smaller, living one. Throwing off his sack of food, Rainsford took his knife from its sheath and began to work with all his energy.

The job was finished at last, and he threw himself down behind a fallen log a hundred feet away. He did not have to wait long. The cat was coming again to play with the mouse.

Following the trail with the sureness of a bloodhound came General Zaroff. Nothing escaped those searching black eyes, no crushed blade of grass, no bent twig, no mark, no matter how faint, in the moss. So intent was the Cossack on his stalking that he was upon the thing Rainsford had made before he saw it. His foot touched the protruding bough that was the trigger. Even as he touched it, the general sensed his danger and leaped back with the agility of an ape. But he was not quite quick enough; the dead tree, delicately adjusted to rest on the cut living one, crashed down and struck the general a glancing blow on the shoulder as it fell; but for his alertness, he must have been smashed beneath it. He staggered, but he did not fall; nor did he drop his revolver. He stood there, rubbing his injured shoulder, and Rainsford, with fear again gripping

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his heart, heard the general's mocking laugh ring through the jungle.

"Rainsford," called the general, "if you are within sound of my voice, as I suppose you are, let me congratulate you. Not many men know how to make a Malay mancatcher. Luckily for me I, too, have hunted in Malacca. You are proving interesting, Mr. Rainsford. I am going now to have my wound dressed; it's only a slight one. But I shall be back. I shall be back."

When the general, nursing his bruised shoulder, had gone, Rainsford took up his flight again. It was flight now, a desperate, hopeless flight, that carried him on for some hours. Dusk came, then darkness, and still he pressed on. The ground grew softer under his moccasins; the vegetation grew ranker, denser; insects bit him savagely.

Then, as he stepped forward, his foot sank into the ooze. He tried to wrench it back, but the muck sucked viciously at his foot as if it were a giant leech. With a violent effort, he tore his feet loose. He knew where he was now. Death Swamp and its quicksand.

His hands were tight closed as if his nerve were something tangible that someone in the darkness was trying to tear from his grip. The softness of the earth had given him an idea. He stepped back from the quicksand a dozen feet or so and, like some huge prehistoric beaver, he began to dig.

Rainsford had dug himself in France³ when a second's delay meant death. That had been a placid pastime compared to his digging now. The pit grew deeper; when it was above his shoulders, he climbed out and from some hard saplings cut stakes and sharpened them to a fine point. These stakes he planted in the bottom of the pit with the points sticking up. With flying fingers he wove a rough carpet of weeds and branches

and with it he covered the mouth of the pit. Then, wet with sweat and aching with tiredness, he crouched behind the stump of a lightning-charred tree.

He knew his pursuer was coming; he heard the padding sound of feet on the soft earth, and the night breeze brought him the perfume of the general's cigarette. It seemed to Rainsford that the general was coming with unusual swiftness; he was not feeling his way along, foot by foot. Rainsford, crouching there, could not see the general, nor could he see the pit. He lived a year in a minute. Then he felt an impulse to cry aloud with joy, for he heard the sharp crackle of the breaking branches as the cover of the pit gave way; he heard the sharp scream of pain as the pointed stakes found their mark. He leaped up from his place of concealment. Then he cowered back. Three feet from the pit a man was standing, with an electric torch in his hand.

"You've done well, Rainsford," the voice of the general called. "Your Burmese tiger pit has claimed one of my best dogs. Again you score. I think, Mr. Rainsford, I'll see what you can do against my whole pack. I'm going home for a rest now. Thank you for a most amusing evening."

At daybreak Rainsford, lying near the swamp, was awakened by a sound that made him know that he had new things to learn about fear. It was a distant sound, faint and wavering, but he knew it. It was the baying of a pack of hounds.

Rainsford knew he could do one of two things. He could stay where he was and wait. That was suicide. He could flee. That was postponing the inevitable. For a moment he stood there, thinking. An idea that held a wild chance came to him, and, tightening his belt, he headed away from the swamp.

The baying of the hounds drew nearer, then still nearer, nearer, ever nearer. On a ridge Rainsford climbed a tree. Down a watercourse, not a quarter of a mile away, he could see

³ This reference to France has to do with the trench warfare on the front line during World War I. Fighters often dug trenches, or deep ditches, for protection from artillery and small arms fire. —Eds.

the bush moving. Straining his eyes, he saw the lean figure of General Zaroff; just ahead of him Rainsford made out another figure whose wide shoulders surged through the tall jungle weeds; it was the giant Ivan, and he seemed pulled forward by some unseen force; Rainsford knew that Ivan must be holding the pack in leash.

They would be on him any minute now. His mind worked frantically. He thought of a native trick he had learned in Uganda. He slid down the tree. He caught hold of a springy young sapling and to it he fastened his hunting knife, with the blade pointing down the trail; with a bit of wild grapevine he tied back the sapling. Then he ran for his life. The hounds raised their voices as they hit the fresh scent. Rainsford knew now how an animal at bay feels.

He had to stop to get his breath. The baying of the hounds stopped abruptly, and Rainsford's heart stopped too. They must have reached the knife.

He shinned excitedly up a tree and looked back. His pursuers had stopped. But the hope that was in Rainsford's brain when he climbed died, for he saw in the shallow valley that General Zaroff was still on his feet. But Ivan was not. The knife, driven by the recoil of the springing tree, had not wholly failed.

Rainsford had hardly tumbled to the ground when the pack took up the cry again.

"Nerve, nerve, nerve!" he panted, as he dashed along. A blue gap showed between the trees dead ahead. Ever nearer drew the hounds. Rainsford forced himself on toward that gap. He reached it. It was the shore of the sea. Across a cove he could see the gloomy gray stone of the chateau. Twenty feet below him the sea rumbled and hissed. Rainsford hesitated. He heard the hounds. Then he leaped far out into the sea. . . .

When the general and his pack reached the place by the sea, the Cossack stopped. For

some minutes he stood regarding the blue-green expanse of water. He shrugged his shoulders. Then he sat down, took a drink of brandy from a silver flask, lit a cigarette, and hummed a bit from *Madame Butterfly*.

General Zaroff had an exceedingly good dinner in his great paneled dining hall that evening. With it he had a bottle of Pol Roger and half a bottle of Chambertin. Two slight annoyances kept him from perfect enjoyment. One was the thought that it would be difficult to replace Ivan; the other was that his quarry had escaped him; of course, the American hadn't played the game — so thought the general as he tasted his after-dinner liqueur. In his library he read, to soothe himself, from the works of Marcus Aurelius. At ten he went up to his bedroom. He was deliciously tired, he said to himself, as he locked himself in. There was a little moonlight, so, before turning on his light, he went to the window and looked down at the courtyard. He could see the great hounds, and he called, "Better luck another time," to them. Then he switched on the light.

A man, who had been hiding in the curtains 200 of the bed, was standing there.

"Rainsford!" screamed the general. "How in God's name did you get here?"

"Swam," said Rainsford. "I found it quicker than walking through the jungle."

The general sucked in his breath and smiled. "I congratulate you," he said. "You have won the game."

Rainsford did not smile. "I am still a beast at bay," he said, in a low, hoarse voice. "Get ready, General Zaroff."

The general made one of his deepest bows. "I see," he said. "Splendid! One of us is to furnish a repast for the hounds. The other will sleep in this very excellent bed. On guard, Rainsford." . . .

He had never slept in a better bed, Rainsford 205 decided.

UNDERSTANDING AND INTERPRETING

1. What is Rainsford's central conflict in paragraphs 32–38? How does the conflict evolve over the course of the story? Give examples to support your answer.
2. How does Connell use direct and indirect characterization to portray General Zaroff? What evidence is there that General Zaroff believes he is superior to other animals, including men?
3. What similarities do Rainsford and General Zaroff share? In what ways do their characters differ?
4. What purpose does Ivan serve in the story? How does his character impact the events that occur?
5. In paragraph 120, General Zaroff explains how he views men. What would you say his definition of *man* is? Does Rainsford fit this definition? Why or why not?
6. In what ways is the game rigged in favor of the hunter? Give specific examples to support your answer.
7. Give examples of when Rainsford draws on logic and reason to elude the hunter. What does he do that separates him from other hunted species?
8. Why is it important that the story takes place on an island as opposed to a different location? Does the island play a thematic role in this story as well as a literal one?
9. How do Rainsford's ideas about hunting change over the course of the story? Give specific examples that show his attitude at the beginning of the story, and evidence of the change during and after he is hunted.
2. **Vocabulary in Context.** What is the meaning of the word “indolently” in paragraph 30 and what does its use tell us about Rainsford's character at this point in the story?
3. During his conversation with Whitney in paragraph 10, Rainsford asks the question, “Who cares how a jaguar feels?” What is the irony of this statement? How might Rainsford answer this question differently at the end of the story?
4. Connell uses a multitude of figurative language devices (simile, metaphor, personification) in the opening conversation between Rainsford and Whitney. How do these devices contribute to the overall mood at the beginning? How do they foreshadow later events in the story?
5. Explain how Connell uses language to build suspense in paragraphs 32–37.
6. What is ironic about Rainsford thinking that he'd escaped “his enemy, the sea” in paragraph 38?
7. Reread paragraphs 45–47 describing General Zaroff's compound. How does Connell use imagery and details in these paragraphs to foreshadow the meeting between Rainsford and General Zaroff?
8. General Zaroff makes many ironic statements during dinner, and lunch the following day, about his lifestyle and beliefs that further illuminate his character. For example, he mentions in paragraph 86 that his God-given gift is to be a hunter; however, Zaroff has used his “gift” to hunt God's ultimate creation—man. What other statements does General Zaroff make that demonstrate irony in the situation and reveal insight into his character?

ANALYZING LANGUAGE, STYLE, AND STRUCTURE

1. **Vocabulary in Context.** Words can have double meanings. Look up the word “game” in the dictionary. What multiple meanings could be attached in the title?
9. What details in the story indicate that Rainsford's past experiences have helped him elude General Zaroff?
10. In paragraph 199, the point of view shifts characters. Why does Connell include this shift in point of view toward the end of the story?

11. What is the effect of putting Rainsford's name at the end of the last sentence: "He had never slept in a better bed, Rainsford decided." How would the effect of the ending have differed if Connell chose to start the sentence with his name instead?

TOPICS FOR COMPOSING

1. **Analysis.** On the exterior, General Zaroff is a sophisticated, civilized individual. Underneath, he desires to satisfy his thirst for hunting in a game of wits and survival with humans as the prey. What human behaviors or tendencies might Connell be critiquing in this story? Explain other symptoms of this tendency that you have read about in history or current events. Does it play a positive role in any way, or is it always negative?
2. **Argument.** General Zaroff admits that his boredom with hunting causes him to seek new and more dangerous game. Discuss the consequences, either positive or negative, of keeping ourselves constantly interested, or even entertained.
3. **Personal.** Oftentimes when faced with peril or placed in dire situations, survival skills will instinctively kick in. Have you experienced an event that has prompted the use of your survival skills or instinct? Explain the situation and how your survival skills or instinct helped you through it.
4. **Personal.** General Zaroff establishes a game that heavily favors the hunter. Discuss a situation you have been in where someone else sets the rules of the "game" in their own favor. What were the results?
5. **Argument.** Argue whether or not you think that Connell uses Rainsford as the "huntee" to shed light on the cruelties of hunting animals in general. Is this approach effective? Why or why not?
6. **Creative.** Choose a key scene of this story, and rewrite it with Zaroff as an anthropomorphic lion. Afterward, discuss how this change affected the themes and conflicts in the story.

Lelah

ANGELA FLOURNOY

Angela Flournoy is a graduate of the Iowa Writer's Workshop and has taught creative writing at the University of Iowa, the New School, and Columbia University. Her first novel, *The Turner House* (2015), won widespread acclaim and focuses on the Turner family's mother and thirteen grown children struggling in the economically hard-hit Detroit, Michigan. This story, drawn from the novel, focuses on the youngest of the Turner children, Lelah, who suffers from a gambling addiction.

Key Context Lelah, the main character of the story, plays roulette when she gambles. Here are some basic rules of roulette that will help you to understand the game and the effect it has on her. Roulette is a game of chance played in many casinos that uses a large wheel with thirty-seven numbered pockets, one of which is labeled "00." The pockets are colored red or black. The dealer spins a ball on the outside of the wheel,



LaToya T. Duncan

which falls into one of the pockets. The goal of the players is to try to guess which pocket the ball will fall into. Before the ball drops, players place bets on the roulette table. They can bet on one individual number, which pays out the most money. They can also bet on odd/even numbers, a range of numbers (called the “corners”), or colors (red/black), which pay out less. While ultimately, roulette, like all casino games, is a matter of luck since there is no way that anyone can truly predict which pocket the ball will fall into, there are strategies that players, like Lelah in this story, use to try to better their chances of winning by using a combination of these bets.



kompozit/Getty Images

She stuffed fistfuls of her underwear into trash bags while the Detroit city bailiff leaned against the wall and fiddled with his phone. The other bailiff waited outside. Lelah saw him through the front window. He did calf raises on the curb near the dumpster, his pudgy hands on his hips.

She'd always imagined the men who handled evictions as menacing — big muscles, loud mouths. These two were young and large, but soft looking, baby-faced. Like giant chocolate cherubs. It had never come to this before. Lelah had received a few thirty-day notices but always cleared out before the Demand for Possession — a seven-day notice slid under her door. Seven days might as well have been none this time around; before Lelah knew it, the bailiffs were knocking, telling her she had two hours to grab what she

could, that they would toss whatever she left behind into that dumpster outside.

It was the end of April, but it felt like June. The bailiff leaning on the wall carried a gray washcloth in his back pocket, and he swiped it across his brow from time to time. He pretended not to be watching her, but Lelah knew better. He had a plan ready if she snapped and started throwing dishes at him, if she called for backup — a brother or cousin to come beat him up — or if she tried to barricade herself in the bathroom. He probably had a gun. Mostly, all Lelah did was put her hands on the things she owned, think about them for a second, and decide against carrying them to her Pontiac. Furniture was too bulky, food from the fridge would expire in her car, and the



Top and bottom: © Sally Ryan/ZUMApress.com

↑ These are images of eviction taken by photographer Sally Ryan.

What are these photographs suggesting about eviction, and how are they similar or different from what you imagine might have happened in Lelah's case?

smaller things — a blender, boxes full of costume jewelry, a toaster — felt ridiculous to take along. She didn't know where she'd end up. Where do the homeless make toast? Outside of essential clothing, hygiene items, and a few pots and

pans, she focused on the sorts of things people on TV cried about after a fire: a few photos of herself taken over the years, her birth certificate and Social Security card, photos of her daughter and grandson, her father's obituary.

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The second bailiff stopped his calf raises when Lelah walked outside with another box. She imagined that the neighbors peeked at her through their blinds, but she refused to turn around and confirm.

"I'd give you a hand, 5 but we can't touch none of your stuff," he said. Lelah used her shoulder to cram the box into the backseat.

"I know you're thinking, like, if we're not allowed to touch your stuff, then how are we gonna dump everything at the end."

Lelah did not acknowledge that she'd heard him. She took a step back from her car, checked to see if anything valuable was visible from the windows.

"We hire some guys to come and do that part," he said. "Me personally, I'm not touching none of your stuff. I don't do cleanup."

The bailiff smiled. A few of his teeth were brown. Maybe he was older than he looked.

Back inside the apartment, the other bailiff, 10 the sweaty one, sat, legs splayed, on her sofa. At the sight of Lelah he stood up, leaned against the wall once more. What to take, what to take, what to take? It all looked like junk now. Cheap things she'd bought just to keep her apartment from looking barren. She snatched her leather jacket from its hook on the hallway-closet door. That's it, she thought. Leave now, with an hour and a half to spare.

Some people in Gamblers Anonymous, a place she hadn't been in months, claimed the tiny ball, spinning and spinning around on its wheel, was the reason they loved the game.



AP Photo

↑ Here is a picture of the real Motor City Casino in Detroit. From this picture alone, why might Lelah and other gamblers be drawn to the site?

If Lelah were playing, she would never stand here, so far away from the wheel and the top half of the board, a position where she'd end up asking strangers to put her chips where she wanted them to go. If she were playing, she'd request the orange chips. She could almost feel them, the click and dry slide of them in her palm. But she couldn't play right now. She'd spent the last of her cash on lunch, and she didn't know whether she'd be approved for unemployment, so she couldn't spend the \$183 in the bank.

"No more bets," the dealer said. He waved his hand over the table. People settled back onto their stools.

The ball landed on double zero. There were a few cheers, but mostly groans. It was a crowded night in Motor City Casino.

"The one time I take my money off those 15 zeros they come up," the light-skinned woman next to Lelah said. "I been splitting the zeros all night."

"I know, I saw you," Lelah said. "That's how it always goes. That means you'll hit soon." . . .

"I hope so," the woman said. Her fake eyelashes made her look drowsy, like a

middle-aged blinking baby doll. “All I know is that I’ll be back to splitting these zeros from now on.”

She told herself she’d come to Motor City to eat. Her twenty-five complimentary tickets for the buffet were the only tangible benefit of thousands of games of roulette. That and a VIP card. She had anticipated a strange stare, or at least a smirk, as the valet helped her out of her overflowing car, but he hadn’t seemed to notice. Or maybe she wasn’t the only homeless gambler in Motor City tonight.

It was a low-stakes table, five dollars to get on the board. The woman with the eyelashes split the zeros again with twenty-five dollars’ worth of lavender chips — an amount Lelah considered risky seeing as how double zero just came up. She said nothing though. Camaraderie was appreciated, outright advice was not.

Lelah knew she was an addict. She’d more or less known four years ago when she had to ask Brenda, her cubicle mate at the phone company, to lend her two hundred dollars, just until payday. That two hundred had bloomed to a thousand in a year’s time, and after she had paid Brenda back she had found other coworkers to befriend and borrow from. A few hundred from Jamaal, a sweet, chubby twenty-year-old with dreadlocks who worked on the third floor and maybe had a crush on her; sixty dollars from Yang, an older Chinese woman who used to sell pork buns from her cube before management forbade all sales except for the Girl Scout variety; twelve hundred from her supervisor Dwayne, a fifty-year-old widower with a potbelly and a gold-plated left incisor who absolutely had a crush on her but insisted he wanted nothing in return for the loan. “Now that my Sheila’s gone I got nothing and nobody to spend on,” he’d said. . . .

[A]t the grievance meeting HR brought up the money she’d borrowed going all the way back to Brenda. They claimed she’d borrowed more than five thousand dollars over the four years, but that didn’t sound right to Lelah. She could only account for about three thousand, and she’d paid

back everybody but Dwayne. “Jesus, you could’ve told us you were pumping little old ladies for cash before we got in here,” her union rep had said. She had been suspended without pay for over a month now and was still waiting to see if she would be terminated.

When it came to playing roulette, she followed her own code. She never bet all inside, or all out; she spread her chips around the table, she never begged the dealer to let her play out her last chip, and she didn’t make loud proclamations, speak directly to the little white ball as if it gave a damn about her, or beg the chips to behave any particular way.

“No more bets.”

The pit boss, a busty redheaded woman in a pantsuit, whispered something in the dealer’s ear, looked hard at the people gathered around the table, then walked a few paces away.

The ball landed on twenty-seven.

“Aw hell,” the woman splitting the zeros said. Lelah always played twenty-seven. Brianne was born on the twenty-seventh of February, as was her brother Troy. Now was a smart time to move on to the buffet, she knew, but she couldn’t take her eyes off the dealer. He swept up all of the chips, a jumble of sherbet-colored winnings for the casino, because no one bet on her number.

It was awkward, being at a table but not playing at the table. You had to smile, look indifferent and simultaneously interested enough to justify taking up space. She stood up. Took off her jacket.

Several chips covered number twenty-seven this turn. Too late for them, Lelah thought. The woman put the rest of her lavender chips — Lelah estimated twenty between zero and double zero again. She looked up at Lelah and winked.

“No more bets,” the dealer said.

“I knew it! I knew it! I knew it!” The woman next to her jumped up from her stool.

The ball was on double zero. Lelah congratulated her as the dealer slid her a small

fort of chips, more than five hundred dollars.

If she were a seasoned gambler, this woman would stay put and ride this upswing out. This was what Lelah would have done. But the woman asked the dealer to give her the chips in twenties and stood up to go.

"For you," she said to Lelah. She handed her a blue-and-yellow twenty-dollar chip.

"For me, for what?"

"You said I'd hit and I did."

"You would've anyway, I can't," Lelah said.

"Like hell you can't," the woman said. Then she leaned in closer, whispered, "Roulette ain't a spectator sport."

Lelah closed her fingers around the chip.

"Well, thank you. Here," Lelah looked past the woman toward a cocktail waitress, put up a hand to get her attention. "At least let me buy you a free drink. I can afford a free drink."

"No, I need to run out of here with my money before I get pulled back in." She dropped her remaining chips into her purse, a sturdy, designer-looking purse, Lelah noticed, and headed toward the cashier.

This happened to Lelah sometimes in the casino, a stranger high off a big win gave her money just for bearing witness, and each time she felt like crying. Because a stranger could be so generous, when she'd never once thought to do that after a win. Because she wanted the money so much. Because, truthfully, it didn't take much to make Lelah feel like crying. But feeling like crying was not the same as actually crying, and Lelah was up twenty dollars.



George Rose/Getty Images

↑ Casinos are intentionally designed to keep gamblers engaged and surrounded with opportunities to play.

What do you notice in this photograph of a casino in Las Vegas that encourages gambling? What do you notice about the setting in "Lelah" that accomplishes this?

She'd been down to less than twenty bucks and pulled ahead before. There was a red convertible sitting on top of the Wheel of Fortune slots, and though she despised slots as an amateur, vulgar game, she imagined winning so much at a table that they gave the damn thing to her; just put a ramp over the front slots so she could climb up, drive her new Corvette down, and pick up the rest of her winnings at the cashier. Or maybe she'd only get a few hundred, but it would be enough to buy her some time, so she'd resist the urge to try to flip the money. No, she'd run out of there, hundreds in her pocket, and check into a nice hotel. Yes, a nice hotel would be a good start, and then she'd take a day or two to figure out what to do next. This was a lot more plausible than the car scenario, she knew; she just had to strategize.

She figured she should eat first, before they ran out of the good stuff at the buffet, then she'd come back and try to make the chip last. Split it into ones at the five-dollar minimum table, spread it around.

seeing connections

The excerpt below is from an article published in *Scientific American*.

from **How the Brain Gets Addicted to Gambling**

FERRIS JABR

Research to date shows that pathological gamblers and drug addicts share many of the same genetic predispositions for impulsivity and reward seeking. Just as substance addicts require increasingly strong hits to get high, compulsive gamblers pursue ever riskier ventures. Likewise, both drug addicts and problem gamblers endure symptoms of

withdrawal when separated from the chemical or thrill they desire. . . .

[N]euroscientists have learned that drugs and gambling alter many of the same brain circuits in similar ways. A 2005 German study . . . suggests problem gamblers — like drug addicts — have lost sensitivity to their high: when winning, subjects had lower than typical electrical activity in a key region of the brain's reward system.

In what ways could the attributes of addiction be applied to what Lelah demonstrates in this story?

As she piled the green beans onto her plate, she thought she saw half a dozen people she recognized. The woman near the pop fountain with the red sequin hat was definitely someone Lelah had seen before; she always wore that hat and she kept rolls of quarters for the slots in her fanny pack. Lelah kept her eyes on the food.

She knew she should return to the table where the woman won the chip for her, but every open seat there made it so you could see the craps table behind it. Lelah couldn't risk being distracted. She chose a five-dollar-minimum roulette table near the bar. It was bad form to take up a seat when you had so little money to play, but Lelah was determined to make this money grow.

She put ten outside on black, two on twenty-seven, and three in the corner between seven, eight, ten, and eleven. The dealer spun the ball and it landed on eight. This brought her to fifty-four dollars, a much more reasonable amount to work with. She took off her jacket.

Lelah never kept a strict count of her money after every play. The exact amount wasn't as

important to her while in the thick of the game as much as the feel of her stack of chips. Could she cover them with her entire palm, or did she have tall enough stacks that her hand sat on top of them, and the colors — the orange ones she preferred, persimmon, in fact — still peeked between her fingers? Yes, this was the thing to measure by. Let the dollar amount be a pleasant surprise. She kept playing inside and out, sometimes black, sometimes red, a few comers, a few splits, but always straight up on twenty-seven.

Her tablemates came and went. She registered their movements — new faces and body shapes — but not the particulars anymore. The camaraderie seduced her in the beginning, it helped her warm up to the task at hand, but after a while, if she didn't go broke, she'd slip into a space of just her and her hands and the chips that she tried to keep under them. A stillness like sleep, but better than sleep because it didn't bring dreams. She was just a mind and a pair of hands calculating, pushing chips out, pulling some back in, and running her thumb along the length of stacks to feel what she'd gained or lost.

She never once tried to explain this feeling in her GA meetings. She couldn't even share with them the simplest reasons for why she played. They were always talking about feeling alive or feeling numb. How the little white ball made them feel a jolt in their heart. . . . Leah did not feel alive when she played roulette. That wasn't the point, she'd wanted to say. It wasn't to feel alive, but it also wasn't to feel numb. It was about knowing what to do intuitively, and thinking about one thing only, the possibility of winning, the possibility of walking away the victor, finally.

"You want to change some of those for twenties?" the dealer asked.

He's talking to me, Leah realized, and she looked down for the first time in at least ten plays. Her hand rested on a cluster of persimmon stacks about six inches tall. Three hundred dollars, give or take, she could feel it. Jim, the dealer stared at her.

"Sure," she said. "How about one hundred in twenties, one eighty in fives, and whatever's left in ones again."

Jim obliged, and Leah slid a cobalt five-dollar chip back to him for his assistance.

She had enough for a hotel room now. She knew she should leave. Slide her chips into her purse like that generous woman did and make a beeline for the cashier. But her watch said eleven p.m. Just another half hour and she could be up six hundred dollars. She could find a place to stay for a week with six hundred dollars, maybe two weeks if she settled for a . . . motel. She could flip the money into something worth leaving with. Not could, she *would*. She put sixty on black, ten on double zero because it hadn't hit yet, forty on the third twelve of the board, and twenty on twenty-seven.

No matter how still Leah's mind became as she played, she was never careless; her purse stayed in her lap and her cell phone was tucked in her front pocket. Vernon was the one to tell her that more than two decades ago, back when they'd taken trips offbase in Missouri to the riverboat casinos. "The same guy sitting next to you shooting the s*** all night will steal your wallet in a heartbeat," he'd said, and she'd nodded. This was toward the end of their marriage. Neither of them was interested in winning money, but Vernon had an engineer's knack for figuring things out, breaking systems down into their parts. They conceived Brianne after one of these trips, and although they weren't exactly in love anymore, Leah believed they had created their daughter in hope.

"No more bets." The ball landed on fourteen. She put money on the same spots again, just half as much.

It wasn't Vernon's fault she'd ended up a gambler — she would never say it was. A few years after the divorce and her return home, Leah started going to Caesars in Windsor on her own, and that's when the feeling found her. The stillness she hadn't even realized she'd needed up until then.

"No more bets."

Leah looked down. Her shiny red twenties were gone. Cobalt and persimmon were left — it felt like forty dollars. Forty dollars was like no money at all so she might as well let it play. Straight up on twenty-seven twice and it was gone, and with it, the stillness. She heard the slot bells first, then noticed the stink of cigarette smoke in the air, and found herself part of a loud and bright Friday night in Motor City once again.

UNDERSTANDING AND INTERPRETING

1. How does Leah decide what to take from her apartment and what to leave behind (pars. 3–10)? What do Leah's choices reveal about her?
2. What do Leah's actions during the eviction (pars. 1–10), specifically her behavior toward the bailiffs, suggest about her character?
3. Look back closely at the bailiffs' actions and dialogue. What do they represent, or what

purpose do they serve in communicating a theme of the story?

4. In paragraph 20, Flournoy writes, "Lelah knew she was an addict." Look back through the story and identify other places where she seems both aware and unaware of her own addiction.
5. Lelah says she always plays "twenty-seven" because it is the birthdate of her daughter and her brother. Considering what you know about the odds of that number coming up on the wheel and what happens to Lelah throughout the story, why do you think she continues to play that number over and over? What does it suggest about her?
6. The woman with the eyelashes at the roulette table who talks to Lelah is a perfect example of a character foil. In what ways does Flournoy use this woman to illustrate aspects of Lelah's character, and for what result?
7. Describe the setting of the Motor City Casino. How do the details of setting contribute to the plot and our understanding of Lelah's character?
8. Summarize Lelah's philosophy toward betting and how she keeps track of her money. What more do we learn about Lelah's character from this information?
9. Reread paragraph 42 when Lelah imagines winning the red convertible and paragraph 52 that begins "She had enough [money] for a hotel room now." What do these passages suggest about how Lelah approaches the reality of her situation?
10. In paragraph 47, beginning with "Her tablemates came and went," Lelah describes the feelings she gets when she gambles and, perhaps, the reasons she does it. What does she reveal about herself in this paragraph?

ANALYZING LANGUAGE, STYLE, AND STRUCTURE

1. **Vocabulary in Context.** In paragraph 18, Lelah uses the buffet tickets, which she says are the only "tangible benefit of thousands of games of roulette." What does the phrase *tangible benefit* mean, and what does it reveal about Lelah's attitude toward gambling?

2. **Vocabulary in Context.** The word "camaraderie" is used twice in this story (pars. 19 and 47). What does this word mean in this context, and how does Lelah feel about the concept?
3. Five times in the story, Flournoy includes the line "No more bets" from the dealer, as the roulette wheel slows down. Besides communicating plot, what other effect does this dialogue create?
4. In this story, Flournoy is able to effectively communicate what it might feel like to be addicted to gambling. Look back through the story and identify words and phrases that are intended to draw the reader into Lelah's addiction.
5. There are a couple of flashbacks within the casino scene. Look back closely at these and explain the purpose or effect of the information the reader receives at that time in the story.
6. Reread the last paragraph of the story, especially the last sentence. How does the diction and the syntax communicate the change in Lelah's luck and the reality of her situation?
7. The story is composed of two separate scenes—the eviction and the gambling at the casino. How are these two scenes related, and how does each shed additional light on the other?

TOPICS FOR COMPOSING

1. **Analysis.** Write a response that analyzes Lelah's actions and motivations, and the conflicts she faces. How does this characterization help Flournoy express a point she is making about how people face life's situations?
2. **Research.** What are the laws in your city or town regarding evictions? How much notice are landlords required to give, and are there any rules governing what happens to someone's possessions afterward?
3. **Personal.** Lelah describes the "stillness" that roulette gives her. What are activities

that you engage in that offer you a similar kind of feeling?

4. **Argument.** When Lelah arrives at the casino, she wonders if “she wasn’t the only homeless gambler in Motor City tonight.” The *New York Times* quoted a study in 2014, saying that “the rates of casino gambling participation and frequency of visits have increased among lower-income groups.” Should casinos be required to do more to

prevent people who are not financially secure from losing too much money gambling? If so, what might be done? Or, do you believe that adults should be able to make their own decisions regarding how they choose to spend their money?

5. **Research.** Compulsive gambling has been identified as an addiction and an impulse control disorder. Research the most effective means to treat this disease.

Central Text

Two Kinds

AMY TAN

Amy Tan (b. 1952) grew up in California, has a master of arts in linguistics, and has written several best-selling novels, including *The Valley of Amazement* (2013). Tan draws on her Chinese heritage to depict the clash of traditional Chinese culture with modern-day American customs. In “Two Kinds,” a chapter from Tan’s critically acclaimed and popular novel *The Joy Luck Club* (1989), a young girl faces intense pressure to be extraordinary.



Mark Mainz/Getty

My mother believed you could be anything you wanted to be in America. You could open a restaurant. You could work for the government and get good retirement. You could buy a house with almost no money down. You could become rich. You could become instantly famous. “Of course, you can be a prodigy, too,” my mother told me when I was nine. “You can be best anything. What does Auntie Lindo know? Her daughter, she is only best tricky.” America was where all my mother’s hopes lay. She had come to San Francisco in 1949 after losing everything in China: her mother and father, her home, her first husband, and two daughters, twin baby girls. But she never looked back with regret. Things could get better in so many ways.

We didn’t immediately pick the right kind of prodigy. At first my mother thought I could be a Chinese Shirley Temple. We’d watch Shirley’s old movies on TV as though they were training films. My mother would poke my arm and say, “*Ni kan*. You watch.” And I would see Shirley tapping her feet, or singing a sailor song, or pursing her lips into a very round O while saying “Oh, my goodness.” “*Ni kan*,” my mother said, as Shirley’s eyes flooded with tears. “You already know how. Don’t need talent for crying!”

Soon after my mother got this idea about Shirley Temple, she took me to the beauty training school in the Mission District and put me in the hands of a student who could barely hold

seeing connections

In the first paragraph of “Two Kinds” we learn that Jing-mei’s mom left China in 1949 to come to America. That year marked the end of a dozen years of war in China, beginning with the war against Japan that merged into World War II from 1937–45, and then a bloody civil war from 1945–49 in which millions more lost their lives as the communist party took power. The passage below talks more about the hardships of living in China during this time period.

from **Forgotten Ally: China’s World War II**

RANA MATTER

[T]he outside world [has never] fully understood the ghastly price that China paid to maintain its resistance against Japan for eight long years, from 1937 to 1945. . . .

The toll that the war inflicted on China is still being calculated, but conservative estimates number the dead at 14 million at least (the British Empire and United States each lost over 400,000 during the Second World War, and Russia more than 20 million). The

number of Chinese refugees may have reached more than 80 million. The greater part of China’s hard-won modernization was destroyed, including most of the rail network, scaled highways, and industrial plants created in the first decades of the twentieth century: 30 percent of the infrastructure in the rich Pearl River delta near Canton, 52 percent in Shanghai, and a staggering 80 percent in the capital, Nanjing. The war would undo two empires in China (the British and the Japanese) and help to create two more (the American and the Soviet). The narrative of the war is the story of a people in torment; from the Nanjing Massacre (widely known as the Rape of Nanking, December 1937– January 1938), when Japanese troops murdered and looted in the captured Chinese capital, to the blasting of dikes on the Yellow River in June 1938, which bought time for the Chinese Army but at a terrible price for hundreds of thousands of compatriots.

How does this historical context inform your understanding of Jing-mei’s mother’s behavior and motivations?

the scissors without shaking. Instead of getting big fat curls, I emerged with an uneven mass of crinkly black fuzz. My mother dragged me off to the bathroom and tried to wet down my hair.

“You look like a Negro Chinese,” she lamented, as if I had done this on purpose.

The instructor of the beauty training school had to lop off these soggy clumps to make my hair even again. “Peter Pan is very popular these days” the instructor assured my mother. I now had bad hair the length of a boy’s; with curly bangs that hung at a slant two inches above my eyebrows. I liked the haircut, and it made me actually look forward to my future fame.

In fact, in the beginning I was just as excited as my mother, maybe even more so. I pictured this prodigy part of me as many different images, and I tried each one on for size. I was a dainty ballerina girl standing by the curtain, waiting to hear the music that would send me floating on my tiptoes. I was like the Christ child lifted out of the straw manger, crying with holy indignity. I was Cinderella stepping from her pumpkin carriage with sparkly cartoon music filling the air. In all of my imaginings I was filled with a sense that I would soon become perfect: My mother and father would adore me. I would be beyond reproach. I would never feel the need to sulk,

seeing connections

While Jing-mei seems to resist her mother's efforts to turn her into a prodigy, are the high expectations she sets for her daughter a good thing? In 2015, Nicholas Kristof wrote an editorial in the *New York Times* entitled "The Asian Advantage," in which he argues that parental expectations play a big role in achievement.

from **The Asian Advantage**

NICHOLAS KRISTOF

It's no secret that Asian-Americans are disproportionately stars in American schools, and even in American society as a whole.

And let's just get one notion out of the way: The difference does not seem to be driven by differences in intelligence.

There's evidence that Americans believe that A's go to smart kids, while Asians are more likely to think that they go to hard workers. The truth is probably somewhere in between, but the result is that Asian-American kids are allowed no excuse for getting B's — or even an A-. The joke is that an A- is an "Asian F."

How important do you think parental expectations are in driving achievement? Or is personal motivation more important? How does this affect your view of Jing-mei's mother?

or to clamor for anything. But sometimes the prodigy in me became impatient. "If you don't hurry up and get me out of here, I'm disappearing for good," it warned. "And then you'll always be nothing."

Every night after dinner my mother and I would sit at the Formica topped kitchen table. She would present new tests, taking her examples from stories of amazing children that she read in *Ripley's Believe It or Not* or *Good Housekeeping*, *Reader's Digest*, or any of a dozen other magazines she kept in a pile in our bathroom. My mother got these magazines from people whose houses she cleaned. And since she cleaned many houses each week, we had a great assortment. She would look through them all, searching for stories about remarkable children.

The first night she brought out a story about a three-year-old boy who knew the capitals of all the states and even most of the European countries. A teacher was quoted as saying that the little boy could also pronounce the names of the foreign cities correctly. "What's the capital of Finland? My mother asked me, looking at the story.

All I knew was the capital of California, because Sacramento was the name of the street we lived on in Chinatown. "Nairobi!" I guessed, saying the most foreign word I could think of. She checked to see if that might be one way to pronounce *Helsinki* before showing me the answer.

The tests got harder — multiplying numbers 10 in my head, finding the queen of hearts in a deck of cards, trying to stand on my head without using my hands, predicting the daily temperatures in Los Angeles, New York, and London. One night I had to look at a page from the Bible for three minutes and then report everything I could remember. "Now Jehoshaphat had riches and honor in abundance and . . . that's all I remember, Ma," I said.

And after seeing, once again, my mother's disappointed face, something inside me began to die. I hated the tests, the raised hopes and failed expectations. Before going to bed that night I looked in the mirror above the bathroom sink, and I saw only my face staring back — and understood that it would always be this ordinary face — I began to cry. Such a sad, ugly girl! I made high-pitched noises like a crazed animal, trying to scratch out the face in the mirror.

And then I saw what seemed to be the prodigy side of me — a face I had never seen before. I looked at my reflection, blinking so that I could see more clearly. The girl staring back at me was angry, powerful. She and I were the same. I had new thoughts, willful thoughts — or rather, thoughts filled with lots of won'ts. I won't let her change me, I promised myself. I won't be what I'm not.

So now when my mother presented her tests, I performed listlessly, my head propped on one arm. I pretended to be bored. And I was. I got so bored that I started counting the bellows of the foghorns out on the bay while my mother drilled me in other areas. The sound was comforting and reminded me of the cow jumping over the moon. And the next day I played a game with myself, seeing if my mother would give up on me before eight bellows. After a while I usually counted only one bellow, maybe two at most. At last she was beginning to give up hope.

Two or three months went by without any mention of my being a prodigy. And then one day my mother was watching the *Ed Sullivan Show* on TV. The TV was old and the sound kept shorting out. Every time my mother got halfway up from the sofa to adjust the set, the sound would come back on and Sullivan would be talking. As soon as she sat down, Sullivan would go silent again. She got up — the TV broke into loud piano music. She sat down — silence. Up and down, back and forth, quiet and loud. It was like a stiff, embraceless dance between her and the TV set. Finally, she stood by the set with her hand on the sound dial.

She seemed entranced by the music, a frenzied little piano piece with a mesmerizing quality, which alternated between quick, playful passages and teasing, lilting ones.

"Nikan," my mother said, calling me over with hurried hand gestures. "Look here."

I could see why my mother was fascinated by the music. It was being pounded out by a little Chinese girl, about nine years old, with a Peter Pan haircut. The girl had the sauciness of a Shirley Temple. She was proudly modest, like a proper Chinese child. And she also did a fancy sweep of



↑ This image shows Ed Sullivan with a young Michael Jackson when the Jackson 5 performed on the *Ed Sullivan Show* in 1970. Ed Sullivan's exposure of the Jackson 5 helped launch their careers.

How might shows like the *Ed Sullivan Show*, which often depicted the talents of up-and-coming stars, put more pressure on parents to harness their children's talents? Do you think that Jing-mei's mother would have pressured Jing-mei without the influence of the television shows and magazines she scoured for examples of prodigies? Why or why not?

a curtsy, so that the fluffy skirt of her white dress
15 cascaded to the floor like petals of a large carnation.

In spite of these warning signs, I wasn't worried. Our family had no piano and we couldn't afford to buy one, let alone reams of sheet music and piano lessons. So I could be generous in my comments when my mother badmouthed the little girl on TV.

"Play note right, but doesn't sound good!" my mother complained "No singing sound."

"What are you picking on her for?" I said
20 carelessly. "She's pretty good. Maybe she's not the best, but she's trying hard." I knew almost immediately that I would be sorry I had said that.

"Just like you," she said. "Not the best. Because you not trying." She gave a little huff as she let go of the sound dial and sat down on the sofa.

The little Chinese girl sat down also, to play an encore of "Anitra's Tanz," by Grieg. I remember the song, because later on I had to learn how to play it.

Three days after watching the *Ed Sullivan Show* my mother told me what my schedule would be for piano lessons and piano practice. She had talked to Mr. Chong, who lived on the first floor of our apartment building. Mr. Chong was a retired piano teacher, and my mother had traded housecleaning services for weekly lessons and a piano for me to practice on every day, two hours a day, from four until six.

When my mother told me this, I felt as though I had been sent to hell. I whined, and then kicked my foot a little when I couldn't stand it anymore.

"Why don't you like me the way I am?" I cried. ²⁵
 "I'm *not* a genius! I can't play the piano. And even if I could, I wouldn't go on TV if you paid me a million dollars!"

My mother slapped me. "Who ask you to be genius?" she shouted. "Only ask you be your best. For you sake. You think I want you to be genius? Hnnh! What for! Who ask you!"?

"So ungrateful," I heard her mutter in Chinese, "If she had as much talent as she has temper, she'd be famous now."

Mr. Chong, whom I secretly nicknamed Old Chong, was very strange, always tapping his fingers to the silent music of an invisible orchestra. He looked ancient in my eyes. He had lost most of the hair on the top of his head, and he wore thick glasses and had eyes that always looked tired. But he must have been younger than

seeing connections

Jing-mei's mother is pushing her child to be a prodigy. Prodigies, especially of the musical variety, are often showcased on television variety shows, to the astonishment of audiences around the world. But this selection from an article in the *Independent*, a British newspaper, suggests that being a prodigy is not necessarily a pathway to future success, noting that the flawless technique created by excessive practice is not the same as artistry and expression. The article featured an interview with Yoheved Kaplinsky, a professor of piano at the prestigious Juilliard school for the performing arts in New York City:

from *Move Over, Mozart*
 ELIZABETH BRAW

"It's a worrisome trend because it highlights early achievement rather than substance

and artistry," Kaplinsky says. "I see 16-year-olds who are lamenting the fact that they haven't performed at Carnegie Hall yet. Early accomplishment means nothing in the long run," Kaplinsky says.

Kaplinsky says that conservatories should support early achievers only if they exhibit artistic potential as well. "We've had kids come in to audition and play note-perfect, but we felt there was a musical vacuum behind their performance and didn't offer them admission," she says. Juilliard occasionally offers a place to a young musician who is not technically brilliant but shows artistic potential.

Do you believe that young people should be pushed to become prodigies? What do you think motivates Jing-mei's mother to push her daughter to become a prodigy?

I thought, since he lived with his mother and was not yet married.

I met Old Lady Chong once, and that was enough. She had a peculiar smell, like a baby that had done something in its pants, and her fingers felt like a dead person's, like an old peach I once found in the back of the refrigerator: its skin just slid off the flesh when I picked it up.

I soon found out why Old Chong had retired from teaching piano. He was deaf. "Like Beethoven!" he shouted to me: "We're both listening only in our head!" And he would start to conduct his frantic silent sonatas.

Our lessons went like this. He would open the book and point to different things, explaining their purpose: "Key! Treble! Bass! No sharps or flats! So this is C major! Listen now and play after me!"

And then he would play the C scale a few times, a simple chord, and then, as if inspired by an old unreachable itch, he would gradually add more notes and running trills and a pounding bass until the music was really something quite grand.

I would play after him, the simple scale, the simple chord, and then just play some nonsense that sounded like a cat running up and down on top of garbage cans. Old Chong would smile and applaud and say "Very good! But now you must learn to keep time!"

So that's how I discovered that Old Chong's eyes were too slow to keep up with the wrong notes I was playing. He went through the motions in half time. To help me keep rhythm, he stood behind me and pushed down on my right shoulder for every beat. He balanced pennies on top of my wrists so that I would keep them still as I slowly played scales and arpeggios. He had me curve my hand around an apple and keep that shape when playing chords. He marched stiffly to show me how to make each finger dance up and down, staccato, like an obedient little soldier.

He taught me all these things and that was how I also learned I could be lazy and get away

with mistakes, lots of mistakes. If I hit the wrong notes because I hadn't practiced enough, I never corrected myself; I just kept playing in rhythm. And Old Chong kept conducting his own private reverie.

So maybe I never really gave myself a fair chance. I did pick up the basics pretty quickly, and I might have become a good pianist at the young age. But I was so determined not to try, not to be anybody different, and I learned to play only the most ear-splitting preludes, the most discordant hymns.

Over the next year I practiced like this, dutifully in my own way. And then one day I heard my mother and her friend Lindo Jong both after church, and I was leaning against a brick wall, wearing a dress with stiff white petticoats. Auntie Lindo's daughter, Waverly, who was my age, was standing farther down the wall, about five feet away. We had grown up together and shared all the closeness of two sisters, squabbling over crayons and dolls. In other words, for the most part, we hated each other. I thought she was snotty. Waverly Jong had gained a certain amount of fame as "Chinatown's Littlest Chinese Chess Champion."

"She bring home too many trophy." Auntie Lindo lamented that Sunday. "All day she play chess. All day I have no time do nothing but dust off her winnings." She threw a scolding look at Waverly, who pretended not to see her.

"You lucky you don't have this problem," Auntie Lindo said with a sigh to my mother.

And my mother squared her shoulders and bragged: "our problem worser than yours. If we ask Jing-mei wash dish, she hear nothing but music. It's like you can't stop this natural talent." And right then I was determined to put a stop to her foolish pride.

A few weeks later Old Chong and my mother conspired to have me play in a talent show that was to be held in the church hall. But then my parents had saved up enough to buy me a secondhand piano, a black Wurlitzer spinet with a scarred bench. It was the showpiece of our living room.

For the talent show I was to play a piece called “Pleading Child,” from Schumann’s *Scenes from Childhood*. It was a simple, moody piece that sounded more difficult than it was. I was supposed to memorize the whole thing. But I dawdled over it, playing a few bars and then cheating, looking up to see what notes followed. I never really listed to what I was playing. I daydreamed about being somewhere else, about being someone else.

The part I liked to practice best was the fancy curtsy: right foot out, touch the rose on the carpet with a pointed foot, sweep to the side, bend left leg, look up, and smile.

My parents invited all the couples from their social club to witness my debut. Auntie Lindo and Uncle Tin were there. Waverly and her two older brothers had also come. The first two rows were filled with children either younger or older than I was. The littlest ones got to go first. They recited simple nursery rhymes, squawked out tunes on miniature violins, and twirled hula hoops in pink ballet tutus, and when they bowed or curtsied, the audience would sigh in unison, “Awww,” and then clap enthusiastically.

When my turn came, I was very confident. I remember my childish excitement. It was as if I knew, without a doubt, that the prodigy side of me really did exist. I had no fear whatsoever, no nervousness. I remember thinking, This is it! This is it! I looked out over the audience, at my mother’s blank face, my father’s yawn, Auntie Lindo’s stiff-lipped smile, Waverly’s sulky expression. I had on a white dress, layered with sheets of lace, and a pink bow in my Peter Pan haircut. As I sat down, I envisioned people jumping to their feet and Ed Sullivan rushing up to introduce me to everyone on TV.

And I started to play. Everything was so beautiful. I was so caught up in how lovely I looked that I wasn’t worried about how I would sound. So I was surprised when I hit the first wrong note. And then I hit another and another. A chill started at



↑ What is the appeal of this type of show for viewers, and this type of stardom for the performers? How is success, as defined by Jing-mei’s mother, represented in these images?

the top of my head and began to trickle down. Yet I couldn’t stop playing, as though my hands were bewitched. I kept thinking my fingers would adjust themselves back, like a train switching to the right track. I played this strange jumble through to the end, the sour notes staying with me all the way.

When I stood up, I discovered my legs were shaking. Maybe I had just been nervous, and the audience, like Old Chong had seen me go through the right motions and had not heard anything wrong at all. I swept my right foot out, went down on my knee, looked up, and smiled. The room was quiet, except for Old Chong, who was beaming and shouting “Bravo! Bravo! Well done!” By then I saw my mother’s face, her stricken face. The audience clapped weakly, and I walked back to my chair, with my whole face quivering as I tried not to cry. I heard a little boy whisper loudly to his mother. “That was awful,” and mother whispered “Well, she certainly tried.”

And now I realized how many people were in the audience — the whole world, it seemed. I was aware of eyes burning into my back. I felt the shame of my mother and father as they sat stiffly through the rest of the show.

We could have escaped during intermission. Pride and some strange sense of honor must have anchored my parents to their chairs. And so we watched it all. The eighteen-year-old boy with a fake moustache who did a magic show and juggled flaming hoops while riding a unicycle. The breasted girl with white make up who sang an aria from *Madame Butterfly* and got an honorable mention. And the eleven-year-old boy who was first prize playing a tricky violin song that sounded like a busy bee.

After the show the Hsus, the Jongs, and the St. Clairs from the Joy Luck Club, came up to my mother and father.

"Lots of talented kids," Auntie Lindo said vaguely, smiling broadly. "That was somethin' else," my father said, and I wondered if he was referring to me in a humorous way, or whether he even remembered what I had done.

Waverly looked at me and shrugged her shoulders. "You aren't a genius like me," she said matter-of-factly. And if I hadn't felt so bad, I would have pulled her braids and punched her stomach.

But my mother's expression was what devastated me: a quiet, blank look that said she had lost everything. I felt the same way, and everybody seemed now to be coming up, like gawkers at the scene of an accident to see what parts were actually missing.

When we got on the bus to go home, my father was humming the busy-bee tune and my mother kept silent. I kept thinking she wanted to wait until we got home before shouting at me. But when my father unlocked the door to our apartment, my mother walked in and went straight to the back, into the bedroom. No accusations, No blame. And in a way, I felt disappointed. I had been waiting for her to start

shouting, so that I could shout back and cry and blame her for all my misery.

I had assumed that my talent-show fiasco meant that I would never have to play the piano again. But two days later, after school, my mother came out of the kitchen and saw me watching TV. "Four clock," she reminded me, as if it were any other day. I was stunned, as though she were asking me to go through the talent-show torture again. I planted myself more squarely in front of the TV. "Turn off TV," she called from the kitchen five minutes later. I didn't budge. And then I decided, I didn't have to do what mother said anymore. I wasn't her slave. This wasn't China. I had listened to her before, and look what happened. She was the stupid one.

She came out of the kitchen and stood in the arched entryway of the living room. "Four clock," she said once again, louder.

"I'm not going to play anymore," I said nonchalantly. "Why should I? I'm not a genius."

She stood in front of the TV. I saw that her chest was heaving up and down in an angry way.

"No!" I said, and I now felt stronger, as if my true self had finally emerged. So this was what had been inside me all along.

"No! I won't!" I screamed. She snapped off the TV, yanked me by the arm and pulled me off the floor. She was frighteningly strong, half pulling, half carrying me towards the piano as I kicked the throw rugs under my feet. She lifted me up onto the hard bench. I was sobbing by now, looking at her bitterly. Her chest was heaving even more and her mouth was open, smiling crazily as if she were pleased that I was crying.

"You want me to be something that I'm not!" I sobbed. "I'll never be the kind of daughter you want me to be!"

"Only two kinds of daughters," she shouted in Chinese. "Those who are obedient and those who follow their own mind! Only one kind of daughter can live in this house. Obedient daughter!"

"Then I wish I weren't your daughter, I wish you weren't my mother," I shouted. As I said these things I got scared. It felt like worms and toads and slimy



↑ This painting of Mozart was created by the artist after the life and death of the young composer, and so the two never crossed paths.

How has the artist portrayed Mozart in this painting? What elements in the painting—the composition, the colors, or the scenery—impact the artist’s overall impression of the young prodigy? Do you find any similarities between this depiction of Mozart and Jing-mei’s character? Explain.

Portrait of Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart at the piano (oil on canvas)/Re, Giovanni del (1829–1915)/LEEMAGE/Museo Nazionale della Scienza e della Tecnologia ‘Leonardo Da Vinci’, Milan, Italy/Bridgeman Images

things crawling out of my chest, but it also felt good, that this awful side of me had surfaced, at last.

“Too late to change this,” my mother said shrilly.

And I could sense her anger rising to its breaking point. I wanted see it spill over. And that’s when I remembered the babies she had lost in China, the ones we never talked about. “Then I wish I’d never been born!” I shouted. “I wish I were dead! Like them.”

It was as if I had said magic words. Alakazam!—her face went blank, her mouth closed, her arms went slack, and she backed out of the room, stunned, as if she were blowing away like a small brown leaf, thin, brittle, lifeless.

It was not the only disappointment my mother felt in me. In the years that followed, I failed her many times, each time asserting my will, my right to fall short of expectations. I didn’t get straight As. I didn’t become class president. I didn’t get into Stanford. I dropped out of college.

Unlike my mother, I did not believe I could be anything I wanted to be, I could only be me.

And for all those years we never talked about the disaster at the recital or my terrible declarations afterward at the piano bench. Neither of us talked about it again, as if it were a betrayal that was now unspeakable. So I never found a way to ask her why she had hoped for something so large that failure was inevitable. And even worse, I never asked her about what frightened me the most: Why had she given up hope? For after our struggle at the piano, she never mentioned my playing again. The lessons stopped. The lid to the piano was closed shutting out the dust, my misery, and her dreams.

So she surprised me. A few years ago she offered to give me the piano, for my thirtieth birthday. I had not played in all those years. I saw the offer as a sign of forgiveness, a tremendous burden removed. “Are you

sure?” I asked shyly. “I mean, won’t you and Dad miss it?” “No, this your piano,” she said firmly. “Always your piano. You only one can play.”

“Well, I probably can’t play anymore,” I said. “It’s been years.” “You pick up fast,” my mother said, as if she knew this was certain. “You have natural talent. You could be a genius if you want to.” “No, I couldn’t.” “You just not trying,” my mother said. And she was neither angry nor sad. She said it as if announcing a fact that could never be disproved. “Take it,” she said.

But I didn’t at first. It was enough that she had offered it to me. And after that, every time I saw it in my parents’ living room, standing in front of

the bay window, it made me feel proud, as if it were a shiny trophy that I had won back.

Last week I sent a tuner over to my parent's apartment and had the piano reconditioned, for purely sentimental reasons. My mother had died a few months before and I had been getting things in order for my father a little bit at a time. I put the jewelry in special silk pouches. The sweaters I put in mothproof boxes. I found some old Chinese silk dresses, the kind with little slits up the sides. I rubbed the old silk against my skin, and then wrapped them in tissue and decided to take them home with me.

After I had the piano tuned, I opened the lid and touched the keys. It sounded even richer than I remembered. Really, it was a very good piano. Inside the bench were the same exercise notes with

handwritten scales, the same secondhand music books with their covers held together with yellow tape. I opened up the Schumann book to the dark little piece I had played at the recital. It was on the left-hand page, "Pleading Child." It looked more difficult than I remembered. I played a few bars, surprised at how easily the notes came back to me.

And for the first time, or so it seemed, I noticed the piece on the right-hand side. It was called "Perfectly Contented." I tried to play this one as well. It had a lighter melody but with the same flowing rhythm and turned out to be quite easy. "Pleading Child" was shorter but slower; "Perfectly Contented" was longer but faster. And after I had played them both a few times, I realized they were two halves of the same song.

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UNDERSTANDING AND INTERPRETING

1. The story begins, "My mother believed you could be anything you wanted to be in America." How is this theme developed, and complicated, throughout the story? What evidence might suggest that there are flaws in the mother's idea of the American Dream?
2. Throughout the story, we are given brief details of the mother's history. How does knowing the mother's past shape our understanding of her motives to push Jing-mei? What can be said about her motivation for her daughter's success?
3. Jing-mei's view of herself shifts when she looks in the mirror in paragraph 12. What is the significance of what she sees in her reflection? How does she redefine her understanding of what a prodigy is?
4. Jing-mei expresses surprise that her performance at the recital was so horrible. Given that she has fought her mother and piano practice for so long, what does her reaction to the recital reveal about her?
5. The story depicts the struggle between a mother and daughter as they grapple with their relationship, but it also depicts the tension between Chinese and American cultures. How are these two conflicts related? How does the cultural conflict connect to the mother-daughter conflict? What role do these conflicts play in progressing the plot of the story?
6. In paragraphs 38–40, what is the significance of the conversation between Jing-mei's mother and Auntie Lindo in relation to the overall conflict of the story?
7. How does telling the story from Jing-mei's point of view both enrich and limit our understanding of the plot? Considering the age of Jing-mei, what might be the benefit of using first person point of view? What information might we be missing when given one perspective?
8. In paragraph 62, Jing-mei's mother explains that there are only two kinds of daughters, "Those who are obedient and those who follow their own mind!" How does this information influence your understanding of the mother's motivations and expectations for Jing-mei?
9. Though the story is not told through the mother's point of view, how does Tan include details that give insight from the mother's perspective?
10. The setting of a story relates not only to time and place but also the social environment. Consider the relationship of the characters in the story to time, place, and circumstance. How does the setting contribute to the conflict in the story?

ANALYZING LANGUAGE, STYLE, AND STRUCTURE

- Vocabulary in Context.** Reread the sentence from paragraph 13, beginning with “So now when my mother . . .” What clues from the text help you determine the meaning of the word *listlessly*?
- Vocabulary in Context.** In the sentence below from paragraph 36, how might the reader determine the definition of the word *discordant*?

But I was so determined not to try, not to be anybody different, and I learned to play only the most ear-splitting preludes, the most discordant hymns.

What other words might the author have used to express the same meaning?

- How has the meaning and interpretation of the line “she tried” changed from when Jing-mei said it about the Asian piano player in paragraph 20 to when the boy says it of Jing-mei after the recital in paragraph 47?
- What is the effect of portraying the mother’s broken English in the dialogue? What might Tan be implying about the conflict between Jing-mei and her mother?
- How is the word “prodigy” defined differently by mother and daughter? In what ways, if at all, do they share the same idea of being a “prodigy”? What do their definitions of the word *prodigy* reveal about their conflict with each other?
- What is the simile in paragraph 14? How do the mother’s actions with the TV act as a metaphor for her relationship with her daughter?
- How does the “obedient little soldier” simile in paragraph 34 reflect Jing-mei’s thoughts about her life? What other similes can you find that portray Jing-mei’s thoughts?
- What does Jing-mei mean by “I could only be me” in paragraph 68? Is this an assertion of her identity, or a confession of failure? Explain.
- Explain what Jing-mei means when she realizes that the songs “Pleading Child” and “Perfectly Contented” can be two halves of the same (pars. 74–75). What might the songs symbolize?

- What would you say is the overall tone of the story? What evidence can you find to support your observation?
- This story ends in the voice of the adult Jing-mei, and we realize that the story is told by Jing-mei looking back on her childhood. How do you think this perspective affects how the story is told? What aspects of the story might be told differently if they were told from the perspective of the young Jing-mei?
- As you read, you might have noticed that Tan speeds up time in some paragraphs, but slows time in order to elaborate on specifics in other places in the story. Choose a scene where Tan slows down to elaborate on details and describe the effect it has on the development of the plot. Why is that part important enough to slow down for?

TOPICS FOR COMPOSING

- Analysis.** The opening paragraphs of this story allude to the American Dream. Write an analysis of the role that the idea of America and the American Dream play in this story, how they influence the conflicts and characters as well as the theme.
- Analysis.** “Two Kinds” is a story that addresses the familial relationship between a mother and daughter. Using evidence from the story, write an essay that explores how Tan reveals the complexity of the relationship between Jing-mei and her mother over time.
- Analysis.** In paragraph 6, Jing-mei says that she pictured her prodigy side “as many different images, and [she] tried each one on for size.” Trace the various images Jing-mei tries on over the course of this story, and consider how each phase ultimately leads to her character becoming “perfectly contented.”
- Personal.** One of the conflicts that Tan makes clear is the competition between rivals (Waverly and Jing-mei; Aunti Lindo and Jing-mei’s mother). What motivates these rivalries? Is it pride? Jealousy? Write a journal response exploring these questions and give examples either from your own experiences or from observations of others.

5. **Creative.** Though the story is written from Jing-mei's perspective, Tan uses direct and indirect characterization to shape the other characters in the story. Rewrite a scene in the story from a different point of view. Example: the mother's point of view at the recital; Waverly's thoughts after her mother's comment about dusting her trophies in paragraph 38.
6. **Multimodal.** American author Dean Koontz says that "everyone has a talent, ability, or skill that he can mine to support himself and to succeed in life." Think about a special talent that you possess. It can be academic, musical, athletic, or other ability. Share your ability with the class in the form of a demonstration, video, or other presentation form.
7. **Research.** In 1949, Tan's parents immigrated to America when the Communist Party seized control of China. Like most immigrants, their hope was to secure a better future for their children. Research what family life was like in late 1940s China. What new opportunities and cultural challenges did Chinese immigrants face in America when trying to balance their identity between two cultures?
8. **Argument.** Although Jing-mei's mother insists that she only wants Jing-mei to "do her best," she continually pressures Jing-mei to pursue excellence. Write an essay in which you argue whether the pressure to excel can actually do more harm than good, or if it is a necessary part of achievement. Use evidence from the story to support your response.
9. **Exposition.** Conduct interviews with athletes, musicians, artists, and academically talented students at your school about what motivates them to succeed. Then, create a chart or graph showing the results, include quotes from some of the individuals you interviewed, and publish the information in your school newspaper or online.
10. **Multimodal.** Create a mini-documentary spotlighting yourself, or another talented individual in your school, neighborhood, or community, showing the journey to becoming successful. You may want to storyboard a plan for the video, taking into consideration your audience, what information should be captured, the camera angles, setting, timing, and background music if any.

Conversation Motivation: The Secret to Success?

There's an old joke about a tourist in New York City who asks a local resident, "How do you get to Carnegie Hall?" (a famous concert hall where the most accomplished musicians play). The resident replies, "Practice, practice, practice."

Jing-mei's mother, from "Two Kinds" by Amy Tan, would definitely agree with the joke's punchline. Suyuan, unnamed in the short story, pushes her daughter to become a prodigy, to develop her genius through hard work and practice; while Jing-mei pushes back against her mother in equal measure, convinced that genius is something you're born with, like her cousin Waverly, a chess prodigy. Is greatness something that can be developed? If so, what are the best methods for getting there?

Think about yourself. What motivates you to do well in school? If you try to get an A in class to please your parents—or, like Calvin above, to get paid—you are influenced by *extrinsic motivations*—motivated by an outside force. But if you do well because you are genuinely interested in learning, you are influenced by *intrinsic motivations*—motivated by an internal force. Intrinsic motivators include things like learning, meaning, curiosity, love, and belonging. Extrinsic motivators are things like competition, rewards, fear of failure, fear of punishment, money. These motivators apply to many different kinds of activities, such as school, sports, and even piano playing.

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↑ What motivates you to do well in school? How similar to or different from Calvin are you?

It's clear that Jing-mei, in the story, is mostly influenced by extrinsic motivations, such as fear of disappointing her mother and her desire to compete with her cousin; her mother, Suyuan, provides a tremendous amount of outside pressure on Jing-mei, which results in her giving up on the piano. Would it have been different had Jing-mei had loved the piano and wanted to pursue it for her own interests?

And, even if she had loved the piano, would she have ever have been the prodigy her mother was hoping for? Can greatness like this be created, or is it just something that you have to be born with? Malcolm Gladwell, one of the authors in this Conversation, suggests that if anyone practices 10,000 hours at one thing—piano, basketball, writing—he or she can reach the highest levels of success.

In the collection of texts that follows, you will read about what motivates us and what some people suggest are the best methods for achieving greatness. This Conversation includes a variety of viewpoints on the issue. After reading them, you will have an opportunity to enter that Conversation by making your own argument about motivation, and supporting your position with evidence from these texts and your own experiences.

ACTIVITY **STARTING THE CONVERSATION**

Write a journal or quickwrite about your initial thinking on this topic before you explore it further by reading additional texts. What motivates people more: intrinsic or extrinsic factors? Why? Does the type of motivation differ based on age, activity, or purpose? How so?

As you read the texts in this Conversation, keep track of important information related to the ideas of tribalism and, especially, your own responses to the ideas you encounter:

Text Title	Thoughts on Extrinsic Motivation	Thoughts on Intrinsic Motivation	Best Evidence (cite page #)	Your Reaction

Texts in This Conversation

1. Malcom Gladwell, from *Outliers*
2. Amy Chua, from *The Battle Hymn of the Tiger Mother*
3. Adam Grant, *How to Raise a Creative Child. Step One: Back Off*
4. Daniel Pink, from *Drive*
5. Andre Agassi, from *Open*

from *Outliers*

MALCOLM GLADWELL



Dan Callister/Alamy

Best-selling author Malcolm Gladwell (b. 1963) grew up in Ontario, Canada, the son of an English university professor father and a Jamaican therapist mother. He has been a staff writer with the *New Yorker* magazine since 1996, and in 2005, he was named one of *Time* magazine's 100 Most Influential People. His most popular books include *The Tipping Point: How Little Things Make a Big Difference* (2000), *Blink: The Power*

of Thinking without Thinking (2005), and *Outliers: The Story of Success* (2008), from which this selection was taken. His writing often explores the implications of research in the social sciences and psychology.

Focus for Reading As you read, look for the factors that Gladwell identifies for achieving the highest levels of success and consider how the characters in "Two Kinds" might respond to his ideas.

For almost a generation, psychologists around the world have been engaged in a spirited debate over a question that most of us would consider to have been settled years ago. The question is this: is there such a thing as innate talent? The obvious answer is yes. . . . Achievement is talent plus preparation. The problem with this view is that the closer psychologists look at the careers of the gifted, the smaller the role innate talent seems to play and the bigger the role preparation seems to play.

Exhibit A in the talent argument is a study done in the early 1990s by the psychologist K. Anders Ericsson and two colleagues at Berlin's elite Academy of Music. With the help of the Academy's professors, they divided the school's violinists into three groups. In the first group were the stars, the students with the potential to become world-class soloists. In the second were those judged to be merely "good," In the third were students who were unlikely to ever play professionally and who intended to be

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music teachers in the public school system. All of the violinists were then asked the same question: over the course of your entire career, ever since you first picked up the violin, how many hours have you practiced?

Everyone from all three groups started playing at roughly the same age, around five years old. In those first few years, everyone practiced roughly the same amount, about two or three hours a week. But when the students were around the age of eight, real differences started to emerge. The students who would end up the best in their class began to practice

more than everyone else: six hours a week by age nine, eight hours a week by age twelve, sixteen hours a week by age fourteen, and up and up, until by the age of twenty they were practicing — that is, purposefully and single-mindedly playing their instruments with the intent to get better — well over thirty hours a week. In fact, by the age of twenty, the elite performers had each totaled ten thousand hours of practice. By contrast, the merely good students had totaled eight thousand hours, and the future music teachers had totaled just over four thousand hours.

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↑ For perspective, you go to school 40 hours a week for 36 weeks out of the year, so you are in school for 1,440 hours a year. At that rate, it would take 6.9 years to reach 10,000 hours of schooling.

Is Dogbert right? Is taking 10,000 hours to practice any one thing reasonable at all? Should it be a goal for parents and/or kids?

Ericsson and his colleagues then compared amateur pianists with professional pianists. The same pattern emerged. The amateurs never practiced more than about three hours a week over the course of their childhood, and by the age of twenty they had totaled two thousand hours of practice. The professionals, on the other hand, steadily increased their practice time every year, until by the age of twenty they, like the violinists, had reached ten thousand hours.

The striking thing about Ericsson's study is that he and his colleagues couldn't find any "naturals," musicians who floated effortlessly to the top while practicing a fraction of the time their peers did. Nor

could they find any "grinds," people who worked harder than everyone else, yet just didn't have what it takes to break the top ranks. Their research suggests that once a musician has enough ability to get into a top music school, the thing that distinguishes one performer from another is how hard he or she works. That's it. And what's more, the people at the very top don't work just harder or even much harder than everyone else. They work much, *much* harder.

The idea that excellence at performing a complex task requires a critical minimum level of practice surfaces again and again in studies of expertise. In fact, researchers have settled on what they believe is the magic number for true expertise: ten thousand hours.

“The emerging picture from such studies is that ten thousand hours of practice is required to achieve the level of mastery associated with being a world-class expert — in anything,” writes the neurologist Daniel Levitin. “In study after study, of composers, basketball players, fiction writers, ice skaters, concert pianists, chess players, master criminals, and what have you, this number comes up again and again. Of course, this doesn’t address why some people get more out of their practice sessions than others do. But no one has yet found a case in which true worldclass expertise was accomplished in less time. It seems that it takes the brain this long to assimilate all that it needs to know to achieve true mastery.”

This is true even of people we think of as prodigies. Mozart, for example, famously started writing music at six. But, writes the psychologist Michael Howe in his book *Genius Explained*,

by the standards of mature composers, Mozart’s early works are not outstanding. The earliest pieces were all probably written down by his father, and perhaps improved in the process. Many of Wolfgang’s childhood compositions, such as the first seven of his concertos for piano and orchestra, are largely arrangements of works by other composers. Of those concertos that only contain music original to Mozart, the earliest that is now regarded as a masterwork (No. 9, K. 271) was not composed until he was twenty-one: by that time Mozart had already been composing concertos for ten years.

The music critic Harold Schonberg goes further: Mozart, he argues, actually “developed late,” since he didn’t produce his greatest work until he had been composing for more than twenty years.

To become a chess grandmaster also seems to take about ten years. (Only the legendary Bobby Fischer got to that elite level in less than that amount of time: it took him nine years.) And what’s ten years? Well, it’s roughly how long it takes to put in ten thousand hours of hard practice. Ten thousand hours is the magic number of greatness. . . .

But to Ericsson and those who argue against the primacy of talent, that isn’t surprising at all. That late-born prodigy doesn’t get chosen for the all-star team as an eight-year-old because he’s too small. So he doesn’t get the extra practice. And without that extra practice, he has no chance at hitting ten thousand hours by the time the professional hockey teams start looking for players. And without ten thousand hours under his belt, there is no way he can ever master the skills necessary to play at the top level. Even Mozart — the greatest musical prodigy of all time — couldn’t hit his stride until he had his ten thousand hours in. Practice isn’t the thing you do once you’re good. It’s the thing you do that makes you good.

The other interesting thing about that ten thousand hours, of course, is that ten thousand hours is an *enormous* amount of time. It’s all but impossible to reach that number all by yourself by the time you’re a young adult. You have to have parents who encourage and support you. You can’t be poor, because if you have to hold down a part-time job on the side to help make ends meet, there won’t be time left in the day to practice enough. In fact, most people can reach that number only if they get into some kind of special program — like a hockey all-star squad — or if they get some kind of extraordinary opportunity that gives them a chance to put in those hours.

QUESTIONS

1. Summarize the conclusions of the K. Anders Ericsson study of students at the Berlin Academy of Music (pars. 3–5).
2. Why does Gladwell include the analysis of Mozart (par. 8)? What argument and/or counterargument is Mozart expected to address?
3. Explain how Gladwell would respond to the following question: is there such a thing as innate talent?
4. According to Gladwell, can everyone reach the 10,000-hour mark? What are the challenges some people face?
5. Do some math on something that you like to do: play basketball, read, play piano, etc. How many hours do you practice at the activity per week, month, year? Are you on track to reach the 10,000-hour mark? Do you want to? Do your parents want you to?
6. **Comparison.** If Gladwell were to read Amy Tan's "Two Kinds," who would he side with, the daughter or the mother? Why?
7. **Informing Your Argument.** How does what Gladwell writes here relate to your own ideas about motivation?

from Battle Hymn of the Tiger Mother

AMY CHUA



roger parkes/Alamy

A graduate of Harvard Law School, Amy Chua (b. 1962) is a professor of law at Yale University. Previously Chua wrote on global politics, but after a bitter fight with her daughter, Chua wrote the best-selling and controversial memoir *Battle Hymn of the Tiger Mother* (2011), about cultural differences in parenting.

Focus for Reading As you read, think about how Chua tries to motivate her daughter to do well and how their relationship is similar to or different from the mother-daughter relationship in "Two Kinds."

Chinese parents can get away with things that Western parents can't. Once when I was young — maybe more than once — when I was extremely disrespectful to my mother, my father angrily called me "garbage" in our native Hokkien dialect. It worked really well. I felt terrible and deeply ashamed of what I had done.

But it didn't damage my self-esteem or anything like that. I knew exactly how highly he thought of me. I didn't actually think I was worthless or feel like a piece of garbage.

As an adult, I once did the same thing to Sophia, calling her garbage in English when she acted extremely disrespectfully toward me. When I mentioned that I

had done this at a dinner party, I was immediately ostracized. One guest named Marcy got so upset she broke down in tears and had to leave early. My friend Susan, the host, tried to rehabilitate me with the remaining guests.

“Oh dear, it’s just a misunderstanding. Amy was speaking metaphorically — right, Amy? You didn’t actually call Sophia ‘garbage.’”

“Um, yes, I did; But it’s all in the context,”⁵ I tried to explain. “It’s a Chinese immigrant thing.”

“But you’re not a Chinese immigrant,” somebody pointed out.

“Good point,” I conceded. “No wonder it didn’t work.”

I was just trying to be conciliatory. In fact, it had worked great with Sophia.

The fact is that Chinese parents can do things that would seem unimaginable — even legally actionable — to Westerners. Chinese mothers can say to their daughters, “Hey fatty — lose some weight.” By contrast, Western parents have to tiptoe around the issue, talking in terms of “health” and never ever mentioning the f-word, and their kids still end up in therapy for eating disorders and negative self-image. (I also once heard a Western father toast his adult daughter by calling her “beautiful and incredibly competent.” She later told me that made her feel like garbage.) Chinese parents can order their kids to get straight As. Western parents can only ask their kids to try their best. Chinese parents can say, “You’re lazy. All your classmates getting ahead of you.” By contrast, Western parents have to struggle with their own conflicted feelings about achievement, and try to persuade themselves that they’re not disappointed about how their kids turned out.

I’ve thought long and hard about how¹⁰ Chinese parents can get away with what

they do. I think there are three big differences between the Chinese and Western parental mind-sets.

First, I’ve noticed that Western parents are extremely anxious about their children’s self-esteem. They worry about how their children will feel if they fail at something, and they constantly try to reassure their children about how good they are notwithstanding a mediocre performance on a test or at a recital. In other words, Western parents are concerned about their children’s psyches. Chinese parents aren’t. They assume strength; not fragility, and as a result they behave very differently. For example, if a child comes home with an A-minus on a test, a Western parent will most likely praise the child. The Chinese mother will gasp in horror and ask what went wrong. If the child comes home with a B on the test, some Western parents will still praise the child. Other Western parents will sit their child down and express disapproval, but they will be careful not to make their child feel inadequate or insecure, and they will not call their child “stupid,” “worthless,” or “a disgrace.” Privately, the Western parents may worry that their child does not test well or have aptitude in the subject or that there is something wrong with the curriculum and possibly the whole school. If the child’s grades do not improve, they may eventually schedule a meeting with the school principal to challenge the way the subject is being taught or to call into question the teacher’s credentials.

If a Chinese child gets a B — which would never happen — there would first be a screaming, hair-tearing explosion. The devastated Chinese mother would then get dozens, maybe hundreds of practice tests and work through them with her child for as long as it takes to get the grade up to an A. Chinese parents demand perfect grades



↑ According to this cartoon, what is the main contrast between Western and Chinese parenting?

because they believe that their child can get them. If their child doesn't get them, the Chinese parent assumes it's because the child didn't work hard enough. That's why the solution to substandard performance is always to excoriate, punish, and shame the child. The Chinese parent believes that their child will be strong enough to take the shaming and to improve from it. (And when Chinese kids do excel, there is plenty of ego-inflating parental praise lavished in the privacy of home.)

Second, Chinese parents believe that their kids owe them everything. The reason for this is a little unclear, but it's probably a combination of Confucian filial piety and the fact that the parents have sacrificed and done so much for their children. (And it's true that Chinese mothers get *in* the trenches, putting in long grueling hours personally tutoring, training, interrogating, and spying on their kids.) Anyway, the understanding is that Chinese children must spend their lives repaying their parents by obeying them and making them proud. By contrast, I don't think most Westerners have the same view of children being permanently indebted to their parents. [My husband] Jed actually has the opposite view. "Children don't choose their parents," he once said to me. "They don't even choose to be born. It's parents

who foist life on their kids, so it's the parents' responsibility to provide for them. Kids don't owe their parents anything. Their duty will be to their own kids." This strikes me as a terrible deal for the Western parent.

Third, Chinese parents believe that they know what is best for their children and therefore override all of their children's own desires and preferences. That's why Chinese daughters can't have boyfriends in high school and why Chinese kids can't go to sleep away camp. It's also why no Chinese kid would ever dare say to mother, "I got a part in the school play! I'm Villager Number 6, I'll have to stay after school for rehearsal every day from 3:00 to 7:00, and I'll also need a ride on weekends." God help any Chinese kid who tried that one.

Don't get me wrong: It's not that Chinese 15 parents don't care about their children. Just the opposite. They would give up anything for their children. It's just an entirely different parenting model. I think of it as Chinese, but I know a lot of non-Chinese parents — usually from Korea, India, or Pakistan — who have a very similar mind-set, so it may be an immigrant thing. Or maybe it's the combination of being an immigrant and being from certain cultures.

Jed was raised on a very different model. Neither of his parents were immigrants. Both

Sy and Florence were born and raised near Scranton, Pennsylvania, in strict Orthodox Jewish households. Both lost their mothers at a young age, and both had oppressive, unhappy childhoods. After they were married, they got out of Pennsylvania as fast as they could, eventually settling in Washington, D.C., where Jed and his older brother and sister grew up. As parents, Sy and Florence were determined to give their children the space and freedom they had been deprived of as children. They believed in individual choice and valued independence, creativity, and questioning authority.

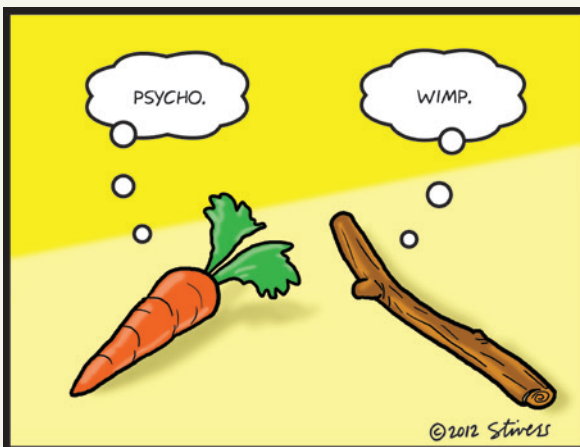
There was a world of difference between my parents and Jed's. Jed's parents gave him a choice about whether he wanted to take violin lessons (which he declined and now regrets) and thought of him as a human being with views. My parents didn't give me any choices, and never asked for my opinion on anything. Every year, Jed's parents let him spend the entire summer having fun with his brother and sister at an idyllic place called Crystal Lake; Jed says those were some of the best times of his life, and we try to bring Sophia and Lulu to Crystal Lake when we can. By contrast, I had to take computer programming—I hated

summers. (So did Katrin, my seven-years-younger sister and soul mate, who on top of computer programming read grammar books and taught herself sentence diagramming to pass the time.) Jed's parents had good taste and collected art. My parents didn't. Jed's parents paid for some but not all of his education. My parents always paid for everything, but fully expect to be cared for and treated with respect and devotion when they get old. Jed's parents never had such expectations.

Jed's parents often vacationed without their kids. They traveled with friends to dangerous places like Guatemala (where they were almost kidnapped), Zimbabwe (where they went on safari), and Borobudur, Indonesia (where they heard the gamelan). My parents never went on vacation without their four kids, which meant we had to stay in some really cheap motels. Also, having grown up in the developing world, my parents wouldn't have gone to Guatemala, Zimbabwe, or Borobudur if someone paid them; they took us to Europe instead, which has governments.

Although Jed and I didn't explicitly negotiate the issue, we basically ended up adopting the Chinese parenting model in our household. There were several reasons for this. First; like many mothers, I did most

of the parenting, so it made sense that my parenting style prevailed. Even though Jed and I had the same job and I was just as busy as he was at Yale, I was the one who oversaw the girls' homework, Mandarin lessons, and all piano and violin practicing. Second, totally apart from my views, Jed favored strict parenting. He used to complain about households where the parents never said no to their children—or, worse, said no but then didn't enforce it. But

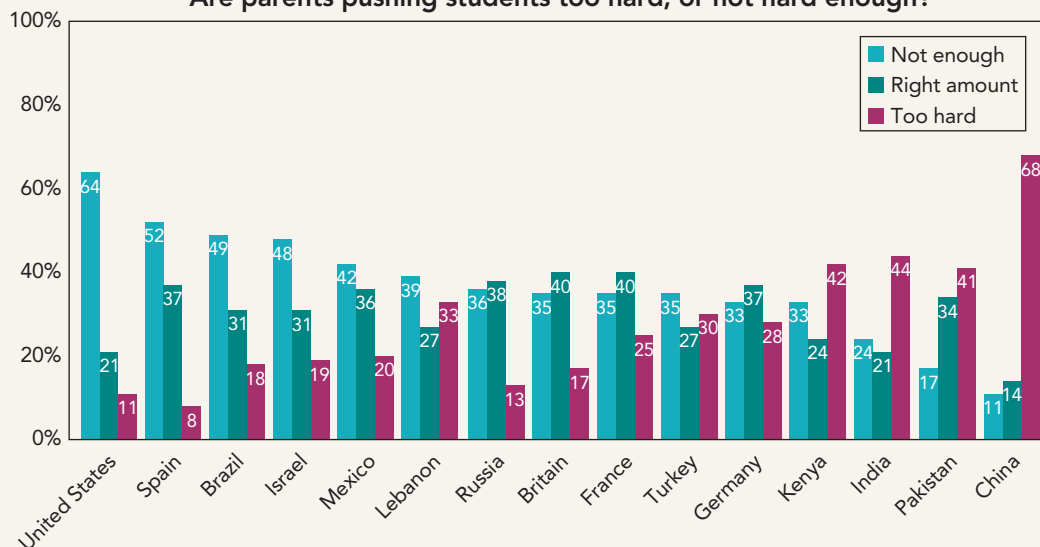


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↑ What is the joke here? How does it relate to the topic of motivation?

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Are parents pushing students too hard, or not hard enough?



Based on data from the 2011 Pew Global Attitudes Survey. Pew Research Center

↑ The following graph is based on data from the 2011 Pew Research Global Attitudes Survey.

Write an interpretative statement about parental pressure in the United States based on the Pew Research data presented in this chart. What might Chua say if she saw this chart?

while Jed was good at saying no to the girls, he didn't have an affirmative plan for them. He would never have forced things like piano or violin on them if they refused. He wasn't absolutely confident that he could make the right choices for them. That's where I came in.

But probably most important, we stuck with the Chinese model because the early results were hard to quarrel with. Other parents were constantly asking us what our secret was. Sophia and Lulu were model children. In public, they were polite, interesting, helpful, and well spoken. They were A students, and Sophia was two years ahead of her classmates in math. They were fluent in Mandarin. And everyone marveled at their classical music playing. In short, they were just like Chinese kids. Except not quite. We took our first trip to China with the girls in 1999. Sophia and Lulu both have brown hair, brown eyes, and Asianesque features; they both speak Chinese. Sophia eats all kinds of organs and organisms—duck webs,

pig ears, sea slugs—another critical aspect of Chinese identity. Yet everywhere we went in China, including cosmopolitan Shanghai, my daughters drew curious local crowds, who stared, giggled, and pointed at the “two little foreigners who speak Chinese.” At the Chengdu Panda Breeding Center in Sichuan, while we were taking pictures of newborn giant pandas—pink, squirming, larvalike creatures that rarely survive—the Chinese tourists were taking pictures of Sophia and Lulu.

Back in New Haven a few months later, when I referred in passing to Sophia as being Chinese, she interrupted me: “Mommy I'm not Chinese.”

“Yes, you are.”

“No, Mommy—you're the only one who thinks so. No one in China thinks I'm Chinese. No one in America thinks I'm Chinese.”

This bothered me intensely, but all I said was, “Well, they're all wrong. You are Chinese.”

Sophia had her first big music moment in 2003 when she won the Greater New

Haven Concerto Competition at the age of ten, earning the right to perform as a piano soloist with a New Haven youth orchestra at Yale University's Battell Chapel. I went wild. I blew up the article about Sophia in the local newspaper and framed it. I invited more than a hundred people to the concert and planned a huge after-party. I bought Sophia her first full-length gown and new shoes. All four grandparents came; the day before the performance, my mother was in our kitchen making hundreds of Chinese pearl balls (pork meatballs covered with white rice), while Florence made ten pounds of gravlax (salmon cured with sea salt under a brick).

Meanwhile, on the practice front, we kicked into overdrive. Sophia was going to perform Mozart's Rondo for Piano and orchestra in D Major, one of the composer's most uplifting pieces. Mozart is notoriously difficult. His music is famously sparkling, brilliant, effervescent, and effortless — adjectives that strike terror in the hearts of most musicians: There's a saying that only the young and old can play Mozart well: the young because they are oblivious and the old because they are no longer trying to impress anyone. Sophia's Rondo was classic Mozart. Her teacher Michelle told her, "When you're playing your runs and trills, think of champagne or an Italian soda, and all those bubbles rising to the top."

Sophia was up to any challenge. She was an unbelievably quick with lightning-quick fingers. Best of all, she listened to everything I said.

By then, I had become a drill sergeant. I broke the Rondo down, sometimes by section, sometimes by goal. We'd spend one hour focusing just on articulation (clarity of notes); then another on tempo (with the metronome), followed by another on dynamics (loud, soft, *crescendo*, *decrescendo*), then another on phrasing

(shaping musical lines), and so on.

We worked late into the night every day for weeks. I spared no harsh words; and got even tougher when Sophia's eyes filled with tears.

When the big day finally arrived, I was suddenly paralyzed; I could never be a performer myself. But Sophia just seemed excited. At Battell Chapel, when she walked out onto the stage to take her soloist's bow, she had a big smile on her face, and I could tell she was happy. As I watched her performing the piece — in the imposing dark-oak hall, she looked tiny and brave at the piano — my heart ached with a kind of indescribable pain.

Afterward, friends and strangers came up to congratulate Jed and me. Sophia's performance was breathtaking, they said, her playing so graceful and elegant. Sophia clearly was a Mozart person, a beaming Michelle told us, and she had never the Rondo sound so fresh and sparkling. "It's obvious that she's enjoying herself," Larry, the boisterous director of the Neighborhood Music School, said to me. "You can't sound that good if you're not having fun."

For some reason, Larry's comment reminded me of an incident from many years before, when Sophia was just starting the piano but I was already pushing hard. Jed discovered some funny marks on the piano, on the wood just above middle C. When he asked Sophia about them, a guilty look came over her. "What did you say?" she asked evasively.

Jed crouched down and examined them more closely. "Sophia," he said slowly, "could these possibly be teeth marks?"

It turned out they were. After more questioning, Sophia, who was perhaps six at the time, confessed that she often gnawed on the piano. When Jed explained that the piano was the most expensive piece of furniture we owned, Sophia promised not to do it again. I'm not quite sure why Larry's remark brought that episode to mind.

QUESTIONS

1. At the beginning of this piece, Chua describes how she once called her daughter “garbage.” Why does she include this story in her piece?
2. In paragraphs 11–14, Chua identifies three differences between Chinese and Western parents. Restate each of these differences into your own words.
3. Create a Venn diagram that compares Jed’s and Amy’s childhoods. How did the differences affect their own parenting decisions?
4. Describe Chua’s role in helping her daughter prepare for her concert. Are her actions justified?
5. How does the ending of the excerpt—with the teeth marks—complicate Chua’s own confidence in her parenting approach?
6. Does Sophia appear to be intrinsically or extrinsically motivated? What evidence supports your position?
7. **Comparison.** Would Jing-mei’s mother from “Two Kinds” approve of Chua’s methods?
8. **Informing Your Argument.** Based on this text, does intrinsic or extrinsic motivation seem to be better for parenting? Or, is there a middle ground that Chua has not explored here?

How to Raise a Creative Child. Step One: Back Off

ADAM GRANT



Marla Aufmuth/Getty Images

Adam Grant (b. 1981) is a professor of management and psychology at the Wharton School of Business at the University of Pennsylvania. He is the author of the *New York Times* best-selling books *Originals* (2016) and *Give and Take* (2013), both on working well in groups and building success. This piece by Grant appeared in the *New York Times* in 2016.

Focus for Reading As you read, focus on Grant’s evidence for what kinds of approaches work best for motivating children to excel.

They learn to read at age 2, play Bach at 4, breeze through calculus at 6, and speak foreign languages fluently by 8. Their classmates shudder with envy; their parents rejoice at winning the lottery. But to paraphrase T. S. Eliot, their careers tend to end not with a bang, but with a whimper.

Consider the nation’s most prestigious award for scientifically gifted high school

students, the Westinghouse Science Talent Search, called the Super Bowl of science by one American president. From its inception in 1942 until 1994, the search recognized more than 2000 precocious teenagers as finalists. But just 1 percent ended up making the National Academy of Sciences, and just eight have won Nobel Prizes. For every Lisa Randall who revolutionizes theoretical physics, there

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are many dozens who fall far short of their potential.

Child prodigies rarely become adult geniuses who change the world. We assume that they must lack the social and emotional skills to function in society. When you look at the evidence, though, this explanation doesn't suffice: Less than a quarter of gifted children suffer from social and emotional problems. A vast majority are well adjusted — as winning at a cocktail party as in the spelling bee.

What holds them back is that they don't learn to be original. They strive to earn the approval of their parents and the admiration of their teachers. But as they perform in Carnegie Hall and become chess champions, something unexpected happens: Practice makes perfect, but it doesn't make new.

The gifted learn to play magnificent 5 Mozart melodies, but rarely compose their own original scores. They focus their energy on consuming existing scientific knowledge, not producing new insights. They conform to codified rules, rather than inventing their own. Research suggests that the most creative children are the least likely to become the teacher's pet, and in response, many learn to keep their original ideas to themselves. In the language of the critic William Deresiewicz, they become the excellent sheep.

In adulthood, many prodigies become experts in their fields and leaders in their organizations. Yet "only a fraction of gifted children eventually become revolutionary adult creators," laments the psychologist Ellen Winner. "Those who do must make a painful transition" to an adult who "ultimately remakes a domain."

Most prodigies never make that leap. They apply their extraordinary abilities by shining in their jobs without making waves. They become doctors who heal their patients without fighting to fix the broken medical system or lawyers who defend clients on

unfair charges but do not try to transform the laws themselves.

So what does it take to raise a creative child? One study compared the families of children who were rated among the most creative 5 percent in their school system with those who were not unusually creative. The parents of ordinary children had an average of six rules, like specific schedules for homework and bedtime. Parents of highly creative children had an average of fewer than one rule.

Creativity may be hard to nurture, but it's easy to thwart. By limiting rules, parents encouraged their children to think for themselves. They tended to "place emphasis on moral values, rather than on specific rules," the Harvard psychologist Teresa Amabile reports.

Even then, though, parents didn't shove 10 their values down their children's throats. When psychologists compared America's most creative architects with a group of highly skilled but unoriginal peers, there was something unique about the parents of the creative architects: "Emphasis was placed on the development of one's own ethical code."

Yes, parents encouraged their children to pursue excellence and success — but they also encouraged them to find "joy in work." Their children had freedom to sort out their own values and discover their own interests. And that set them up to flourish as creative adults.

When the psychologist Benjamin Bloom led a study of the early roots of world-class musicians, artists, athletes and scientists, he learned that their parents didn't dream of raising superstar kids. They weren't drill sergeants or slave drivers. They responded to the intrinsic motivation of their children. When their children showed interest and enthusiasm in a skill, the parents supported them.

Top concert pianists didn't have elite teachers from the time they could walk; their first lessons came from instructors who

seeing connections

In 1968, George Land, author and influential thinker in the field of creativity, conducted a famous study. Land and his colleagues gave a test of creative thinking developed by NASA to a group of 1600

children at ages five, ten, and fifteen. He and his colleagues then used the same test with a very large group of adults. The results of this study are summarized in the following chart:

Age group tested	Number tested	Year of testing	Percent who scored in the "highly creative" range
5-year-olds	1,600 children	1968	98%
10-year-olds	1,600 children	1978	30%
15-year-olds	1,600 children	1983	12%
25+-year-olds	280,000 adults	1985	2%

What can you conclude from the data about what happens to creativity as we get older? What factors do you think contribute to this?

happened to live nearby and made learning fun. Mozart showed interest in music before taking lessons, not the other way around. Mary Lou Williams learned to play the piano on her own; Itzhak Perlman began teaching himself the violin after being rejected from music school.

Even the best athletes didn't start out any better than their peers. When Dr. Bloom's team interviewed tennis players who were ranked in the top 10 in the world, they were not, to paraphrase Jerry Seinfeld, doing push-ups since they were a fetus. Few of them faced intense pressure to perfect the game as Andre Agassi did. A majority of the tennis stars remembered one thing about their first coaches: They made tennis enjoyable.

Since Malcolm Gladwell popularized the

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depends on the time we spend in deliberate practice, debate has raged about how the hours necessary to become an expert vary by field and person. In arguing about that, we've overlooked two questions that matter just as much.

First, can't practice itself blind us to ways to improve our area of study? Research reveals that the more we practice, the more we become entrenched — trapped in familiar ways of thinking. Expert bridge players struggled more than novices to adapt when the rules were changed; expert accountants were worse than novices at applying a new tax law.

Second, what motivates people to practice a skill for thousands of hours? The most reliable answer is passion — discovered through natural curiosity or nurtured through early enjoyable experiences with an activity or many activities.

Evidence shows that creative contributions depend on the breadth, not just depth, of our knowledge and experience. In fashion, the most original collections come from directors who spend the most time working abroad. In science, winning a Nobel Prize is less about being a single-minded genius and more about being interested in many things. Relative to typical scientists, Nobel Prize winners are 22 times more likely to perform as actors, dancers or magicians; 12 times more likely to write poetry, plays or novels; seven times more likely to dabble in arts and crafts; and twice as likely to play an instrument or compose music.

No one is forcing these luminary scientists to get involved in artistic hobbies. It's a reflection of their curiosity. And

sometimes, that curiosity leads them to flashes of insight. "The theory of relativity occurred to me by intuition, and music is the driving force behind this intuition," Albert Einstein reflected. His mother enrolled him in violin lessons starting at age 5, but he wasn't intrigued. His love of music only blossomed as a teenager, after he stopped taking lessons and stumbled upon Mozart's sonatas. "Love is a better teacher than a sense of duty," he said.

Hear that, Tiger Moms and Lombardi Dads? You can't program a child to become creative. Try to engineer a certain kind of success, and the best you'll get is an ambitious robot. If you want your children to bring original ideas into the world, you need to let them pursue their passions, not yours.

QUESTIONS

1. According to Grant, why is intrinsic motivation more effective than extrinsic?
2. What does Grant say about "hobbies," and what role do they play in child development?
3. Summarize Grant's findings about what specific actions parents should take to raise a creative child.
4. Paraphrase Albert Einstein's quotes in paragraph 19. What purpose do these quotes serve in Grant's argument?
5. Look back through this piece and identify the three pieces of evidence Grant uses that you think are the most convincing. Explain why they are persuasive.
6. **Comparison.** What would Grant likely conclude about Suyuan's style of parenting? What evidence from this article supports your inference?
7. **Informing Your Argument.** How do Grant's ideas about creativity and motivation add to your own ideas about motivation? Does the type of activity seem to matter?

from Drive

DANIEL PINK



Riccardo S. Savi/Getty Images

Daniel H. Pink (b. 1964) has a law degree from Yale and a background in both business and politics. After working as chief speech writer for Vice President Al Gore, Pink became a full-time writer on the topics of business, work, and behavior, including three best-selling books, *A Whole New Mind* (2005), *Drive* (2009), and *To Sell Is Human* (2012).

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Key Context Pink's idea of motivation revolves around the idea that humanity has been through two phases of motivation and needs to move on to a "third drive," which he calls Motivation 3.0:

- Motivation 1.0: trying to survive by avoiding hunger and by procreating.
- Motivation 2.0: being driven by rewards and/or punishments.
- Motivation 3.0: "[The] drive to do things because they're interesting, because we want to do them—is this drive for autonomy and for self-direction."

Focus for Reading As you read, be sure to focus on his definitions and examples of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation.

Less of What We Want

One of the most enduring scenes in American literature offers an important lesson in human motivation. In Chapter 2 of Mark Twain's *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*, Tom faces the dreary task of whitewashing Aunt Polly's 810-square-foot fence. He's not exactly thrilled with the assignment. "Life to him seemed hollow, and existence but a burden," Twain writes.

But just when Tom has nearly lost hope, "nothing less than a great, magnificent inspiration" bursts upon him. When his friend Ben ambles by and mocks Tom for his sorry lot, Tom acts confused. Slapping paint on a fence isn't a grim chore, he says. It's a fantastic privilege—a source of, ahem, intrinsic motivation. The job is so captivating that when Ben asks to try a few brushstrokes himself, Tom refuses. He doesn't relent until Ben gives up his apple in exchange for the opportunity.

Soon more boys arrive, all of whom tumble into Tom's trap and end up whitewashing the fence—several times over—on his behalf. From this episode, Twain extracts a key motivational principle, namely "that Work consists of whatever a body is OBLIGED to do, and that Play consists of whatever a body is not obliged to do." He goes on to write:

There are wealthy gentlemen in England who drive four-horse passenger-coaches twenty or thirty miles on a daily line, in the summer, because the privilege costs them considerable money; but if they were offered wages for the service, that would turn it into work and then they would resign.¹

In other words, rewards can perform a weird sort of behavioral alchemy: They can transform an interesting task into a drudge. They can turn play into work. And by diminishing intrinsic motivation, they can send performance, creativity, and even upstanding behavior toppling like dominoes. Let's call this the Sawyer Effect.² A sampling of intriguing experiments around the world reveals the four realms where this effect kicks in—and shows yet again the mismatch between what science knows and what business does.

Intrinsic Motivation

Behavioral scientists like Deci began discovering the Sawyer Effect nearly forty years ago, although they didn't use that term. Instead, they referred to the counterintuitive consequences of extrinsic incentives as "the hidden costs of rewards." That, in fact, was the title of the first book on the subject—a

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¹ Mark Twain, *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 23.

² Here's the two-sided definition of the Sawyer Effect: practices that can either turn play into work or turn work into play.

1978 research volume that was edited by psychologists Mark Lepper and David Greene.

One of Lepper and Greene's early studies (which they carried out with a third colleague, Robert Nisbett) has become a classic in the field and among the most cited articles in the motivation literature. The three researchers watched a classroom of preschoolers for several days and identified the children who chose to spend their "free play" time drawing. Then they fashioned an experiment to test the effect of rewarding an activity these children clearly enjoyed.

The researchers divided the children into three groups. The first was the "expected-award" group. They showed each of these children a "Good Player" certificate — adorned with a blue ribbon and featuring the child's name — and asked if the child wanted to draw in order to receive the award. The second group was the "unexpected-award" group. Researchers asked these children simply if they wanted to draw. If they decided to, when the session ended, the researchers handed each child one of the "Good Player" certificates. The third group was the "no-award" group. Researchers asked these children if they wanted to draw, but neither promised them a certificate at the beginning nor gave them one at the end.

Two weeks later, back in the classroom, teachers set out paper and markers during the preschool's free play period while the researchers secretly observed the students. Children previously in the "unexpected-award" and "no-award" groups drew just as much, and with the same relish, as they had before the experiment. But children in the first group — the ones who'd expected and then received an award — showed much less interest and spent much less time drawing.³

³ Mark Lepper, David Greene, and Robert Nisbett, "Undermining Children's Intrinsic Interest with Extrinsic Rewards: A Test of the 'Overjustification' Hypothesis," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 26 (1974): 29–37.

Percentage of Free Time Spent on a Task Based on Reward

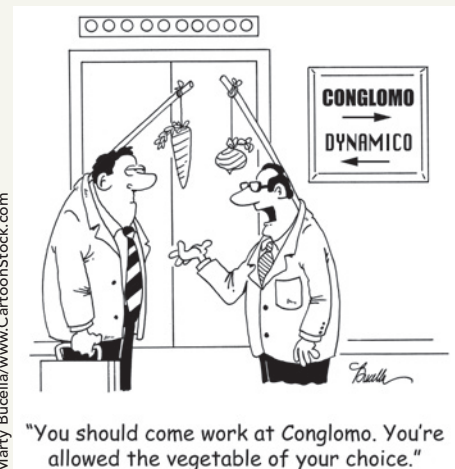
	#	%
Expected award	18	8.59
No award	15	16.73
Unexpected award	18	18.09

↑ This is a chart of the data produced from the experiment that Pink describes. Draw a conclusion about the data and then think about yourself: do you notice similar results in your own life and activities?

Based on data from Lepper, et al.

The Sawyer Effect had taken hold. Even two weeks later, those alluring prizes — so common in classrooms and cubicles — had turned play into work.

To be clear, it wasn't necessarily the rewards themselves that dampened the children's interest. Remember: When children didn't expect a reward, receiving one had little impact on their intrinsic motivation. Only contingent rewards — if you do this, then you'll get that — had the negative effect. Why? "If-then" rewards



↑ This cartoon plays on the idea of using carrots and sticks for motivation.

What message about corporate work does the visual and text communicate? What might Pink say about this type of

require people to forfeit some of their autonomy. Like the gentlemen driving carriages for money instead of fun, they're no longer fully controlling their lives. And that can spring a hole in the bottom of their motivational bucket, draining an activity of its enjoyment.

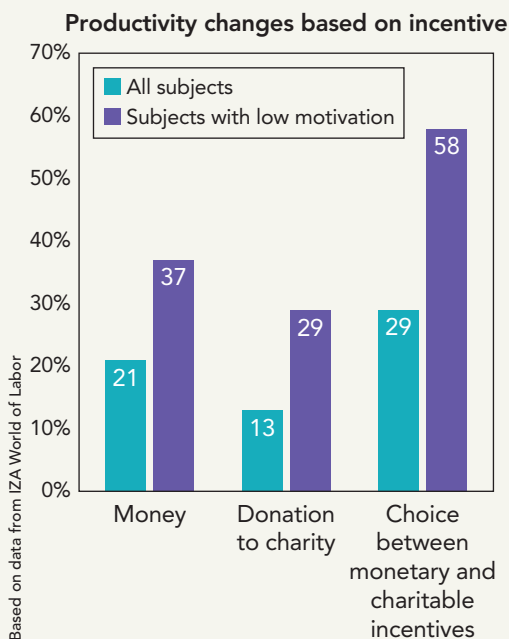
Lepper and Greene replicated these results in several subsequent experiments with children. As time went on, other researchers found similar results with adults. Over and over again, they discovered that extrinsic rewards—in particular, contingent, expected, “if-then” rewards—snuffed out the third drive.

These insights proved so controversial—after all, they called into question a standard

practice of most companies and schools—that in 1999 Deci and two colleagues reanalyzed nearly three decades of studies on the subject to confirm the findings. “Careful consideration of reward effects reported in 128 experiments lead to the conclusion that tangible rewards tend to have a substantially negative effect on intrinsic motivation,” they determined. “When institutions—families, schools, businesses, and athletic teams, for example—focus on the short-term and opt for controlling people’s behavior,” they do considerable long-term damage.⁴

Try to encourage a kid to learn math by paying her for each workbook page she completes—and she’ll almost certainly become more diligent in the short term and lose interest in math in the long term. Take an industrial designer who loves his work and try to get him to do better by making his pay contingent on a hit product—and he’ll almost certainly work like a maniac in the short term, but become less interested in his job in the long term. As one leading behavioral science textbook puts it, “People use rewards expecting to gain the benefit of increasing another person’s motivation and behavior, but in so doing, they often incur the unintentional and hidden cost of undermining that person’s intrinsic motivation toward the activity.”⁵

This is one of the most robust findings in social science—and also one of the most ignored. Despite the work of a few skilled and passionate popularizers—in particular, Alfie Kahn, whose prescient 1993 book, *Punished by Rewards*, lays out a devastating indictment of extrinsic incentives—we



↑ The data found in this graph was gathered by the firm IZA World of Labor, a think tank specializing in economics and public policy. The firm studied changes in productivity when given different incentives, tracked as a number of entries per hour. An increase of 21%, as in the first bar of the graph, indicates that employees made 21% more entries per hour with that type of motivation.

How does the chart illustrate the conclusion that people can be motivated by more than just money? Would Pink agree or disagree with the conclusions? Why?

⁴Edward L. Deci, Richard M. Ryan, and Richard Koestner, “A Meta-Analytic Review of Experiments Examining the Effects of Extrinsic Rewards on Intrinsic Motivation,” *Psychological Bulletin* 125, no. 6 (1999): 659.

⁵Jonmarshall Reeve, *Understanding Motivation and Emotion*, 4th ed. (Hoboken, N.J.: John Wiley & Sons, 2005), 143.

persist in trying to motivate people this way. Perhaps we're scared to let go of Motivation 2.0, despite its obvious downsides. Perhaps we can't get our minds around the peculiar quantum mechanics of intrinsic motivation.

Or perhaps there's a better reason. Even if those controlling "if-then" rewards

activate the Sawyer Effect and suffocate the third drive, maybe they actually get people to perform better. If that's the case, perhaps they're not so bad. So let's ask: Do extrinsic rewards boost performance? Four economists went to India to find out.

QUESTIONS

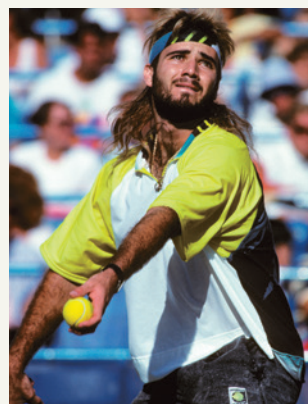
1. Reread the first paragraphs of the excerpt and explain the "Sawyer Effect."
2. According to Pink, why do institutions such as schools and businesses tend to rely on intrinsic or extrinsic motivation?
3. Paraphrase the following quote from a researcher: "People use rewards expecting to gain the benefit of increasing another person's motivation and behavior, but in so doing, they often incur the unintentional and hidden cost of undermining that person's intrinsic motivation toward the activity" (par. 12). Why does Pink include this quotation?
4. In general, what do you think motivates students to do well in school? Grades?
5. **Comparison.** Summarize the research findings of the Lepper and Greene study of children and drawing. How do these results support or contradict Suyuan's approach to parenting?
6. **Informing Your Argument.** Pink is mostly writing for an audience of businesspeople who are interested in motivating their workers. What is the strongest piece of evidence from this context that you can identify from this piece that you can add to your understanding of the issue, or what is one piece of evidence that contradicts what you were thinking about motivation?

from Open

ANDRE AGASSI

One of the greatest tennis players of all time, Andre Agassi (b. 1970) is an eight-time winner of the major "Grand Slam" tennis tournaments. In this 2010 memoir, he discusses his upbringing, especially the way that his father trained him for tennis.

Focus for Reading As you read this excerpt, think about Jing-mei from "Two Kinds" and compare her mother's encouragement with Agassi's father's encouragement. I'm seven years old, talking to myself, because I'm scared, and because I'm the only person who listens to me. Under my breath I whisper: Just quit, Andre, just give up. Put down your racket and walk off this court, right now. Go into the house and get something good to eat. Play with Rita, Philly, or Tami. Sit with Mom while she knits or does her jigsaw puzzle. Doesn't that sound nice? Wouldn't that feel like heaven, Andre? To just quit? To never play tennis again? But I can't. Not only would my father chase me around the house with



PCN Photography/Alamy

my racket, but something in my gut, some deep unseen muscle, won't let me. I hate tennis, hate it with all my heart, and still I keep playing, keep hitting all morning, and all afternoon, because I have no choice. No matter how much I want to stop, I don't. I keep begging myself to stop, and I keep playing, and this gap, this contradiction between what I want to do and what I actually do, feels like the core of my life. At the moment my hatred for tennis is focused on the dragon, a ball machine modified by my fire-belching father. Midnight black, set on big rubber wheels, the word PRINCE painted in white block letters along its base, the dragon looks at first glance like the ball machine at every country club in America, but it's actually a living, breathing creature straight out of my comic books. The dragon has a brain, a will, a black heart — and a horrifying voice. Sucking another ball into its belly, the dragon makes a series of sickening sounds. As pressure builds inside its throat, it groans. As the ball rises slowly to its mouth, it shrieks. For a moment the dragon sounds almost silly, like the fudge machine swallowing Augustus Gloop in Willy

Wonka & the Chocolate Factory. But when the dragon takes dead aim at me and fires a ball 110 miles an hour, the sound it makes is a bloodcurdling roar. I flinch every time. My father has deliberately made the dragon fearsome. He's given it an extra-long neck of aluminum tubing, and a narrow aluminum head, which recoils like a whip every time the dragon fires.

He's also set the dragon on a base several feet high, and moved it flush against the net, so the dragon towers above me. At seven years old I'm small for my age. (I look smaller because of my constant wince and the bimonthly bowl haircuts my father gives me.) But when standing before the dragon, I look tiny. Feel tiny. Helpless. My father wants the dragon to tower over me not simply because it commands my attention and respect. He wants the balls that shoot from the dragon's mouth to land at my feet as if dropped from an airplane. The trajectory makes the balls nearly impossible to return in a conventional way: I need to hit every ball on the rise, or else it will bounce over my head. But even that's not enough for my father. Hit earlier, he yells. Hit earlier.



John Russell/Getty Images



↑ These are photographs of Agassi as a boy.

What do these early images seem to reveal about him?

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My father yells everything twice, sometimes three times, sometimes ten. Harder, he says, harder. But what's the use? No matter how hard I hit a ball, no matter how early, the ball comes back. Every ball I send across the net joins the thousands that already cover the court. Not hundreds. Thousands. They roll toward me in perpetual waves. I have no room to turn, to step, to pivot. I can't move without stepping on a ball — and yet I can't step on a ball, because my father won't bear it. Step on one of my father's tennis balls and he'll howl as if you stepped on his eyeball. Every third ball fired by the dragon hits a ball already on the ground, causing a crazy sideways hop. I adjust at the last second, catch the ball early, and hit it smartly across the net. I know this is no ordinary reflex. I know there are few children in the world who could have seen that ball, let alone hit it. But I take no pride in my reflexes, and I get no credit. It's what I'm supposed to do. Every hit is expected, every miss a crisis. My father says that if I hit 2,500 balls each day, I'll hit 17,500 balls each week, and at the end of one year I'll have hit nearly one million balls. He believes in math. Numbers, he says, don't lie. A child who hits one million balls each year will be unbeatable. Hit earlier,

my father yells. Damn it, Andre, hit earlier. Crowd the ball, crowd the ball. Now he's crowding me. He's yelling directly into my ear. It's not enough to hit everything the dragon fires at me; my father wants me to hit it harder and faster than the dragon. He wants me to beat the dragon. The thought makes me panicky. I tell myself: You can't beat the dragon. How can you beat something that never stops? Come to think of it, the dragon is a lot like my father.

Except my father is worse. At least the dragon stands before me, where I can see it. My father stays behind me. I rarely see him, only hear him, day and night, yelling in my ear. More topspin! Hit harder. Hit harder. Not in the net! Damn it, Andre! Never in the net! Nothing sends my father into a rage like hitting a ball into the net. He dislikes when I hit the ball wide, he yells when I hit a ball long, but when I miff a ball into the net, he foams at the mouth. Errors are one thing, the net is something else. Over and over my father says: The net is your biggest enemy. My father has raised the enemy six inches higher than regulation, to make it that much harder to avoid. If I can clear my father's high net, he figures I'll have no trouble clearing the net one day at Wimbledon. Never mind

In the movie *Whiplash*, → a music teacher is extraordinarily demanding toward his students. At one point he says, "There are no two words more harmful in the English language than 'good job.'"

What do you think he means by this, and would Agassi's father agree or disagree? Why?



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that I don't want to play Wimbledon. What I want isn't relevant. Sometimes I watch Wimbledon on TV with my father, and we both root for Björn Borg, because he's the best, he never stops, he's the nearest thing to the dragon — but I don't want to be Borg. I admire his talent, his energy, his style, his ability to lose himself in his game, but if I ever develop those qualities, I'd rather apply them to something other than Wimbledon. Something of my own choosing. . . .

The net is the biggest enemy, but thinking is the cardinal sin. Thinking, my

father believes, is the source of all bad things, because thinking is the opposite of doing. When my father catches me thinking, daydreaming, on the tennis court, he reacts as if he caught me taking money from his wallet. I often think about how I can stop thinking. I wonder if my father yells at me to stop thinking because he knows I'm a thinker by nature. Or, with all his yelling, has he turned me into a thinker? Is my thinking about things other than tennis an act of defiance? I like to think so.

QUESTIONS

1. Agassi says, "this contradiction between what I want to do and what I actually do, feels like the core of my life." How does he illustrate this contradiction in this excerpt?
2. Reread the section focusing on his description of the ball machine as a "dragon" (pars. 1–2). Identify the emotions he associates with this machine. What is the intended effect of these descriptions on the reader?
3. How does Agassi make it clear that—as a child—he is extrinsically motivated?
4. **Comparison.** How is Agassi similar to Jing-mei in his desire to succeed? How is he different? How are the parents similar or different from each other? Include evidence from both pieces to illustrate these differences.
5. **Informing Your Argument.** This is the first text in this Conversation that is told from the point of view of a child, as opposed to that of a parent or researcher. What additional evidence have you added to your understanding of motivation by reading this piece?

Entering the Conversation

Throughout this Conversation, you have read a variety of texts that deal with motivation and methods for achieving success. Now it's time to respond to the issue and enter the Conversation. Consider the following prompts:

Prompt 1: Think about an activity that you participate in now or in the past. Write about what motivates you—intrinsically or extrinsically—to participate in the activity.

Prompt 2: Should children be pushed to participate in activities at a very

young age in order to get to the 10,000-hour rule Gladwell describes? Where is the line between helping children to succeed and pushing them too hard or too far?

Prompt 3: How do you define success in life? Is it happiness? Is it excellence? Is it being the best? Ultimately, does hard work and practice lead to success, as you define it?

1. | Building on the Conversation. Locate one additional text on this topic that you think adds an interesting perspective to this Conversation. This text can be of any type: an argument, a narrative, a poem, a painting, or even a film clip. Before you decide to add this text to the Conversation, be sure that it is a credible and relevant source, which you can determine by evaluating it with the skills you practiced in Chapter 4 (p. 120). Read and annotate the text carefully, making connections to other texts in the Conversation and “Two Kinds.”

2. | Organizing the Ideas. Some of the texts in this Conversation suggest that either extrinsic or intrinsic motivations are more effective. Review the chart you have been keeping throughout this Conversation and identify the texts and quotes that relate specifically to your prompt.

3. | Making a Claim. Write a statement that reflects your overall attitude toward

motivation and specifically addresses the prompt. This will be the main point you will prove in your own argument that you can support and defend with evidence from the texts you read and your own experiences and reasoning. Keep in mind that a strong claim should be focused and narrowed.

4. | Writing the Argument. Now that you have a claim that reflects your informed stance on motivation, it is time to write your argument. Be sure that you keep your *position on the issue central*, and refer to at least two Conversation texts, which could include the additional text you found to support your position.

5. | Reflecting on the Conversation. Think back on your reading of “Two Kinds” by Amy Tan. How did reading further about intrinsic and extrinsic motivation change your interpretation of that story, or help you understand something about the characters or theme?

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Once Upon a Time

NADINE GORDIMER

Novelist and short story writer Nadine Gordimer (1923–2014) was born and raised in Springs, South Africa, during a time of intense racial upheaval. Throughout her life, Gordimer often witnessed, and wrote about, the repressive effects of Apartheid, which sought to continue white rule and supremacy in majority-black South Africa. Many of her books were banned by the South African government because she challenged the Apartheid government. In 1991, Gordimer won the Nobel Prize for Literature, recognized not only for her contributions to political activism in her home country, but for her masterful writing.

This story begins as a narrative but then turns into a “fairy tale,” which centers around a family who takes increasingly elaborate steps to ensure their safety in an Apartheid-era neighborhood. Throughout the development of the story and the progressing need for protection against unseen forces, Gordimer highlights the conflicts and contradictions of life in Apartheid South Africa.

Key Context Gordimer wrote “Once Upon a Time” in 1989, just as a forty-year period of racial segregation in South Africa, called Apartheid, was ending. In 1990, the government recognized the African National Congress as a legal opposition party and freed its leader, Nelson Mandela, after twenty-seven years in prison. Apartheid had created a permanent underclass that lashed out in anger and desperation. Crime spiked during this period, with murders rising to a rate of almost 80 per 100,000 residents. For comparison, the most dangerous city in America in 2016 was St. Louis, with a murder rate of 49 per 100,000 residents. As a result of this spike in crime, many white residents fled to gated communities with intense security. South Africa remains one of the most dangerous places in the world.



Adrian Steim/21 Icons/Getty Images

Someone has written to ask me to contribute to an anthology of stories for children. I reply that I don't write children's stories; and he writes back that at a recent congress/book fair/seminar a certain novelist said every writer ought to write at least one story for children. I think of sending a postcard saying I don't accept that I "ought" to write anything. And then last night I woke up — or rather was awakened without knowing what had roused me.

A voice in the echo-chamber of the subconscious?

A sound.

A creaking of the kind made by the weight carried by one foot after another along a wooden floor. I listened. I felt the apertures of my ears distend with concentration. Again: the creaking. I was waiting for it; waiting to hear if it indicated that feet were moving from room to room, coming up the passage — to my door. I have no burglar bars, no gun under the pillow, but I have the same fears as people who do take these precautions,

and my windowpanes are thin as rime, could shatter like a wineglass. A woman was murdered (how do they put it) in broad daylight in a house two blocks away, last year, and the fierce dogs who guarded an old widower and his collection of antique clocks were strangled before he was knifed by a casual laborer he had dismissed without pay.

I was staring at the door, making it out in my mind rather than seeing it, in the dark. I lay quite still — a victim already — the arrhythmia of my heart was fleeing, knocking this way and that against its body-cage. How finely tuned the senses are, just out of rest, sleep! I could never listen intently as that in the distractions of the day, I was reading every faintest sound, identifying and classifying its possible threat.

But I learned that I was to be neither threatened nor spared. There was no human weight pressing on the boards, the creaking was a buckling, an epicenter of stress. I was in it. The house that surrounds me while I sleep is built

What is the irony between the title → of the painting and what you see?
What might the artist's message be?
Describe how the artist's message might relate to Gordimer's story.



Paul Bond, *Towards a Nice, Steady Bourgeois Life*. Oil on canvas, 28" x 24". Private collection.

Paul Bond/www.paulbondart.com/Towards A Nice, Steady Bourgeois Life, Oil on Panel/28 x 24.

on undermined ground; far beneath my bed, the floor, the house's foundations, the stopes¹ and passages of gold mines have hollowed the rock, and when some face trembles, detaches and falls, three thousand feet below, the whole house shifts slightly, bringing uneasy strain to the balance and counterbalance of brick, cement, wood and glass that hold it as a structure around me. The misbeats of my heart tailed off like the last muffled flourishes on one of the wooden xylophones made by the Chopi and Tsonga migrant miners who might have been down there, under me in the earth at that moment. The stope where the fall was could have been disused, dripping water from its ruptured veins; or men might now be interred there in the most profound of tombs.

I couldn't find a position in which my mind would let go of my body — release me to sleep again. So I began to tell myself a story, a bedtime story.

In a house, in a suburb, in a city, there were a man and his wife who loved each other very much and were living happily ever after. They had a little boy, and they loved him very much. They had a cat and a dog that the little boy loved very much. They had a car and a caravan trailer for

holidays, and a swimming-pool which was fenced so that the little boy and his playmates would not fall in and drown. They had a housemaid who was absolutely trustworthy and an itinerant gardener who was highly recommended by the neighbors. For when they began to live happily ever after they were warned, by that wise old witch, the husband's mother, not to take on anyone off the street. They were inscribed in a medical benefit society, their pet dog was licensed, they were insured against fire, flood damage and theft, and subscribed to the local Neighborhood Watch, which supplied them with a plaque for their gates lettered YOU HAVE BEEN WARNED over the silhouette of a would-be intruder. He was masked; it could not be said if he was black or white, and therefore proved the property owner was no racist.

It was not possible to insure the house, the swimming pool or the car against riot damage. There were riots, but these were outside the city, where people of another color were quartered. These people were not allowed into the suburb except as reliable housemaids and gardeners, so there was nothing to fear, the husband told the wife. Yet she was afraid that some day such people might come up the street and tear off the plaque YOU HAVE BEEN WARNED and open the gates and stream in . . . Nonsense, my

¹ stope: a series of steps or layers excavated in a mine. —Eds.

This drone photo shows the division between neighborhoods in Johannesburg, South Africa. How does this aerial view support Gordimer's description of the setting in this story?



Johnny Miller/Millefoto/Rex/Shutterstock

dear, said the husband, there are police and soldiers and tear-gas and guns to keep them away. But to please her — for he loved her very much and buses were being burned, cars stoned, and schoolchildren shot by the police in those quarters out of sight and hearing of the suburb — e had electronically controlled gates fitted. Anyone who pulled off the sign YOU HAVE BEEN WARNED and tried to open the gates would have to announce his intentions by pressing a button and speaking into a receiver relayed to the house. The little boy was fascinated by the device and used it as a walkie-talkie in cops and robbers play with his small friends.

The riots were suppressed, but there were many burglaries in the suburb and somebody's trusted housemaid was tied up and shut in a cupboard by thieves while she was in charge of her employers' house. The trusted housemaid of the man and wife and little boy was so upset by this misfortune befalling a friend left, as she herself often was, with responsibility for the possessions of the man and his wife and the little boy that she implored her employers to have burglar bars attached to the doors and windows of the house, and an alarm system installed. The

wife said, She is right, let us take heed of her advice. So from every window and door in the house where they were living happily ever after they now saw the trees and sky through bars, and when the little boy's pet cat tried to climb in by the fanlight to keep him company in his little bed at night, as it customarily had done, it set off the alarm keening through the house.

The alarm was often answered — it seemed — by other burglar alarms, in other houses, that had been triggered by pet cats or nibbling mice. The alarms called to one another across the gardens in shrills and bleats and wails that everyone soon became accustomed to, so that the din roused the inhabitants of the suburb no more than the croak of frogs and musical grating of cicadas' legs. Under cover of the electronic harpies' discourse intruders sawed the iron bars and broke into homes, taking away hi-fi equipment, television sets, cassette players, cameras and radios, jewelry and clothing, and sometimes were hungry enough to devour everything in the refrigerator or paused audaciously to drink the whiskey in the cabinets or patio bars. Insurance companies paid no compensation for single malt, a loss

Typically, walls are meant to separate us from others, and yet this proposed interactive wall in San Francisco, called MeetWall, promotes interaction between two people. The panels rotate 45 degrees when individuals get close, allowing for some transparency, then open the full 90 degrees for the full reveal when the two people are aligned opposite each other.

Can you think of other examples where walls might represent something other than division?



AMIGM.com

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made keener by the property owner's knowledge that the thieves wouldn't even have been able to appreciate what it was they were drinking.

Then the time came when many of the people who were not trusted housemaids and gardeners hung about the suburb because they were unemployed. Some importuned for a job: weeding or painting a roof; anything, *baas*, madam. But the man and his wife remembered the warning about taking on anyone off the street. Some drank liquor and fouled the street with discarded bottles.

Some begged, waiting for the man or his wife to drive the car out of the electronically operated gates. They sat about with their feet in the gutters, under the jacaranda trees that made a green tunnel of the street — for it was a beautiful suburb, spoilt only by their presence — and sometimes they fell asleep lying right before the gates in the midday sun. The wife could never see anyone go hungry. She sent the trusted housemaid out with bread and tea, but the trusted housemaid said these were loafers and tsotsis,² who would come and tie her and shut her in a cupboard. The husband said, She's right. Take heed of her advice. You only encourage them with your bread and tea. They are looking for their chance . . . And he brought the little boy's tricycle from the garden into the house every night, because if the house was surely secure, once locked and with the alarm set, someone might still be able to climb over the wall or the electronically closed gates into the garden. You are right, said the wife, then the wall should be higher. And the wise old witch, the husband's mother, paid for the extra bricks as her Christmas present to her son and his wife — the little boy got a Space Man outfit and a book of fairy tales.

But every week there were more reports of intrusion: in broad daylight and the dead of night, in the early hours of the morning, and even in the lovely summer twilight — a certain

family was at dinner while the bedrooms were being ransacked upstairs. The man and his wife, talking of the latest armed robbery in the suburb, were distracted by the sight of the little boy's pet cat effortlessly arriving over the seven-foot wall, descending first with a rapid bracing of extended forepaws down on the sheer vertical surface, and then a graceful launch, landing with swishing tail within the property. The whitewashed wall was marked with the cat's comings and goings; and on the street side of the wall there were larger red-earth smudges that could have been made by the kind of broken running shoes, seen on the feet of unemployed loiterers, that had no innocent destination.

When the man and wife and little boy took the pet dog for its walk round the neighborhood streets they no longer paused to admire this show of roses or that perfect lawn; these were hidden behind an array of different varieties of security fences, walls and devices. The man, wife, little boy and dog passed a remarkable choice: there was the low-cost option of pieces of broken glass embedded in cement along the top of walls, there were iron grilles ending in lance-points, there were attempts at reconciling the aesthetics of prison architecture with the Spanish Villa style (spikes painted pink) and with the plaster urns of neoclassical facades (twelve-inch pikes finned like zigzags of lightning and painted pure white). Some walls had a small board affixed, giving the name and telephone number of the firm responsible for the installation of the devices. While the little boy and the pet dog raced ahead, the husband and wife found themselves comparing the possible effectiveness of each style against its appearance; and after several weeks when they paused before this barricade or that without needing to speak, both came out with the conclusion that only one was worth considering. It was the ugliest but the most honest in its suggestion of the pure concentration-camp style, no frills, all evident

² tsotsis: South African English, meaning thug, criminal. —Eds.

efficacy. Placed the length of walls, it consisted of a continuous coil of stiff and shining metal serrated into jagged blades, so that there would be no way of climbing over it and no way through its tunnel without getting entangled in its fangs. There would be no way out, only a struggle getting bloodier and bloodier, a deeper and sharper hooking and tearing of flesh. The wife shuddered to look at it. You're right, said the husband, anyone would think twice . . . And they took heed of the advice on a small board fixed to the wall: Consult DRAGON'S TEETH The People For Total Security.

Next day a gang of workmen came and stretched the razor-bladed coils all round the walls of the house where the husband and wife and little boy and pet dog and cat were living happily ever after. The sunlight flashed and slashed, off the serrations, the cornice of razor thorns encircled the home, shining. The husband said, Never mind. It will weather. The wife said, You're wrong. They guarantee it's rust-proof. And she waited until the little boy had run off to play before she said, I hope the cat will take heed . . . The husband said, Don't worry, my dear, cats always look before they leap. And it was true that from that day on the cat slept

in the little boy's bed and kept to the garden, never risking a try at breaching security.

One evening, the mother read the little boy to sleep with a fairy story from the book the wise old witch had given him at Christmas. Next day he pretended to be the Prince who braves the terrible thicket of thorns to enter the palace and kiss the Sleeping Beauty back to life: he dragged a ladder to the wall, the shining coiled tunnel was just wide enough for his little body to creep in, and with the first fixing of its razor-teeth in his knees and hands and head he screamed and struggled deeper into its tangle. The trusted housemaid and the itinerant gardener, whose "day" it was, came running, the first to see and to scream with him, and the itinerant gardener tore his hands trying to get at the little boy. Then the man and his wife burst wildly into the garden and for some reason (the cat, probably) the alarm set up wailing against the screams while the bleeding mass of the little boy was hacked out of the security coil with saws, wire-cutters, choppers, and they carried it—the man, the wife, the hysterical trusted housemaid and the weeping gardener—into the house.

UNDERSTANDING AND INTERPRETING

1. What does the author fear in paragraphs 2–7? Though the sound she hears has a rational explanation, why does the author struggle to fall asleep?
2. Describe the progression of increased security measures the family takes in response to crimes in their neighborhood. How do they reach their decisions to continue adding security? Are their actions warranted? Why or why not?
3. What can you infer about the setting by the fact that the sounding of house alarms doesn't affect the neighbors—"no more than the croak of frogs and musical grating of cicadas' legs" (par. 11)?
4. Why do you think the mother-in-law is described throughout the story as the "wise old witch"?
5. What does it say about the mother's character that she attempts to provide food to those outside the gate? Are her actions motivated by genuine concern, or guilt? Provide evidence from the story to support your assertions.
6. Based on the house workers' actions and reactions to events that happen in the story, what might Gordimer be emphasizing about their roles in both the family and in society?
7. Find examples of external and internal conflict in the story. Of the conflicts posed—external and internal—which do you feel constitutes a greater threat to the family?
8. Who or what do you hold responsible for the child's death? Support your reasoning using details from the story.

9. How is this story like a fairy tale? What elements does this story share with common fairy tales? How is the story not like a fairy tale?
10. The ideas of racism and segregation are central to Gordimer's story. What possible theme, or themes, can be found regarding the effects of racism and segregation? How do the events in the story develop those ideas?

ANALYZING LANGUAGE, STYLE, AND STRUCTURE

1. **Vocabulary in Context.** The narrator says that she is called to write a fairy tale because of a "voice in the echo-chamber of the subconscious" (par. 2). What are the meanings of the terms "echo-chamber" and "subconscious"? How do these ideas relate to the ideas in the story?
2. The words "reliable" and "trusted" are used to describe the housemaid in paragraphs 9 and 10. What are the connotations of these words in this context? How are these words used to distinguish differences between the housemaid and others of her race?
3. How does Gordimer use details and imagery to set the mood? Point out specific examples and explain how they add to the element of suspense.
4. The story begins from the author's point of view in a narrative style, then switches into third person point of view for the "bedtime story." Why might the author have chosen to structure her story in this way?
5. In paragraph 8, Gordimer uses the phrase "living happily ever after." Why might she have included the line at the beginning instead of the end, where this line typically is placed in fairy tales? What effect does repeating the phrase "living happily ever after" have on the reader's interpretation of the story?
6. Discuss the irony in the line "from every window and door in the house where they

were living happily ever after they now saw the trees and sky through bars" (par. 10).

7. Find similarities between Gordimer's description of her own house at the beginning and that of the family's in her bedtime story. What conclusions can you draw from the connections you find?
8. What is ironic about the boy's death?
9. Why do you think Gordimer chose to present a story about the tragic effects of Apartheid in the form of a fairy tale? Is Gordimer's use of a fairytale to highlight the impact of Apartheid effective? Why or why not?

TOPICS FOR COMPOSING

1. **Analysis.** The wall in the story is meant to literally keep out intruders, and yet it represents more than that. Write about the symbolic meaning of the wall in this story.
2. **Personal.** In her essay, Gordimer wrestles with her fear that there is an intruder in her house even as she realizes that it's only the sounds of her house settling. Have you ever convinced yourself to be afraid of something that was only a potential threat, but unrealized? Write a reflective journal about a situation you experienced in which you found yourself unnecessarily fearful and how you dealt with your emotions.
3. **Argument.** In a sense, the family imprisons themselves in their own home—physically by the measures of security they put into place, and figuratively by the fears of the "what could happen" if intruders prevailed. Argue whether or not the family has overreacted to the situation, or whether their fears are founded.
4. **Creative.** Fairytales often include messages or lessons about life. Research another humanitarian issue or struggle. Write your own bedtime story or fairy tale that illustrates the issue and what cautionary tale you want to pose to readers.

Nemecia

KIRSTIN VALDEZ QUADE

Kirstin Valdez Quade is the author of *Night at the Fiestas* (2015), from which this story was taken. It was named a best book of 2015 by the *San Francisco Chronicle* and the American Library Association. Quade is currently an assistant professor at Princeton University. Having grown up in the Southwest, Quade draws from her experiences in New Mexico for much of her work. "Nemecia," which is set in northern New Mexico, is a story about two cousins whose lives are shrouded in secrecy—a story that relates the consequences of traumatic experiences and the effect of not being honest with each other.



Maggie Shipstead

There is a picture of me standing with my cousin Nemecia in the bean field. On the back is penciled in my mother's hand, *Nemecia and Maria, Tajique, 1929*. Nemecia is thirteen; I am six. She is wearing a rayon dress that falls to her knees, glass beads, and real silk stockings, gifts from her mother in California. She wears a close-fitting hat, like a helmet, and her smiling lips are pursed. She holds tight to my hand. Even in my white dress I look like a boy; my hair, which I have cut myself, is short and jagged. Nemecia's head is tilted; she looks out from under her eyelashes at the camera. My expression is sullen, guilty. I don't remember the occasion for the photograph, or why we were dressed up in the middle of the dusty field. All I remember of the day is that Nemecia's shoes had heels, and she had to walk tipped forward on her toes to prevent them from sinking into the dirt.

Nemecia was the daughter of my mother's sister. She came to live with my parents before I was born because my Aunt Benigna couldn't care for her. Later, when Aunt Benigna recovered

and moved to Los Angeles, Nemecia had already lived with us for so long that she stayed. This was not unusual in our New Mexico town in those years between the wars; if someone died, or came upon hard times, or simply had too many children, there were always aunts or sisters or grandmothers with room for an extra child.

The day after I was born my great-aunt Paulita led Nemecia into my mother's bedroom to meet me. Nemecia was carrying the porcelain baby doll that had once belonged to Aunt Benigna. When they moved the blanket from my face so that she could see me, she smashed her doll against the plank floor. The pieces were all found; my father glued them together, wiping the surface with his handkerchief to remove what oozed between the cracks. The glue dried brown, or maybe it dried white and only turned brown with age. The doll sat on the bureau in our bedroom, its face round and placidly smiling behind its net of brown cracks, hands folded primly across white lace, a strange and terrifying mix of young and old.

Nemecia had an air of tragedy about her, which she cultivated. She blackened her eyes

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with a kohl pencil. She spent her allowance on magazines and pinned the photographs of actors from silent films around the mirror on our dresser. I don't think she ever saw a film — not, at least, until after she left us, since the nearest theater was all the way in Albuquerque, and my parents would not in any case have thought movies suitable for a young girl. Still, Nemecia modeled the upward glances and pouts of Mary Pickford and Greta Garbo in our small bedroom mirror.

When I think of Nemecia as she was then, I think of her eating. My cousin was ravenous. She needed things, and she needed food. She took small bites, swallowed everything as neatly as a cat. She was never full and the food never showed on her figure. She told jokes as she served herself helping after helping, so that we were distracted and did not notice how many tortillas or how many bowls of green-chili stew she had eaten. If my father or little brothers teased her at the table for her appetite, she burned red. My mother would shush my father and say she was a growing girl.

At night she stole food from the pantry, handfuls of prunes, beef jerky, pieces of ham. Her stealth was unnecessary; my mother would gladly have fed her until she was full. Still, in the mornings everything was in its place, the waxed paper folded neatly around the cheese, the lids tight on the jars. She was adept at slicing and spooning, so her thefts weren't noticeable. I would wake to her kneeling on my bed, a tortilla spread with honey against my lips. "Here," she'd whisper, and even if I was still full from dinner and not awake, I would take a bite, because she needed me to participate in her crime.

Watching her eat made me hate food. The quick efficient bites, the movement of her jaw, the way the food slid down her throat — it made me sick to think of her body permitting such quantities. Her exquisite manners and the ladylike dip of her head as she accepted each mouthful somehow made it worse. But if I was a

small eater, if I resented my dependence on food, it didn't matter, because Nemecia would eat my portion, and nothing was ever wasted.

I was afraid of Nemecia because I knew her greatest secret: when she was five, she put her mother in a coma and killed our grandfather.

I knew this because she told me late one Sunday as we lay awake in our beds. The whole family had eaten together at our house, as we did every week, and I could hear the adults in the front room, still talking.

"I killed them," Nemecia said into the darkness. She spoke as if reciting, and I didn't at first know if she was talking to me. "My mother was dead. Almost a month she was dead, killed by me. Then she came back, like Christ, except it was a bigger miracle because she was dead longer, not just three days." Her voice was matter-of-fact.

"Why did you kill our grandpa?" I whispered.

"I don't remember," she said. "I must have been angry."

I stared hard at the darkness, then blinked. Eyes open or shut, the darkness was the same. Unsettling. I couldn't hear Nemecia breathe, just the distant voices of the adults. I had the feeling I was alone in the room.

Then Nemecia spoke. "I can't remember how I did it, though."

"Did you kill your father too?" I asked. For the first time I became aware of a mantle of safety around me that I'd never noticed before, and it was dissolving.

"Oh, no," Nemecia told me. Her voice was decided again. "I didn't need to, because he ran away on his own."

Her only mistake, she said, was that she didn't kill the miracle child. The miracle child was her brother, my cousin Patrick, three years older than me. He was a miracle because even as my Aunt Benigna slept, dead to the world for those weeks, his cells multiplied and his features emerged. I thought of him growing strong on sugar water and my aunt's wasting body, his soul glowing steadily

inside her. I thought of him turning flips in the liquid quiet.

"I was so close," Nemecia said, almost wistfully.

A photograph of Patrick as a toddler stood in a frame on the piano. He was seated between my Aunt Benigna, whom I had never met, and her new husband, all of them living in California. The Patrick in the photograph was fat cheeked and unsmiling. He seemed content there, between a mother and a father. He did not seem aware of the sister who lived with us in another house nine hundred miles away. Certainly he didn't miss her.

"You better not tell anyone," my cousin said. 20

"I won't," I said, fear and loyalty swelling in me. I reached my hand into the dark space between our beds.

The next day, the world looked different; every adult I encountered was diminished now, made frail by Nemecia's secret. That afternoon I went to the store and stood quietly at my mother's side as she worked at the messy rolltop desk behind the counter. She was balancing the accounts, tapping her lower lip with the end of her pencil.

My heart pounded and my throat was tight. "What happened to Aunt Benigna? What happened to your dad?"

My mother turned to look at me. She put down the pencil, was still for a moment, and then shook her head and made a gesture like she was pushing it all away from her.

"The important thing is we got our miracle. Miracles. Benigna lived, and that baby lived." Her voice was hard. "God at least granted us that. I'll always thank him for that." She didn't look thankful.

"But what happened?" My question was less forceful now.

My mother shook her head again. "It's best forgotten, hijita.¹ I don't want to think about it."

I believed that what Nemecia told me was true. What confused me was that no one ever treated



↑ How has Valdez Quade made the character of Nemecia seem menacing? How might this famous painting by Frida Kahlo resemble the character of Nemecia at this point in the story?

She Plays Alone or Girl with Death Mask; Ella Juega Sola o Nina con Mascara de la Muerte, 1938 (oil on tin)/Kahlo, Frida (1907–54)/CHRISTIES IMAGES/Private Collection/Bridgeman Images. © 2017 Banco de México Diego Rivera Frida Kahlo Museums Trust, Mexico, D.F. / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York

Nemecia like a murderer. If anything, they were especially nice to her. I wondered if they knew what she'd done. I wondered if they were afraid of what she might do to them. Perhaps the whole town was terrified of my cousin, watching her, and I watched Nemecia too as she talked with the teacher on the school steps, as she helped my mother before dinner. But she never slipped, and though sometimes I thought I caught glimmers of caution in the faces of the adults, I couldn't be sure.

The whole town seemed to have agreed to keep me in the dark, but I thought if anyone would be vocal about her disapproval — and surely she disapproved of murder — it would be my great-aunt Paulita. I asked her about it one afternoon at her house as we made tortillas,

¹ Spanish: young lady, little daughter. —Eds.

careful not to betray Nemecia's secret. "What happened to my grandfather?" I pinched off a ball of dough and handed it to her.

"It was beyond imagining," Paulita said. She rolled the dough in fierce, sharp thrusts. I thought she'd go on, but she only said again, "Beyond imagining."

Except that I *could* imagine Nemecia killing someone. Hell, demons, flames — these were the horrors that I couldn't picture. Nemecia's fury, though — that was completely plausible.

"But what *happened*?"

Paulita flipped the disk of dough, rolled it again, slapped it on the hot iron top of the stove, where it blistered. She pointed at me with the rolling pin. "You're lucky, Maria, to have been born after that day. You're untouched. The rest of us will never forget it, but you, mi hijita, and the twins, are untouched." She opened the front door of her stove with an iron hook and worried the fire inside.

No one would talk about what had happened when Nemecia was five. And soon I stopped asking. Before bed I would wait for Nemecia to say something more about her crime, but she never mentioned it again.

At night I stayed awake as long as I could, waiting for Nemecia to come after me in the dark.

Any new thing I got, Nemecia ruined, not enough that it was unusable, or even very noticeable, but just a little: a scrape with her fingernail in the wood of a pencil, a tear on the inside hem of a dress, a crease in the page of a book. I complained once, when Nemecia knocked my new windup jumping frog against the stone step. I thrust the frog at my mother, demanding she look at the scratch in the tin. My mother folded the toy back into my palm and shook her head, disappointed. "Think of other children," she said. She meant children I knew, children from Tajique. "So many children don't have such beautiful new things."

I was often put in my cousin's care. My mother was glad of Nemecia's help; she was busy with the store and with my three-year-old brothers. I don't think she ever imagined that my cousin wished me harm. My mother was hawkish about her children's safety — later, when I was fifteen, she refused to serve a neighbor's aging farmhand in the store for a year because he whistled at me — but she trusted Nemecia. Nemecia was my mother's niece, almost an orphan, my mother's first child.

My cousin was fierce with her love and with her hate, and sometimes I couldn't tell the difference. I seemed to provoke her anger without meaning to.

At her angriest, she would lash out with slaps and pinches that turned my skin red and blue. Her anger would sometimes last weeks, aggression that would fade into long silences. I knew I was forgiven when she would begin to tell me stories, ghost stories about La Llorona, who haunted arroyos and wailed like the wind at approaching death, stories about bandits and the terrible things they would do to young girls, and, worse, stories about our family. Then she would hold and kiss me and tell me that though it was all true, every word, and though I was bad and didn't deserve it, she loved me still.

Not all her stories scared me. Some were wonderful — elaborate sagas that unfurled over weeks, adventures of girls like us who ran away. And all her stories belonged to us alone. She braided my hair at night, snapped back if a boy teased me, showed me how to walk so that I looked taller. "I'm here to take care of you," she told me. "That's why I'm here."

After her fourteenth birthday, Nemecia's skin turned red and oily and swollen with pustules. It looked tender. She began to laugh at me for my thick eyebrows and crooked teeth, things I hadn't noticed about myself until then.

One night she came into our bedroom and looked at herself in the mirror for a long time.

When she moved away, she crossed to where I sat on the bed and dug her nail into my right cheek. I yelped, jerked my head. “Shh,” she said kindly. With one hand she smoothed my hair, and I felt myself soften under her hands as she worked her nail through my skin. It hurt only a little bit, and what did I, at seven years old, care about beauty? As I sat snug between Nemecia’s knees, my face in her hands, her attention swept over me the way I imagined a wave would, warm and slow and salty.

Night after night I sat between her knees while she opened and reopened the wound. One day she’d make a game of it, tell me that I looked like a pirate; another day she’d say it was her duty to mark me because I had sinned. Daily she and my mother worked against each other, my mother spreading salve on the scab each morning, Nemecia easing it open each night with her nails. “Why don’t you heal, hijita?” my mother wondered as she fed me cloves of raw garlic. Why didn’t I tell her? I don’t know exactly, but I suppose I needed to be drawn into Nemecia’s story.

By the time Nemecia finally lost interest and let my cheek heal, the scar reached from the side of my nose to my lip. It made me look dissatisfied, and it turned purple in the winter.

When Nemecia turned sixteen, ⁴⁵ she left me alone. It was normal, my mother said, for her to spend more time by herself or with older girls. At dinner my cousin was still funny with my parents, chatty with the aunts and uncles. But those strange secret fits of rage and adoration — all the attention she’d once focused on me — ended completely. She had turned away from me, but instead of relief I felt emptiness.

I tried to force Nemecia back into our old closeness. I bought her caramels, nudged her in church as though we shared some secret joke. Once at school I ran up to where she stood with some older girls. “Nemecia!” I exclaimed, as though I’d been looking everywhere for her, and grabbed her hand. She didn’t push me away or snap at me, just smiled distantly and turned back to her friends.



Chad Ehlers/Alamy

↑ The feast of Corpus Christi has been celebrated with much grandeur by Catholics around the world for centuries. This photo shows the Corpus Christi celebration on the streets of Valencia, Spain.

How does this photo of the celebration affect your understanding of Maria’s reaction to Nemecia’s participation?

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We still shared our room, but she went to bed late. She no longer told stories, no longer brushed my hair, no longer walked with me to school. Nemecia stopped seeing me, and, without her gaze, I became indistinct to myself. I'd lie in bed waiting for her, holding myself still until I could no longer feel the sheets on my skin, until I was bodiless in the dark. Eventually, Nemecia would come in, and when she did, I would be unable to speak.

My skin lost its color, my body its mass, until one morning in May when, as I gazed out the classroom window, I saw old Mrs. Romero walking down the street, her shawl billowing around her like wings. My teacher called my name sharply, and I was surprised to find myself in my body, sitting solid at my desk.

Suddenly I decided: I would lead the Corpus Christi procession. I would wear the wings and everyone would look at me.

Corpus Christi had been my mother's favorite 50 feast day since she was a child, when each summer she walked with the other girls through the dirt streets, flinging rose petals. Every year my mother made Nemecia and me new white dresses and wound our braids with ribbons in coronets around our heads. I'd always loved the ceremony: the solemnity of the procession, the blessed sacrament in its gold box held high by the priest under the gold-tasseled canopy, the prayers at the altars along the way. Now I could think only of leading that procession.

My mother's altar was her pride. Each year she set up the card table on the street in front of the house. The Sacred Heart stood in the center of the crocheted lace cloth, flanked by candles and flowers in mason jars.

Everyone took part in the procession, and the girls of the town led it all with baskets of petals to cast before the Body of Christ. On that day we were transformed from dusty, scraggle-haired children into angels. But it was the girl at the head of the procession who really was an angel,

because she wore the wings that were stored between sheets of tissue paper in a box on top of my mother's wardrobe. Those wings were beautiful, gauze and wire, and tied with white ribbon on the upper arms.

A girl had to have been confirmed to lead the procession, and was chosen based on her recitation of a psalm. I was ten now, and this was the first year I qualified. In the days leading up to the recitation I surveyed the competition. Most of the girls were from ranches outside town. Even if they did have a sister or parent who could read well enough to help them with their memorization, I knew they wouldn't pronounce the words right. Only my cousin Antonia was a real threat; she had led the procession the year before, and was always beautifully behaved, but she would recite an easy psalm. Nemecia was too old and had never shown interest anyway.

I settled on Psalm 37, which I chose from my mother's cardboard-covered *Manna* for its impressive length and difficult words.

I practiced fervently, in the bathtub, walking 55 to school, in bed at night. The way I imagined it, I would give my recitation in front of the entire town. Father Garcia would hold up his hand at the end of Mass, before people could shift and cough and gather their hats, and he would say, "Wait. There is one thing more you need to hear." One or two girls would go before me, stumble through their psalms (short ones, unremarkable ones). Then I would stand, walk with grace to the front of the church, and there, before the altar, I'd speak with eloquence that people afterward would describe as *unearthly*. I'd offer my psalm as a gift to my mother. I'd watch her watch me from the pew, her eyes full of tears and pride.

Instead, our recitations took place in Sunday school before Mass. One by one we stood before our classmates as our teacher, Mrs. Reyes, followed our words from her Bible. Antonia recited the same psalm she had recited the year before. When it was my turn, I stumbled over the phrase, "For my iniquities are gone over my head:

and as a heavy burden are become heavy upon me." When I sat down with the other children, tears gathered behind my eyes and I told myself that none of it mattered.

A week before the procession, my mother met me outside school. During the day she rarely left the store or my little brothers, so I knew it was important.

"Mrs. Reyes came by the store today, Maria," my mother said. I could not tell from her face if the news had been good or bad, or about me at all. She put her hand on my shoulder and led me home.

I walked stiffly under her hand, waiting, eyes on the dusty toes of my shoes.

Finally my mother turned to me and hugged me. "You did it, Maria."

That night we celebrated. My mother brought bottles of ginger ale from the store, and we shared them, passing them around the table. My father raised his and drank to me. Nemecia grabbed my hand and squeezed it.

Before we had finished dinner, my mother stood and beckoned me to follow her down the hall. In her bedroom she took down the box from her wardrobe and lifted out the wings. "Here," she said, "let's try them on." She tied the ribbons around my arms over my checked dress, and led me back to where my family sat waiting.

The wings were light, and they scraped against the doorway. They moved ever so slightly as I walked, the way I imagined real angel wings might.

"Turn around," my father said. My brothers slid off their chairs and came at me. My mother caught them by the arms. "Don't go get your greasy hands on those wings." I twirled and spun for my family, and my brothers clapped. Nemecia smiled and served herself seconds.

That night Nemecia went up to bed when I did. As we pulled on our nightgowns, she said, "They had to pick you, you know."

I turned to her, surprised. "That's not true," I said.

"It is," she said simply. "Think about it.

Antonia was last year, Christina Garcia the year before. It's always the daughters of the Altar Society."

It hadn't occurred to me before, but of course she was right. I would have liked to argue, but instead I began to cry. I hated myself for crying in front of her, and I hated Nemecia. I got into bed, turned away, and fell asleep.

Sometime later I woke up to darkness. Nemecia was beside me in bed, her breath hot on my face. She patted my head and whispered, "I'm sorry, I'm sorry, I'm sorry." Her strokes became harder. Her breath was hot and hissing. "I am the miracle child. They never knew. *I* am the miracle because *I* lived."

I lay still. Her arms were tight around my head, my face pressed against her hard sternum. I couldn't hear some of the things she said to me, and the air I breathed tasted like Nemecia. It was only from the shudders that passed through her thin chest into my skull that I finally realized she was crying. After a while she released me and set me back on my pillow like a doll. "There now," she said, and arranged my arms over the covers. "Go to sleep." I shut my eyes and tried to obey.

I spent the afternoon before Corpus Christi watching my brothers play in the garden while my mother worked on her altar. They were digging a hole. Any other time I would have helped them, but tomorrow was Corpus Christi. It was hot and windy and my eyes were dry. I hoped the wind would settle overnight. I didn't want dust on my wings.

I saw Nemecia step out onto the porch. She shaded her eyes and stood still for a moment. When she caught sight of us crouched in the corner of the garden she came over, her strides long and adult.

"Maria. I'm going to walk with you tomorrow in the procession. I'm going to help you."

"I don't need any help," I said.

Nemecia smiled as though it was out of her hands. "Well." She shrugged.

"But I'm leading it," I said.
 "Mrs. Reyes chose me."

"Your mother told me I had to help you, and that *maybe* I would get to wear the wings."

I stood. Even standing, I came only to her shoulder. I heard the screen door slam, and my mother was on the porch. She came over to us, steps quick, face worried.

"Mama, I don't *need* help. Tell her Mrs. Reyes chose *me*."

"I only thought that there 80
 will be other years for you." My mother's tone was imploring.
 "Nemecia will be too old next year."

"But I may never memorize anything so well ever!" My voice rose. "This may be my only chance."

My mother's face brightened.
 "Maria, of course you'll memorize something. It's only a year. You'll get picked again, I promise."

I couldn't say anything. I saw what had happened: Nemecia had decided she would wear the wings, and my mother had decided to let her. Nemecia would lead the town, tall in her white dress, the wings framing her. And following would be me, small and angry and ugly. I wouldn't want it next year, after Nemecia. I wouldn't want it ever again.

Nemecia put her hand on my shoulder. "It's about the blessed sacrament, Maria. It's not about you." She spoke gently. "Besides, you'll still be leading it. I'll just be there with you. To help."

"Hijita, listen —"

"I don't want your help," I said. I was as dark and savage as an animal.

"Maria —"

Nemecia shook her head and smiled sadly.

"That's why I am here," she said. "I lived so I



HIP/Art Resource, NY

↑ How would you describe the relationship between Nemecia and the narrator? How does the relationship, and the emotions involved compare with the relationship and emotions depicted in this painting by Gauguin?

Gauguin, Paul Eugène Henri. 'Piti Tiena', (Two Sisters), 1892. (1848-1903). State Hermitage, St. Petersburg.

could help you." Her face was calm, and a kind of holiness settled into it.

Hate flooded me. "I wish you hadn't," I said.
 "I wish you hadn't lived. This isn't your home. You're a killer." I turned to my mother. I was crying hard now, my words choked and furious.

"She's trying to kill us all. Don't you know?
 Everyone around her ends up dead. Why don't you ever punish her?"

My mother's face turned gray, and suddenly I was afraid.

Nemecia was still for a moment, and then her face clenched and she ran into the house.

After that, everything happened very quickly. My mother didn't shout, didn't say a word. She came into my room carrying the carpetbag she used when she had to stay at the home of a sick relative. I made my face more sullen than I felt. Her silence was frightening. She opened my bureau drawer and began to pack things into the bag, three dresses, all my drawers and undershirts. She put my Sunday shoes in too, my hairbrush, the book that lay beside my bed, enough things for a very long absence.

My father came in and sat beside me on the bed. He was in his work clothes, pants dusty from the field.

"You're just going to stay with Paulita for a while," he said. 95

I knew what I'd said was terrible, but I never guessed that they would get rid of me. I didn't cry, though, not even when my mother folded up the small quilt that had been mine since I was born and set it into the top of the carpetbag. She buckled it all shut.

My mother's head was bent over the bag, and for a moment I thought I'd made her cry, but when I ventured to look at her face, I couldn't tell.

"It won't be long," my father said. "It's just to Paulita's. So close it's almost the same house." He examined his hands for a long time, and I too looked at the crescents of soil under his nails. "Your cousin has had a hard life," he said finally. "You have to understand."

"Come on, Maria," my mother said gently.

Nemecia was sitting in the parlor, her hands folded and still on her lap. I wished she would stick out her tongue or glare, but she only watched me pass. My mother held open the door and then closed it behind us. She took my hand, and we walked together down the street to Paulita's house with its garden of dusty hollyhocks.

My mother knocked on the door, and then went in, telling me to run along to the kitchen. I heard her whispering. Paulita came in for a moment to pour me milk and set out some cookies for me, and then she left again.

I didn't eat. I tried to listen, but couldn't make out any words. I heard Paulita click her tongue, the way she clicked it when someone had behaved shamefully, like when it was discovered that Charlie Padilla had been stealing from his grandmother.

My mother came into the kitchen. She patted my wrist. "It's not for long, Maria." She kissed the top of my head.

I heard Paulita's front door shut, heard her slow steps come toward the kitchen. She sat opposite me and took a cookie.

"It's good you came for a visit. I never see enough of you." 105

The next day I didn't go to Mass. I said I was sick, and Paulita touched my forehead but didn't contradict me. I stayed in bed, my eyes closed and dry. I could hear the bells and the intonations as the town passed outside the house. Antonia led the procession, and Nemecia walked with the adults; I know this because I asked Paulita days later. I wondered if Nemecia had chosen not to lead or if she had not been allowed, but I couldn't bring myself to ask.

I stayed with Paulita for three months. She spoiled me, fed me sweets, kept me up late with her. Each night she put her feet on the arm of the couch to stop the swelling, balanced her jigger of whiskey on her stomach, and stroked the stiff gray hair on her chin while she told stories: about Tajique when she was a girl, about the time she snuck out to the fiestas after she was supposed to be asleep. I loved Paulita and enjoyed her attention, but my anger at my parents simmered, even when I was laughing.

My mother stopped by, tried to talk to me, but in her presence the easy atmosphere of Paulita's house became stale. Over and over she urged

me to visit her in the store, and I did once, but I was silent, wanting so much to be drawn out, disdaining her attempts.

"Hijita," she said, and pushed candy at me across the counter. I stood stiff in her embrace and left the candy. My mother had sent me away, and my father had done nothing to stop her. They'd picked Nemecia, picked Nemecia over their real daughter.

Nemecia and I saw each other at school, but we didn't speak. Our teacher seemed aware of the changes in our household and kept us apart. People were kind to me during this time, a strange, pitying kindness. I thought they knew how angry I was, knew there was no hope left for me. I too would be kind, I thought, if I met myself on the road.

The family gathered on Sundays, as always, at my mother's house for dinner. That was how I had begun to think of it during those months: my mother's house. My mother hugged me, and my father kissed me, and I sat in my old place, but at the end of dinner, I always left with Paulita. Nemecia seemed more at home than ever. She laughed and told stories, and swallowed bite after neat bite. She seemed to have grown older, more graceful. She neither spoke to nor looked at me. Everyone talked and laughed, and it seemed only I remembered that we were eating with a murderer.

"Nemecia looks well," Paulita said one night as we walked home.

I didn't answer, and she didn't speak again until she had shut the door behind us.

"One day you'll be friends again, Maria. You two are sisters." Her hand trembled as she lit the lamp.

I couldn't stand it anymore. "No," I said. "We won't. We'll never be friends. We *aren't* sisters. She's the killer, and I'm the one who was sent away. Do you even *know* who killed your brother?" I demanded. "Nemecia. And she tried to kill her own mother too. Why doesn't anyone *know* this?"

"Sit down," Paulita said to me sternly. She'd never spoken to me in this tone. "First of all, you were not sent away. You could shout to your mother from this house. And, my God, Nemecia is not a killer. I don't know where you picked up such lies."

Paulita lowered herself into a chair. When she spoke again, her voice was even, her old eyes pale brown and watery. "Your grandfather decided he would give your mother and Benigna each fifty acres of land." Paulita put her hand to her forehead and exhaled slowly. "My God, this was so long ago. So your grandfather stopped by one morning to see Benigna about the deed. He was still on the road, he hadn't even made it to the door, when he heard the shouting. Benigna's cries were that loud. Her husband was beating her." Paulita paused. She pressed the pads of her fingers against the table.

I thought of the sound of fist on flesh. I could almost hear it. The flame of the lamp wavered and the light wobbled along the scrubbed, wide planks of Paulita's kitchen floor.

"This wasn't the first time it had happened, just the first time your grandfather walked in on it. So he pushed open the door, angry, ready to kill Benigna's husband. There must have been a fight, but Benigna's husband was drunk and your grandfather wasn't young anymore. Benigna's husband must have been closer to the stove and to the iron poker. When they were discovered — " Paulita's voice remained flat. "When they were discovered, your grandfather was already dead. Benigna was unconscious on the floor. And they found Nemecia behind the woodbox. She'd seen the whole thing. She was five."

I wondered who had walked in first on that brutality? Surely someone I knew, someone I passed at church or outside the post office. Maybe someone in my family. Maybe Paulita. "What about Nemecia's father?"

"He was there on his knees, crying over Benigna. 'I love you, I love you, I love you,' he kept saying."

How had it never occurred to me that, at five years old, Nemecia would have been too small to attack a grown man and woman all at once? How could I have been so stupid?

At school I watched for signs of what Paulita had told me, but Nemecia was the same: graceful, laughing, distant. I felt humiliated for believing her, and I resented the demands she made on my sympathy. Pity and hatred and guilt nearly choked me. If anything, I hated my cousin more, she who had once been a terrified child, she who could call that tragedy her own. Nemecia would always have the best of everything.

Nemecia left for California three months after Corpus Christi. In Los Angeles, my Aunt Benigna bought secondhand furniture and turned the small sewing room into a bedroom. She introduced Nemecia to her husband and to the miracle child. There was a palm tree in the front yard and a pinkpainted gravel walkway. I know this from a letter my cousin sent my mother, signed with a flourish, *Norma*.

I moved back to my mother's house and to the room that was all mine. My mother stood in the middle of the floor as I unpacked my things into the now-empty bureau. She looked lost.

"We missed you," she said, looking out the window. And then, "It's not right for a child to be away from her parents. It's not right that you left us."

I wanted to tell her that I had not left, that I had been left, led away and dropped at Paulita's door.



↑ This surrealist painting by artist Dorothea Tanning is entitled "Fatala," suggesting "fate" or "death" or both. The figure seems to be opening a door into a book, where she finds four different head coverings, perhaps suggesting that her story might change depending on which she chooses, who she chooses to be.

How has Nemecia's identity shifted throughout this story, and how might that have to do with either "fate" or "death"? What other connections can you find between "Nemecia" and this painting?

Dorothea Tanning, "Fatala," 1947, Oil on Canvas, 10" x 7" © 2017 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York/ADAGP, Paris. Courtesy of the Dorothea Tanning Foundation.

"Listen." Then she stopped and shook her head. "Ah, well," she said, with an intake of breath.

I placed my camisoles in the drawer, one on top of the other. I didn't look at my mother. The reconciliation, the tears and embraces that I'd dreamt about didn't come, and so I hardened

myself against her.

Our family quickly grew over the space Nemecia left, so quickly that I often wondered if she'd meant anything to us at all. Nemecia's life became glamorous in my mind — beautiful, tragic, the story of an orphan. I imagined that I could take that life, have it for myself. Night after night I told myself the story: a prettier me, swept away to California, and the boy who would find me and save me from my unhappiness. The town slept among the vast, whispering grasses, coyotes called in the distance, and Nemecia's story set my body alight.

We attended Nemecia's wedding, my family and I. We took the long trip across New Mexico and Arizona to Los Angeles, me in the backseat between my brothers. For years I'd pictured Nemecia living a magazine shoot, running on the beach, stretched on a chaise longue beside a flat, blue pool, and it was a fantasy that had sustained me. As we crossed the Mojave Desert, though, I began to get nervous — that I wouldn't recognize her, that she'd have forgotten me. I found myself hoping that her life wasn't as beautiful as I'd imagined it, that she'd finally been punished. When we drove up to the little house, Nemecia ran outside in bare feet and hugged each of us as we unfolded ourselves from the car.

"Maria!" she cried, smiling, and kissed both my cheeks, and I fell into a shyness I couldn't shake all that week.

"Nemecia, cariño,"² my mother said. She stepped back and looked at my cousin happily.

"Norma," my cousin said. "My name is Norma."

It was remarkable how completely she'd changed. Her hair was blond now, her skin tanned dark and even.

My mother nodded slowly and repeated, "Norma."

The wedding was the most beautiful thing I'd ever seen, and I was wrung with jealousy. I must have understood then that I wouldn't have

130 a wedding of my own. Like everything else in Los Angeles, the church was large and modern. The pews were pale and sleek, and the empty crucifix shone. Nemecia confessed to me that she didn't know the priest here, that she rarely even went to church anymore. In a few years, I too would stop going to church, but it shocked me then to hear my cousin say it.

They didn't speak Spanish in my aunt's house. When my mother or father said something in Spanish, my aunt or cousins answered resolutely in English. I was embarrassed by my parents that week, the way their awkward English made them seem confused and childish.

The day before the wedding, Nemecia invited me to the beach with her girlfriend. I said I couldn't go — I was fifteen, younger than they were, and I didn't have a swimming suit.

"Of course you'll come. You're my little 140 sister." Nemecia opened a messy drawer and tossed me a tangled blue suit. I remember I changed in her bedroom, turned in the full-length mirror, stretched across her pink satin bed, and posed like a pinup. I felt older, sensual. There, in Nemecia's bedroom, I liked the image of myself in that swimming suit, but on the beach my courage left me. Someone took our picture, standing with a tanned, smiling man. I still have the picture. Nemecia and her friend look easy in their suits, arms draped around the man's neck. The man — who is he? How did he come to be in the photograph? — has his arm around Nemecia's small waist. I am beside her, my hand on her shoulder, but standing as though I'm afraid to touch her. She leans into the man and away from me, her smile broad and white. My scar shows as a gray smear on my cheek. I smile with my lips closed, and my other arm is folded in front of my chest.

Until she died, my mother kept Nemecia's wedding portrait beside her bed: Nemecia and her husband in front of a photographer's arboreal backdrop with their hands clasped, smiling into each other's faces. The photograph my cousin

² Spanish: "darling" —Eds.

gave me has the same airless studio quality but is of Nemecia alone, standing on some steps, her train arranged around her. She is half-turned, unsmiling, wearing an expression I can't interpret. Neither thoughtful nor stony nor proud. Her expression isn't unhappy, just almost, but not quite, vacant.

When she left for Los Angeles, Nemecia didn't take the doll that sat on the bureau. The doll came with us when we moved to Albuquerque; we saved it, I suppose, for Nemecia's children, though we never said so out loud. Later, after my mother died in 1981, I brought it from her house, where for years my mother had kept it on her bureau. For five days it lay on the table in my apartment before I called Nemecia and asked if she wanted it back.

"I don't know what you're talking about," she said. "I never had a doll."

"The cracked one, remember?" My voice went high with disbelief. It seemed impossible that she could have forgotten. It had sat in our room for years, facing us in our beds each night as we fell asleep. A flare of anger ignited — she was lying, she had to be lying — then died.

I touched the yellowed hem of the doll's dress, ¹⁴⁵ while Nemecia told me about the cruise she and her husband were taking through the Panama Canal. "Ten days," she said, "and then we're going to stay for three days in Puerto Rico. It's a new boat, with casinos and pools and ballrooms. I hear they treat you royally."

While she talked, I ran my finger along the ridges of the cracks in the doll's head. From the sound of her voice, I could almost imagine she'd never aged, and it seemed to me I'd spent my whole life listening to Nemecia's stories.

"So what about the doll?" I asked when it was almost time to hang up. "Do you want me to send it?"

"I can't even picture it," she said and laughed. "Do whatever you want. I don't need old things lying around the house."

I was tempted to take offense, to think it was me she was rejecting, our whole shared past in Tajique. I was tempted to slip back into that same old envy, for how easily Nemecia had let those years drop away from her, leaving me to remember her stories. But by then I was old enough to know that she wasn't thinking about me at all.

Nemecia spent the rest of her life in Los Angeles. I visited her once when I had some vacation time saved, in the low house surrounded by bougainvillea. She collected Dolls of the World and Waterford crystal, which she displayed in glass cases. She sat me at the dining room table and took the dolls out one by one. "Holland," she said and set it before me. "Italy. Greece." I tried to see some evidence in her face of what she had witnessed as a child, but there was nothing.

Nemecia held a wineglass up to the window and turned it. "See how clear?" Shards of light moved across her face.

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UNDERSTANDING AND INTERPRETING

1. What details does the author share through Maria's eyes that characterize Nemecia in the opening paragraphs (pars. 1–8)? Based on these details, what initial assumptions do you make about Nemecia's character? What does Maria's description of her cousin tell us about the kind of person Maria is?
2. In paragraphs 5–6, Nemecia is described by Maria as having a "ravenous" appetite and that "she was never full" and stole food at night. How might Nemecia's relationship with food indicate a deeper, underlying issue?
3. In paragraphs 42–43, Maria describes the wounds that Nemecia continually inflicts on her face. In what ways are the scars she creates both physical and emotional?
4. After Maria accuses her cousin of being a murderer, her parents decide to send her

to her Aunt Paulita's house to live (par. 93). What might be the mother's motivation for doing this and how does this response to the situation give us insight into the sort of person she is?

5. At one point, Maria states that she hates Nemecia more because she had a tragedy that she could call "her own" (par. 123). How does seeing Nemecia's past in this way distort Maria's perception of her cousin?
6. Once Maria learns the truth of Nemecia's past, she shares a range of emotions for how she feels about her cousin, from humiliation and guilt, to anger. How do her emotions portray her complicated relationship with Nemecia?
7. At the end of the story, we learn that Nemecia changes her name to Norma. In what other ways has she reinvented herself to shed her past? Are you convinced she has moved on with her life? Why or why not?
8. The story is driven by the mystery of Nemecia's past and what really happened to her mother and grandfather. How does not knowing what really happened drive the plot?
9. Throughout the story, the adults continually avoid telling Maria the truth about her cousin. What details from the story indicate that the family feels they are doing the right thing by protecting her from the truth?
10. How do Maria's feelings toward her parents and the home she used to live in change after she moves to her Aunt Paulita's house?
11. Given everything Maria experiences with her cousin, do you feel she comes to terms with it in the end? Has Maria somehow forgiven her cousin, or are her feelings still left unresolved? What evidence from the story supports your thinking?
12. How does telling the story from Maria's first person point of view impede our understanding of the emotions and motivations of others?

ANALYZING LANGUAGE, STYLE, AND STRUCTURE

1. **Vocabulary in Context.** In paragraph 55, Maria imagines that her recitation of the psalm would be described as "unearthly." What does the word mean in this context?
2. The story opens with Nemecia reflecting on a picture of her and Nemecia as children then flashes back to her memories of her relationship with Nemecia from childhood to adulthood. What is the significance of beginning with the photograph in the opening paragraph?
3. The story is built on secrets that family members shelter within themselves. Find the parts in the story where secrecy is displayed and think about how the characters respond. How would sharing these secrets have changed the course of events in the story? How might things have been different if honesty and reality had prevailed over veiling the truth?
4. How does the structure of the story—which begins with Maria and Nemecia as adults, flashes back to childhood, and then returns to adulthood—shape our views of Nemecia?
5. What purpose does including religious imagery have in developing a theme in the story? Why are these religious images important? What message does Quade explore about religion's role in the story?
6. In paragraph 86, Maria says, "I was as dark and savage as an animal." How does the simile portray the change in Maria's? Do you feel this change is warranted? Why or why not?
7. What might the doll on the dresser symbolize? Find evidence from the story to support your response.

TOPICS FOR COMPOSING

1. **Analysis.** Write about how Maria's attitude toward Nemecia progresses throughout the story. In particular, how does Maria's understanding of Nemecia when they were

children differ from her looking back as an adult?

2. **Personal.** Quade portrays the complex, tangled emotions in familial relationships and the ways in which we communicate, shield, and protect one another. Maria's family hides the truth of a tragic incident from the past that Nemecia herself says she is responsible for and for which the reader is led to believe is true. Why might she have admitted to something she had not done? Explore the idea that childhood memories can be fuzzy and flawed, or, in some cases, imagined.
3. **Argument.** After Maria's outburst against Nemecia, her parents decide to send her to her Aunt Paulita's house "for a while." Do you agree with the parents' decision? Why or why not? How would you have reacted if you had been in Maria's place? Describe another possible solution to the situation—what alternate way could the situation have been handled?
4. **Personal.** Maria's view of adults changes after Nemecia's revelation. In a sense, she has lost part of her innocence and the world is now a darker place. How does knowing life's realities impact our perspective of our world? Is it better to be left in the dark, or shielded from truth than to know it? Explain.
5. **Research.** The story portrays the impact that violence can have on a person, especially if experienced at a very young age. Nemecia was five when she witnessed the brutal attack of her mother and her grandfather. Much research has been done on the effects of domestic violence and trauma on children. Research some of these effects and connect what you find to the behaviors exhibited of Nemecia in the story. What patterns of behavior are exhibited by Nemecia that support research findings on the effects of experiencing domestic violence?
6. **Creative.** The action in the story is given from Maria's point of view and is therefore limited to her own thoughts and feelings. Try rewriting a scene from the story from another character's point of view. Think about how the different perspective may impact the reader's interpretation of the events.
7. **Personal.** Quade portrays characters who have experienced tragedy that forever changes their relationships with each other. Consequently, the idea of "home" goes from a place for comfort and healing to one of strain and separation. Think about other stories, movies, games, or narratives in which home is no longer *home*. Write a journal describing the change and how it affected those involved.

Story of an Hour

KATE CHOPIN

Kate Chopin (1850–1904) was an American author widely known as one of the leading writers of her time. Born in St. Louis, Missouri, she later moved to New Orleans, Louisiana, after marrying her husband, Oscar Chopin, in 1870. Together they had six children. After losing her husband and mother within a few years of each other, she found therapy in writing to help heal her depression. She continued to publish two volumes of short stories, *Bayou Folk* (1894) and *A Night in Acadie* (1897), and two novels,



Missouri History Museum, St. Louis

At Fault (1890) and *The Awakening* (1899). “Story of an Hour” is a tale of a woman freed from a loveless marriage. It appeared in *Vogue* magazine in 1894.

Key Context Chopin’s writing is most often associated with the beginnings of American feminism. Her stories explore the idea of woman’s rights and independence, topics not readily or publicly accepted in the society of the time. Women at that time were not allowed to vote, hold political office, own property if they were married, or attend college. There were few jobs that women were allowed to do, so they often married to secure financial support, and in return raised a family. As feminist ideas began to develop, these traditions and rules were questioned, and they informed Kate Chopin’s thinking in “Story of an Hour.”

Knowing that Mrs. Mallard was afflicted with a heart trouble, great care was taken to break to her as gently as possible the news of her husband’s death.

It was her sister Josephine who told her, in broken sentences; veiled hints that revealed in half concealing. Her husband’s friend Richards was there, too, near her. It was he who had been in the newspaper office when intelligence of the railroad disaster was received, with Brently Mallard’s name leading the list of “killed.” He had only taken the time to assure himself of its truth by a second telegram, and had hastened to forestall any less careful, less tender friend in bearing the sad message.

She did not hear the story as many women have heard the same, with a paralyzed inability to accept its significance. She wept at once, with sudden, wild abandonment, in her sister’s arms. When the storm of grief had spent itself she went away to her room alone. She would have no one follow her.

There stood, facing the open window, a comfortable, roomy armchair. Into this she sank, pressed down by a physical exhaustion that haunted her body and seemed to reach into her soul.

She could see in the open square before her house the tops of trees that were all aquiver with the new spring life. The delicious breath of rain was in the air. In the street below a peddler was crying his wares. The notes of a distant song which some one was singing reached her faintly, and countless sparrows were twittering in the eaves.

There were patches of blue sky showing here and there through the clouds that had met and piled one above the other in the west facing her window.

She sat with her head thrown back upon the cushion of the chair, quite motionless, except when a sob came up into her throat and shook her, as a child who has cried itself to sleep continues to sob in its dreams.

She was young, with a fair, calm face, whose lines bespoke repression and even a certain strength. But now there was a dull stare in her eyes, whose gaze was fixed away off yonder on one of those patches of blue sky. It was not a glance of reflection, but rather indicated a suspension of intelligent thought.

There was something coming to her and she was waiting for it, fearfully. What was it? She did not know; it was too subtle and elusive to name.

5



The Discord, 1855 (colour litho)/Heppenheimer, F. (19th century)/NEW YORK HISTORICAL SOCIETY/Collection of the New-York Historical Society, USA/Bridgeman Images

↑ This cartoon illustrates a popular idiom that means that whoever is head of the household “wears the pants in the family.”

What elements of this picture would Mrs. Mallard identify with?

But she felt it, creeping out of the sky, reaching toward her through the sounds, the scents, the color that filled the air.

Now her bosom rose and fell tumultuously. She was beginning to recognize this thing that was approaching to possess her, and she was striving to beat it back with her will — as powerless as her two white slender hands would have been. When she abandoned herself a little whispered word escaped her slightly parted lips. She said it over and over under her breath: “free, free, free!” The vacant stare and the look of terror that had followed it went from her eyes. They stayed keen and bright. Her pulses beat fast, and the coursing blood warmed and relaxed every inch of her body.

She did not stop to ask if it were or were not a monstrous joy that held her. A clear and exalted

perception enabled her to dismiss the suggestion as trivial. She knew that she would weep again when she saw the kind, tender hands folded in death; the face that had never looked save with love upon her, fixed and gray and dead. But she saw beyond that bitter moment a long procession of years to come that would belong to her absolutely. And she opened and spread her arms out to them in welcome.

There would be no one to live for during those coming years; she would live for herself. There would be no powerful will bending hers in that blind persistence with which men and women believe they have a right to impose a private will upon a fellow-creature. A kind intention or a cruel intention made the act seem no less a crime as she looked upon it in that brief moment of illumination.

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And yet she had loved him — sometimes. Often she had not. What did it matter! What could love, the unsolved mystery, count for in the face of this possession of self-assertion which she suddenly recognized as the strongest impulse of her being!

“Free! Body and soul free!” she kept whispering.

Josephine was kneeling before the closed door with her lips to the keyhole, imploring for admission. “Louise, open the door! I beg; open the door — you will make yourself ill. What are you doing, Louise? For heaven’s sake open the door.”

“Go away. I am not making myself ill.” No; she was drinking in a very elixir of life through that open window.

Her fancy was running riot along those days ahead of her. Spring days, and summer days, and all sorts of days that would be her own. She breathed a quick prayer that life might be long. It was only yesterday she had thought with a shudder that life might be long.

She arose at length and opened the door to her sister’s importunities. There was a feverish triumph in her eyes, and she carried herself unwittingly like a goddess of Victory. She clasped her sister’s waist, and together they descended the stairs. Richards stood waiting for them at the bottom.

Some one was opening the front door with a latchkey. It was Brently Mallard who entered, a little travel-stained, composedly carrying his grip-sack and umbrella. He had been far from



Woman at her Window, or, The Wife of a Treasurer, 1841 (oil on canvas)/Tropinin, Vasili Andreevich (1776–1857)/State Russian Museum, St. Petersburg, Russia/Bridgeman Images

↑ Compare the scene in this painting, and the emotions involved, with the scene in “Story of an Hour” as the revelation slowly takes hold of Mrs. Mallard in her room.

What similarities do you find? What differences?

the scene of the accident, and did not even know there had been one. He stood amazed at Josephine’s piercing cry; at Richards’ quick motion to screen him from the view of his wife.

When the doctors came they said she had died of heart disease — of the joy that kills.

UNDERSTANDING AND INTERPRETING

1. The reader discovers in the first line that Mrs. Mallard suffers from a heart condition. What might be the reason for sharing this information early in the story?
2. Upon learning of her husband’s death, Mrs. Mallard “wept at once” (par. 3). What is significant about her reaction in comparison to other women who experience a “paralyzed inability” to accept similar news?
3. In paragraph 4, Mrs. Mallard goes to the armchair where she “sank, pressed down by a physical exhaustion that haunted her body and seemed to reach into her soul.” What does this line tell us about Mrs. Mallard’s emotional state?
4. In paragraph 10, Mrs. Mallard recognizes “this thing” rising in her and tries to “beat it back with her will.” What is “this thing,” and why might she try to suppress it?

5. Mrs. Mallard reveals that “[o]ften she had not” loved her husband (par. 13). What can you infer about her motivations for marrying Mr. Mallard? How much of her unhappiness can be attributed to her own decisions?
6. Based on details in the story, what assumptions can be made about the type of man Mr. Mallard is? What assumptions can be made about the Mallards’ marriage?
7. Is there evidence to support that Mrs. Mallard’s heart trouble is caused by anything other than natural physical causes? Explain.
8. What is the significance of the doctors determining the cause of Mrs. Mallard’s death?
9. The setting of the story is limited to the house that Mrs. Mallard lives and dies in. How does the limited setting support the theme(s) of the story?
10. Taking into consideration the historical context in which Chopin wrote, what are some possible themes for this story? What message is Chopin trying to convey about the relationships between men and women?
6. It is not until paragraph 15 that the reader first learns that Mrs. Mallard’s first name is Louise. What is the significance of revealing her first name at this point in the story?
7. What might the “open window” in paragraph 16 symbolize?
8. The line “life might be long” is repeated twice, but in two different contexts (par. 17). Explain the differences in meaning each time the line is presented.
9. In paragraph 17, Mrs. Mallard prays for a long life. What is ironic about Mrs. Mallard’s death?
10. What is the meaning of the paradox in the last line—“the joy that kills?”

TOPICS FOR COMPOSING

ANALYZING LANGUAGE, STYLE, AND STRUCTURE

1. **Vocabulary in Context.** What is the meaning of the word *elixir* as used in paragraph 16? To what extent does the word relate to both Mrs. Mallard’s physical and emotional condition?
2. What is the significance of the story happening over the course of an hour? How might the story have been different if the events had taken place over several days, or longer?
3. What are possible interpretations of the metaphor “storm of grief” in paragraph 3?
4. How does the author’s use of sensory details in paragraphs 4–6 demonstrate the changes of Mrs. Mallard’s situation?
5. Explain the possible meaning behind the oxymoron *monstrous joy* in paragraph 11. Who might consider her joy to be monstrous, and why?
1. **Analysis.** Though he does not make an appearance until the end, we learn a good deal about Mr. Mallard. Analyze Chopin’s use of imagery and details to indirectly characterize Mr. Mallard.
2. **Personal.** Write a quickwrite about a time you were misled because you were given incorrect information. What was the situation, and what happened when you discovered the truth?
3. **Argument.** The story was published in 1894, a time in which women’s roles in marriage were marginalized. Argue whether or not the roles of women in marriages and relationships today is better, worse, or the same. Be sure to include examples and evidence to support your points.
4. **Research.** What is significant about the simile in paragraph 18 when comparing Mrs. Mallard to the “goddess of Victory?” Do some research on the background, stories, and depictions of this allegorical goddess, and present your findings to explain why Chopin decided to allude to her.
5. **Creative.** The story is told from the third person point of view. Rewrite the story from Mrs. Mallard’s, or another character’s, point of view.

Square Eyes

ANNA MILL AND LUKE JONES

Anna Mill and Luke Jones are London-based architects and designers who have collaborated on design projects ranging from bookshops, to houseboats, to a garden chapel. This short graphic story was runner up for the *Observer*/Jonathan Cape prize in 2010.



Left and right: Photos courtesy Manuela Barczewski, millandjones.com

Key Context Though the technology of the augmented reality presented in this story is just a little ahead of its time, "Square Eyes" presents a world that is still very familiar. The characters are unnamed in this story, but elsewhere they are identified as George, the one with glasses, and Fin.



Graphic Novel: "Square Eyes" by Anna Mill and Luke Jones, Permission of Jonathan Cape Publishers, The Random House Group.



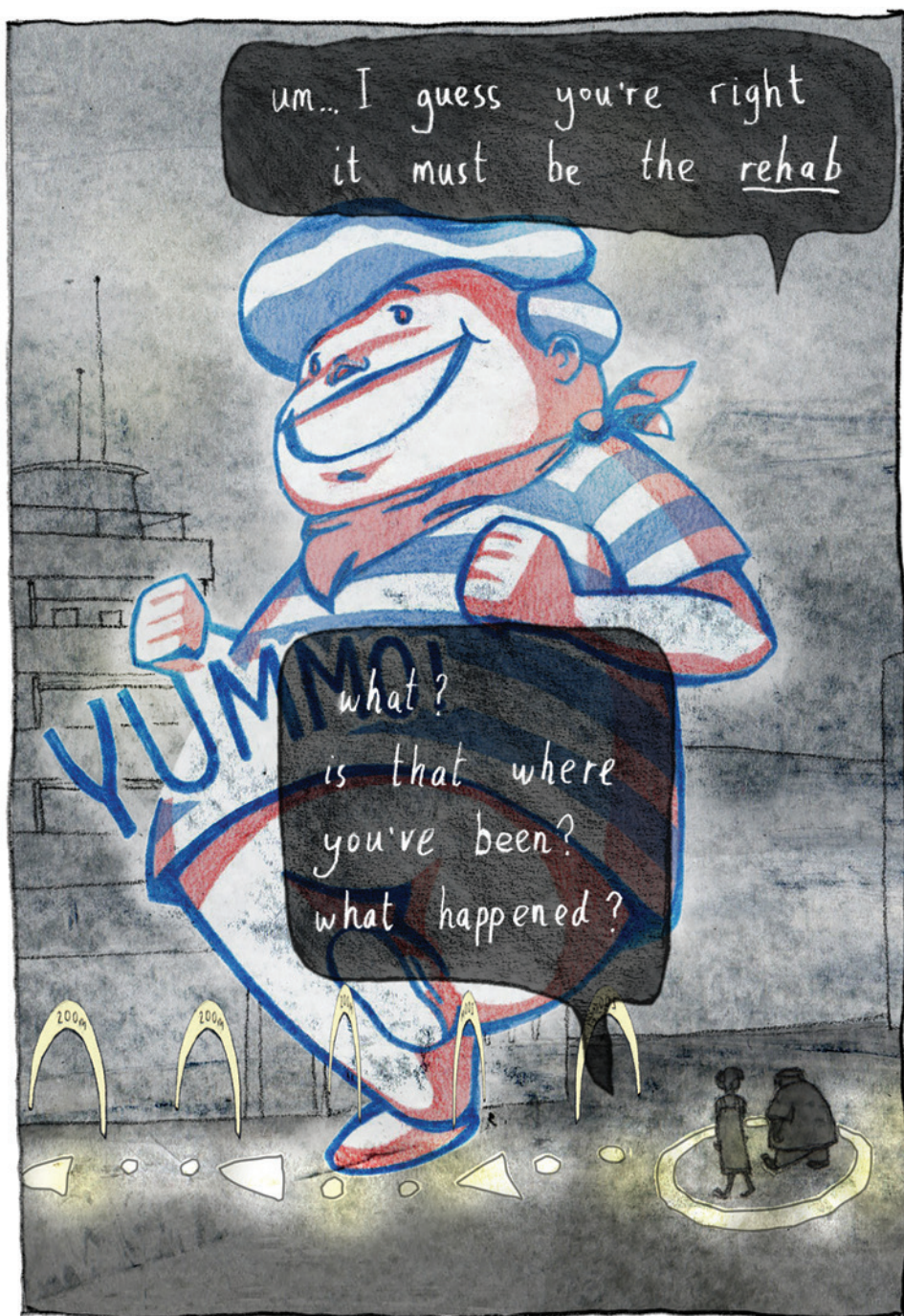






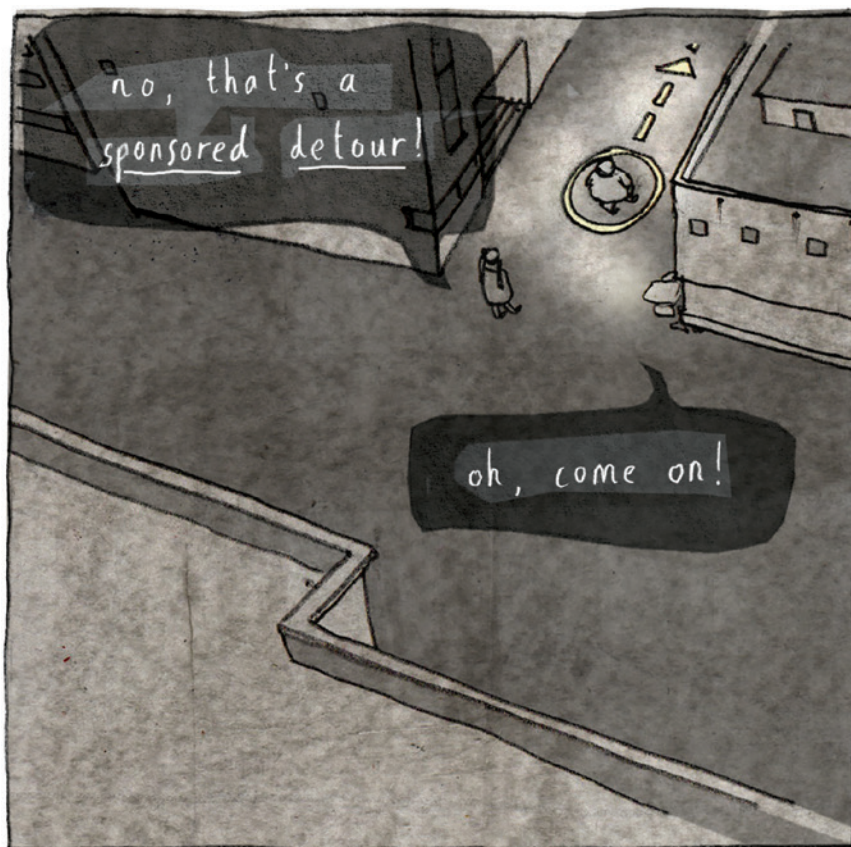
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UNDERSTANDING AND INTERPRETING

1. What is George's attitude toward technology? What evidence can you find in the text—something George says or does—to support your interpretation?
2. Fin seems deeply conflicted about technology. What are the internal conflicts she faces and what, if any, are the resolutions of those conflicts?
3. While it's clear that George and Fin are friends, they have conflicts that appear between them. Identify the conflicts, especially as seen in their dialogue, and explain what the conflicts reveal about each of them.
4. There are two overlapping settings in this story through which the characters move: the real world and augmented reality. Describe each of these settings, and explain how they connect with the other.
5. Starting with the panel on page 301, there are gold arches and circles in most of the frames. What do these literally represent? How do the creators also use these metaphorically?

ANALYZING LANGUAGE, STYLE, AND STRUCTURE

1. **Vocabulary in Context.** On page 307, Fin uses the phrase “zen wholegrain feeling” to describe how she hoped she’d feel after her detox. What does this phrase mean in this context as opposed to other contexts, and how does it help us to better understand Fin’s experience?
2. Graphic story artists can create their dialogue balloons and the text inside in any number of ways. In this case, they are transparent black with white script. Look closely at one panel, perhaps the large one on page 301 with the advertisement about changing “your flat, sad hair,” and describe how the dialogue balloons of “Square Eyes” compare to the text of the advertisements and what effect the contrasts creates.
3. Look back closely at the panels that include both the real world and the augmented reality. How does the artwork create the sense of both connection and separation between these settings?

4. How would you describe the use of color in this graphic story, and how does this help the writers to communicate their message?
5. Reread the sequence in which Fin tries to communicate to George what it was like during the media detox. Look closely at her language choices and figurative language. How successful is she in communicating her feelings?
6. What is the effect of starting the story in the “woods” as opposed to starting in reality?
7. The characters never do arrive at their destination. Why do you think the creators of this story chose to end the story this way?
8. The plot of this story could be easily summarized as two friends meet and walk to a coffee shop, but many events happen that complicate this simple plot. What are some of the key events of the plot, and why did the authors choose to unfold the plot in this way?
9. One of the largest and the most colorful panel, by far, is on page 306 showing the flock of birds with George and Fin seen from above. Write an interpretation of this scene that explains how it helps to illustrate one or more of the themes of the story.

TOPICS FOR COMPOSING

1. **Analysis.** Write a response in which you explain what “Square Eyes” is suggesting about the following topics. Be sure to provide evidence for your interpretation of theme.
 - a. The role of advertising and marketing in our lives.
 - b. The challenges of communication between friends in a world dominated by technology.
 - c. The differences between our online selves and our real selves.
2. **Personal.** Describe your own media and technology use. How similar or different is it compared to George’s? Have you ever

taken, or considered taking, a full detox from technology like Fin? What was the experience like, or what do you think it might be like?

3. **Extension.** The “compulsory reality retraining” that Fin describes is not entirely fictional. China, in an effort to combat what they see as growing Internet addiction in their youth, have begun operating military-style detox camps. Read the following description from a *USA Today* article about reasoning behind these camps, and explain how you think this would relate to the ideas presented in “Square Eyes.” To what extent is this an answer to a problem of internet addiction?

Frequently as a result of substandard performance in college, students in China are being forced into military-style boot camps for what the country has labeled “Internet addiction disorder.” Often tricked into the camp by worried parents who feel that their child’s grades are a reflection of their social media use, web surfing, or online gaming, students are left to harshly “reprogram” their habits over a period of three to six months.

Favoring military style drills and exercises over talk therapy, the camps, now numbering more than 250, have also been criticized over abuse allegations and several deaths that have occurred on their premises, as reported by ABC News. Several patients have been beaten to death after failing to complete orders.

In 2008, China became the first country in the world to consider Internet addiction a clinical disorder and the high numbers of those afflicted attest to that—as reported by *China Daily*, the country has an estimated 24 million Internet addicts.

4. **Argument.** Do you think that there should be mandatory limits on the amount of time people should be allowed to spend in online environments? Do you think that too much augmented reality can have the effects presented in “Square Eyes”?

WORKSHOP 2

Writing Fiction

There are some people who just love creative writing; even as young children, they make up stories, expanding them into longer and longer tales. Others prefer more concrete writing and nonfiction, such as research papers, science lab reports, and the like. But if the goal of this whole chapter is for you to better understand fiction as a genre, one of the best ways to do this is to understand how fiction works from the inside out. To really know how conflict, setting, and characterization affect a reader, you need to become—for a period of time—a short story writer yourself.

In this workshop, you're going to get a chance to play around with some of the key elements of fiction and even take a stab at writing a short piece yourself.

Getting Started

Writers are readers, and they often write in the style, form, and genre of the stories they like best. Inspiration and influence can come from many sources, or, as suspense writer Stephen King says:

Let's get one thing clear right now, shall we? There is no Idea Dump, no Story Central, no Island of the Buried Bestsellers; good story ideas seem to come quite literally from nowhere, sailing at you right out of the empty sky: two previously unrelated ideas come together and make something new under the sun. Your job isn't to find these ideas but to recognize them when they show up.

Writer Veronica Roth, for instance, says that she was strongly influenced by the band Evanescence's song "Sweet Sacrifice" with the lyrics: "fear is only in our minds / but it's taking over all the time." She put this lyric together with an idea she had for a dystopian world, which became the central idea for the *Divergent* series.

ACTIVITY TYPES OF STORIES

Meet with a partner or a small group to discuss your favorite or least favorite films, novels, short stories, video games, or other texts that fit in the following categories:

1. Fantasy
2. Science fiction
3. Historical fiction or speculative fiction
4. Realistic fiction
5. Romance
6. Comedies
7. Mystery
8. Action/War/Spy
9. Sports
10. Another genre not listed here

Your Story—Setting

Among professional writers, there is unlikely to be consensus around how they begin writing a story. Does it begin with a character first? Is it the story that comes to them first? Or is it an imaginary or realistic world that the writer pictures? There's no right answer. There is a famous story about J. K. Rowling, that she came up with the idea of Harry Potter while delayed on a train traveling from Manchester to London in 1990, imagining the boy wizard waiting for the train at Platform 9 3/4. So, in this case, it's a bit of character, setting, and plot all at once. For the purposes of this workshop, we're going to start with setting, but feel free to jump ahead to plot or character, or a different element, if you think that is more appropriate for your approach to writing stories.

The setting of a story is often one of the first aspects that a fiction writer thinks about because the world that a writer creates, even one that seems remarkably like our own, is a tool for drawing a reader into the story. And for worlds different from our own, the key aspects of setting are essential. The setting of the Harry Potter series, for instance, includes much more than just that magical platform and Hogwarts castle; it also includes all of the details about how that world works—magic and muggles and all the rest. As readers, we expect to feel that we really know the time and place of the story as much as we know our own world.

The details of setting contribute strongly to how the reader feels. A horror story can make the reader feel nervous and scared through descriptions of dark windows, creeping shadows, and unexplained creaking sounds. Look back at the details of setting that Tim O'Brien includes in "Ambush" for the purpose of creating uncertainty and a lack of clarity toward the man that the narrator is about to kill.

I remember it was still dark when Kiowa shook me awake for the final watch. The night was foggy and hot. For the first few moments I felt lost, not sure about directions, groping for my helmet and weapon. . . . Very gradually, in tiny slivers, dawn began to break through the fog; and from my position in the brush I could see ten or fifteen meters up the trail. The mosquitoes were fierce. I remember slapping them, wondering if I should wake up Kiowa and ask for some repellent, then thinking it was a bad idea, then looking up and seeing the young man come out of the fog. . . . There was no sound at all—none that I can remember. In a way, it seemed, he was part of the morning fog, or my own imagination, but there was also the reality of what was happening in my stomach.

The setting of the world O'Brien creates in this story through the elements of setting are essential to everything else that follows in the story, including character, conflict, and theme.

ACTIVITY SETTING

Thinking about your story, answer these key questions:

- Describe the location where the majority of the action will take place. What makes that setting interesting for a reader?
- What is the time period?
- If it is a world very different from our own, what are the “rules” that are in effect there?
- When will the majority of the action take place? Year? Month? Season? Time of day?
- What are the feelings you want to create through the setting of your story? Why?

Consider drawing a picture of one or more of your settings, or take photographs, or locate images online that illustrate your imagined setting. What stands out the most about your setting? Why? Write a few sentences that would appear in your story to describe one or more of your settings.

Your Story—Characters

Once you have established the world your story will take place in, it's time to consider the people who will populate that world, the characters.

Let's think about Rainsford from the short story “The Most Dangerous Game” by Richard Connell (p. 212). Here are some things that we know (or don't know) about him:

Full Name: Sanger Rainsford

Age: 30-ish?

Ethnicity: White, British

Where he lives: wherever his job takes him

Family: unknown

Friends: unknown

Hobbies/interests/profession: big game hunter and author

Key background information: was a soldier in World War I

Physical characteristics: strong, fast

Emotional characteristics: calm, quick-minded

There is, of course, a lot of information that we don't know about him. Most professional writers think of their fictional characters as real people, with fully developed histories and backgrounds, but they can't include everything and must make choices about what details to include and which to leave out.

ACTIVITY PROTAGONIST

Give some thought to a character that you might want to write about. What do you know, or think you know at this point, about your protagonist? If it helps, you might want to consider drawing a sketch of your protagonist or locating images online that might help you to visualize him or her. Be sure to get as detailed as possible about where/when the character lives. This will be important not only to understand the character, but also to learn more about the world you will be creating or presenting in your story.

- Full name:
- Age:
- Ethnicity:
- Where and when he or she lives:
- Family:
- Friends:
- Hobbies/interests/profession:
- Key background information:
- Physical characteristics (hair, height, eyes, etc.):
- Emotional characteristics (three "positive" characteristics; three "negative" ones):

Try to learn a little bit more about your character by thinking about some of the following:

- What would the character buy in a grocery store or order in a restaurant? Why? Are there even grocery stores or restaurants in the world in which your character lives? If not, how and what does he/she eat?
- What would the character do on his/her "day off"? Why?
- Was his/her childhood a good or a troubled one? How so?
- What is your character's greatest fear, hope, or secret?
- What would he/she do if she/he witnessed a robbery or crime in progress? Why?

Your Story—Conflicts

As you may have read earlier in this chapter, stories are driven by conflicts, and conflicts are usually created when the protagonist encounters an obstacle. What kind of story would it be if Harry Potter just immediately got everything he wanted: friends,

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acceptance, family, etc.? No, stories are about how characters deal with the obstacles they encounter.

In “Reindeer Games” by Sherman Alexie on page 176, Junior wants to be able to fit into his new school without giving up his identity as an Indian after leaving his old school behind. When he decides to try out for the school’s basketball team, there are a number of conflicts he faces. Character versus self: is he good enough to play on his new school’s team? Does he want to face his old school? Character versus others: the coach is demanding a lot from him. Rowdy and the other Indians at his old school have not forgiven him and want to make it difficult for him to play well in his return.

ACTIVITY CONFLICTS

Think about your protagonist’s goals and the obstacles he/she faces in achieving them.

1. What does he/she want more than anything else?
2. How do the following prevent—or delay—your protagonist from achieving his/her goal(s)? You can review these elements of conflict on page 155.
 - Other characters?
 - Himself/herself?
 - Society?
 - Nature?

Antagonist

Let’s dive a little deeper into the notion of an antagonist. In many stories, the antagonist will be the primary obstacle standing between the protagonist and the goal. Remember, the antagonist isn’t necessarily evil or a bad person, like Voldemort to Harry Potter. An antagonist could be a well-meaning father who inadvertently keeps his daughter from becoming more independent by always cleaning her room or doing her laundry.

At first, it seems like the coach will be an antagonist, stopping Junior from making the basketball team, but eventually he grows to respect Junior’s tenacity. By the end of the excerpt, it’s clear that Rowdy is certainly an antagonist to Junior’s desire to attend his new school while maintaining his old friendships on the reservation. Rowdy takes extreme and violent methods to prevent that.

ACTIVITY ANTAGONIST

Now, think about a character who might be considered the antagonist to your protagonist. Again, if it helps, consider drawing a picture or locating online images that represent the antagonist.

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- Describe this antagonist with as many of the details as you can identify:
 - Full name:
 - Age:
 - Ethnicity:
 - Where he or she lives:
 - Family:
 - Friends:
 - Hobbies/interests/profession:
 - People he or she knows:
 - Physical characteristics (hair, height, eyes, etc.):
 - Emotional characteristics (three “positive” characteristics; three “negative”):
- How and why does this character keep the protagonist from reaching his/her goals?
- What are his/her own motivations or desires?
- Try writing out a brief dialogue exchange between the protagonist and the antagonist that might capture an aspect of their conflict.

WRITER'S CORNER DIALOGUE

Dialogue in fiction writing follows a specific format. Most important is that writers change paragraphs whenever a new person is speaking. They put quotation marks around what is said out loud. Sometimes writers will clearly state who is talking, and sometimes they will not, recognizing that the audience will understand from the context. For example, look at this dialogue exchange between two characters from the short story “Nemecia”:

“Maria. I’m going to walk with you tomorrow in the procession. I’m going to help you.”

“I don’t need any help,” I said.

Nemecia smiled as though it was out of her hands. “Well.” She shrugged.

“But I’m leading it,” I said. “Mrs. Reyes chose me.”

“Your mother told me I had to help you, and that *maybe* I would get to wear the wings.”

I stood. Even standing, I came only to her shoulder. I heard the screen door slam, and my mother was on the porch. She came over to us, steps quick, face worried.

“Mama, I don’t *need* help. Tell her Mrs. Reyes chose *me*.”

Your Story—Plot

At this point in the workshop, you have probably identified your protagonist, an antagonist, your setting, and a conflict or two that your character will face. Now it's time to start thinking a little bit more about the story you are going to tell.

If you were to distill the essence of the short story "Ambush," it might go something like: "Still traumatized by his experiences in Vietnam, a father wonders just how much to tell his young daughter about the time when he killed a man during the war. Tim O'Brien's 'Ambush' raises questions about motivations and consequences amid the fog of war." Distilling your idea down to the basics like this is a good way to get a handle on the story: some people refer to this as an "elevator pitch," a short description of an idea in the time it takes for someone to ride in an elevator.

ACTIVITY BOOK JACKET

Imagine that the story you are writing is about to be published in book form. If the publisher asked you to write a short summary that would appear on the inside cover of the book jacket, what would you write? What might the cover include? Why? Ask a classmate to write a "blurb" for the back cover: a one- to two-sentence review of why someone might want to read the book.

As you may have read earlier in this chapter, plot is about how the story is constructed. You have the essence of your story from your book jacket or elevator pitch, but what do you start with? In what order do the events occur? How does the story end? Are there flashbacks, etc.? These are all choices that writers make, even though you are not necessarily limited to the structure identified in the typical plot diagram (see p. 156).

Here are a few suggestions for what you might try to include in your story for each of the parts of the plot diagram and other aspects of your story:

Exposition: How will you introduce your protagonist? It could be a scene that includes some kind of significant action by your protagonist to reveal a key character trait. Or, introduce your protagonist with a piece of dialogue that shows how she/he feels about another person or event. Another essential aspect that you ought to consider in your exposition is exactly how you will introduce the setting of your story. How will you establish the time period and the location, especially if it is a world very different from our own?

Rising Action: The rising action has to make the following things clear: what is the protagonist hoping to accomplish? Who is the antagonist, and how and why will they prevent the protagonist from achieving his/her goals? There should be at least one scene in which the protagonist nearly achieves at least a part of the goal and is kept from it. Will you include any flashbacks to earlier parts of the story? This is not

essential, but a scene or two from the past can provide added depth and motivation to your characters. Flashbacks can occur anywhere in a story, but are generally used as part of the rising action.

Climax: This will be a scene in which the protagonist either achieves what he/she was hoping to, or it becomes clear that it will not happen. The central conflict (between self, others, society, or nature) should be resolved one way or another.

Falling Action: What happens immediately after the climax? Not every story has a clear section of falling action, and it may be difficult to distinguish between this and the resolution.

Resolution: This is where the audience gets a clear understanding of what has happened and what the future might be like for the protagonist and the other main characters. It might be tempting to write something like “they lived happily ever after” or “and then he woke up to learn it was all a dream,” but those endings are rarely satisfying for a reader. You might try hinting at a new looming conflict to set up your sequel!

ACTIVITY PLOT

Sketch out a plot diagram for what you know about your story at this point. Be sure to consider how the conflicts you identified above can be the rising action leading to the climax. Don't worry if you cannot fill in all of the components at this point; you will likely return to this diagram regularly as you are drafting your story. Try to keep in mind how your story will end: has your protagonist reached his or her goals? Why or why not?

Your Story — Additional Characters

In most stories, there are more characters than just the protagonist and the antagonist. Additional characters help to move the plot along and can help to reveal certain aspects of the characters. Kiowa, for instance, in “Ambush” provides the narrator with possible rationalizations for why he killed the man in the story that cause the narrator to reflect.

ACTIVITY ADDITIONAL CHARACTERS

Who are additional characters that you might need in your story? What do you know about them, and what purpose will they serve in the story? Consider using some of the same questions in the protagonist and antagonist activities above to help you flesh out your characters.

Your Story—Point of View

The point of view a story is told from greatly affects how a writer communicates character and plot. In Edgar Allan Poe's "The Cask of Amontillado," we get the story from the point of view of the protagonist, who wants to kill the antagonist and who includes numerous rationales for committing the crime. Here is an excerpt from near the beginning of the story when the protagonist sees the man he is planning to kill:

It was about dusk, one evening during the supreme madness of the carnival season, that I encountered my friend. He accosted me with excessive warmth, for he had been drinking much. The man wore motley. He had on a tightfitting parti-striped dress, and his head was surmounted by the conical cap and bells. I was so pleased to see him, that I thought I should never have done wringing his hand.

Imagine how different the story would be if we received the point of view of the man he is trying to kill. It might sound something like this:

It was about dusk, one evening during the carnival season when I encountered Montresor. I know him only a little, but I had been drinking so I accosted him with excessive warmth. I wore typical festival garb. It seemed strange to me that he seemed so pleased to see me; he wouldn't stop wringing my hand. If I had anything else to do that night, I would have made any excuse to be rid of him, but it was carnival season.

Or, look what changes when it is told from the third person point of view:

The two men met at dusk during carnival. The one named Fortunato was dressed for the party in a conical cap with bells, but the other man, Montresor, was dressed in dark clothes and it looked as if he had been waiting for Fortunato to arrive at this spot. Several times, Fortunato made a move to leave, but each time Montresor held him back and refused to let go of his hand.

Each of these passages communicate a different level of knowledge and intimacy, depending on the point of view from which they are told.

ACTIVITY POINT OF VIEW

You may or may not have already decided from whose perspective your story will be told, but take this time to play around with some of the different choices you could make with the narration of your story:

- Write a paragraph in first person, from the point of view of the protagonist, in which he or she describes a conflict he or she is facing.
- Rewrite that same paragraph in first person from the point of view of the antagonist.
- Rewrite in third person omniscient.
- Rewrite in third person limited.

Your Story—The Opening

At this point, you have explored and practiced writing components of a short story, including characters, conflicts, setting, and point of view. The next step, of course, would be to actually begin writing your story, which is sometimes more easily said than done. It's hard to start a story, and it's easy to resort to clichés. In his advice to aspiring writers, Stephen King says, "you can, you should, and if you're brave enough to start, you will."

Look at these opening lines from some of the stories from this chapter. Each tries to engage the reader and establish character, knowing that they can begin the actual conflicts of the story later on.

- 1. Starting with Dialogue.** The beginning of "The Veldt" immediately raises suspicion about what is happening with the nursery.

"George, I wish you'd look at the nursery."

"What's wrong with it?"

"I don't know."

"Well, then."

"I just want you to look at it, is all, or call a psychologist in to look at it."

"What would a psychologist want with a nursery?"

"You know very well what he'd want." His wife paused in the middle of the kitchen and watched the stove busy humming to itself, making supper for four.

"It's just that the nursery is different now than it was."

"All right, let's have a look."

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↑ What is this *Peanuts* cartoon suggesting about the difficulty of starting off a story?

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- 2. Starting with Suspense.** The beginning of “Story of an Hour” makes the reader immediately wonder exactly what has happened and what will happen:

Knowing that Mrs. Mallard was afflicted with a heart trouble, great care was taken to break to her as gently as possible the news of her husband’s death.

- 3. Starting with Description.** The opening of “Nemecia” sets up the striking differences between the narrator and her cousin:

There is a picture of me standing with my cousin Nemecia in the bean field. On the back is penciled in my mother’s hand, Nemecia and Maria, Tajique, 1929. Nemecia is thirteen; I am six. She is wearing a rayon dress that falls to her knees, glass beads, and real silk stockings, gifts from her mother in California. She wears a close-fitting hat, like a helmet, and her smiling lips are pursed. She holds tight to my hand. Even in my white dress I look like a boy; my hair, which I have cut myself, is short and jagged. Nemecia’s head is tilted; she looks out from under her eyelashes at the camera. My expression is sullen, guilty. I don’t remember the occasion for the photograph, or why we were dressed up in the middle of the dusty field. All I remember of the day is that Nemecia’s shoes had heels, and she had to walk tipped forward on her toes to prevent them from sinking into the dirt.

ACTIVITY OPENING LINES

Try writing a few different scenes that could act as an opening to your story. Consider starting at the end of the plot or with a setting or character description.

FINAL REFLECTION

Whether you put all of these pieces of your story together into a complete, developed short story or not, you likely have learned a lot about how and why short stories are constructed for particular effect. Write an explanation of what being a writer has taught you about reading a piece of fiction. What have you begun to notice that you might not have otherwise?

WORKSHOP 3

Analyzing Fiction

As you likely remember from previous chapters, analysis is the process of taking something apart in order to understand it better. When we analyze fiction, we're looking at how an author uses literary elements like characterization, plot, and setting, as well as language choices, to deliver an idea—the theme. The goal is to uncover why the writer made the choices he or she did, and what impact those choices had on the story.

If you worked through Workshop 2, you used the tools of storytelling to begin to craft a piece of fiction. As you worked with the characters, plot, setting, and other literary devices, you had lots of choices to make. What is this story about? Where does the story begin? What happens next? Who are these characters? What language can I use to bring the story to life? Being a writer is all about *choices*, right down to carefully choosing individual words to bring your world to life. For instance, if a villain's smile is "menacing like a rottweiler," or "friendly like a labrador," that difference in language creates two completely different characters. Those characters likely will act differently, which might result in a different story altogether. In an analysis, your goal is to explain to the reader *why* the writer made the choices they made. Answering the "why" is key.

Look at this painting →
by Kevin Peterson
entitled *Funeral*. First,
write a paragraph
on the story that the
painting tells. Then,
talk about how the
artist created that
story visually.

What choices did the
artist use to suggest
characters, a setting,
a point of view, and
even a plot, with just a
still image?



Kevin Peterson, *Funeral*. 26" x 36", oil on panel.

kevinpetersonstudios.com

Let's practice some analysis using a small passage from the Central Text in this chapter, "Two Kinds" on page 237. In this passage, the main character, Jing-mei, struggles with a mother who wants to turn her into a prodigy. As a result, Jing-mei ends up going through an identity crisis.

A typical writing prompt for an analysis of fiction might read:

In many works of literature, characters experience an epiphany. An epiphany is a sudden realization that has a major impact on the character's life. Explain what causes this epiphany, and how this epiphany develops the character and reveals a theme.

Before you even get to the text, you need to break down the prompt, and think about what it is asking you to do. First, you should make sure that you understand what an epiphany is. Look it up if you need to. Once you're clear on that, it's important to notice that the prompt is asking you to do two things:

1. Explain what causes the epiphany in "Two Kinds."
2. Explain what the epiphany reveals about Jing-mei.

Once you have that figured out, you have a focus for your reading.

ACTIVITY ANALYZING FICTION

Rewatch your favorite movie, and then write a paragraph on what makes it so good. After you are done, write a reflection on whether your analysis had to do with plot, character, setting, or theme.

Step 1: Reading and Making Observations

First, just read through the passage in order to understand it. What is happening? Who are the characters? What is their relationship? What do they want? Then, go back and reread it for meaning along with the commentary we've included. The commentary is about noticing things that are interesting or confusing, and just asking questions as we go. Feel free to note your own observations. Our notes are intended as a starting point, not the final word.

The tests got harder — multiplying numbers in my head, finding the queen of hearts in a deck of cards, trying to stand on my head without using my hands, predicting the daily temperatures in Los Angeles, New York, and London. One night I had to look at a page from the Bible for three minutes and then report everything I could remember. "Now Jehoshaphat had riches and honor in abundance and . . . that's all I remember, Ma," I said.

*Tasks start out normal, then get weird.
What is Tan telling us about the mom by making this list so bizarre?*

And after seeing, once again, my mother's disappointed face, something inside me began to die. I hated the tests, the raised hopes and failed expectations.

Before going to bed that night I looked in the mirror above the bathroom sink,

Whose hopes were raised? Hers, or her moms? Or both?

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What was she expecting to see? and I saw only my face staring back—and understood that it would always be this ordinary face—I began to cry. Such a sad, ugly girl! I made high-pitched noises like a crazed animal, trying to scratch out the face in the mirror.

Tan is creating another Jing-mei character: the prodigy.

Seems to be taking her failure to heart and having an identity crisis

Hoping to see extraordinary face, not just ordinary.

And then I saw what seemed to be the prodigy side of me—a face I had never seen before. I looked at my reflection, blinking so that I could see more clearly.

The girl staring back at me was angry, powerful. She and I were the same. I had new thoughts, willful thoughts—or rather, thoughts filled with lots of won'ts. I won't let her change me, I promised myself. I won't be what I'm not.

Tan is saying that the prodigy is "angry, powerful." That's unexpected!

"Prodigy" identity is not the "ideal" daughter.

Found the epiphany!

This pronoun "her" is a bit confusing. I think it refers to her mom, but she hasn't been referred to in a long time. The most recent other person referred to was the "sad, ugly girl" in the mirror.

ACTIVITY READING AND MAKING OBSERVATIONS

Look back through the pieces in this chapter and choose one that you find interesting. Skim through your chosen text and locate a section that is about the approximate length of the excerpt above and seems to be a crucial part of the story.

When you have decided on your excerpt, read it twice.

1. On your first reading, read for understanding. What is happening?
2. On your second reading, read for meaning. Annotate the excerpt by asking questions and noting important ideas or moments. Pay special attention to how the writer uses the Essential Elements of Fiction in this section.

Step 2: Finding a Focus

There is a lot going on in this short passage! So, how do we begin to analyze something like this? We said that analysis is about pulling things apart, but we also said that it was about doing that in order to understand it better. So, once we've taken notes on all of the little things, we have to bring some order to the chaos. We need to find some ideas or themes that connect things.

Let's go back through, and summarize the main ideas in the notes, paragraph by paragraph:

- **Paragraph 1:** The first handful of notes all come back to the idea of whether Jing-mei resents the tests and does poorly on purpose, or if she is honestly trying and failing. Is she upset by her failure, or upset at what her mom is putting her through?
- **Paragraph 2:** In this paragraph, Jing-mei sees her normal reflection—the "ordinary . . . sad, ugly girl"—and we're led to believe that this is the face she sees because she fails the test. This is the face of failure. She attacks this face out of frustration.
- **Paragraph 3:** In this paragraph, Jing-mei is transformed and redefined as a willful prodigy. The motivation here is confusing, because the thing that starts all of this is her failure of her mom's tests. But being more willful and full of "won'ts" isn't going to help her pass those tests. How is she defining "prodigy"?

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As we summarized those notes, the question that seems to come up over and over is what the relationship is between Jing-mei and her mom, and how that fuels the change in identity in Jing-mei. How do the bizarre tests lead to Jing-mei's transformation? Answering this question will be the focus of our model analysis.

WRITER'S CORNER BRAINSTORMING

Sometimes it's hard to figure out a topic, or where we stand on the topic. Freewriting can help us work with the ideas, talk things through mentally, and sometimes come to interesting conclusions. The trick to freewriting is eliminating all distractions and to pour your ideas on the page, even if they seem erratic or disorganized. Some people say to set a timer; others say just write until you're out of things to say. Try them both and see what works best for you.

ACTIVITY WORKING WITH A PASSAGE

Now that we have given an example of what it looks like to annotate a passage and summarize the things you noticed, it's time for you to try. In the previous activity, you selected a passage to work with. Think about why you chose that passage. What did you find especially interesting or compelling: Was it character? Plot? Setting? Conflict? Theme? Then, following the same steps as modeled with "Two Kinds" above, annotate that passage, and summarize your notes to find a focus for your analysis. If you struggle with finding a focus, perhaps you need to look for different or additional passages, or a different story.

Step 3: Creating a Thesis Statement

Whether it's a thesis sentence for a full essay or just a topic sentence for an analytical paragraph, the recipe remains the same. You want to introduce the idea you are looking to explore and take an interpretive stance on that idea. Don't just tell your readers what happened; tell them *why* it happened. Don't just tell them what your essay is going to be about; tell them what your position on that topic is. Having a good, intriguing thesis is essential to clarifying your thinking and setting up a strong argument.

For the topic we've been exploring, we might write a thesis sentence like this:

Weak Thesis

In this section of "Two Kinds," Jing-mei rebels against her mother.

This thesis states what happens, but it doesn't tell us *why*. It doesn't take an interpretive stance on the passage, and doesn't answer any of the questions we asked as we took notes on the passage.

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Weak Thesis

In this analysis, I will discuss the motivations behind Jing-mei's epiphany in "Two Kinds."

Again, not a great thesis statement, but why? Well, it doesn't grab the reader's attention, because it doesn't take a stand on the issue. What are the motivations? Why do the characters have these motivations?

Working Thesis

Tired of failing to be the sort of prodigy her mother would like her to be, Jing-mei creates her own definition of a prodigy, unleashing the strong, willful girl within herself.

This thesis states what happens, but it also takes a stand on why: she was pushed to change by her mother's behavior. It also talks about why she changed in the way that she did: in a situation where she didn't feel in control of her identity, she took control.

This is not the only possible thesis. You might think that this change in Jing-mei is a bad thing, that she has been pushed to the breaking point by her mother. You might think that Jing-mei's idea of a "prodigy" as being willful and "full of won'ts" is ultimately a negative change in the character's life, rather than an epiphany where she finds herself. You might change the focus entirely and just try to define what a "prodigy" is and try to explain why Jing-mei and her mother have such different definitions of it. Stories are full of things to talk about. Find the thing that you are most interested in or most passionate about, and run with it.

For the rest of this workshop, we'll use the "working thesis" above as our starting point.

ACTIVITY CREATING A THESIS

Using the passage that you selected and analyzed in the previous activities, now write a working thesis that takes an interpretive stance on that passage. Remember that your thesis should introduce the idea you want to explore, and take a stance on that idea.

Step 4: Proving Your Point

Now that we have a focus for our analysis, the next step is to prove that our interpretation is valid. Some people say that literature is subjective and you can interpret it any way you want, but that's only part of the story. The interpretation has to be a valid reading of the text itself. The way we prove that in academic writing is by drawing evidence directly from the text and combining that with your own commentary.

Based on our working thesis, what exactly do you need to prove? Let's see:

Working Thesis

Tired of failing to be the sort of prodigy her mother would like her to be, Jing-mei creates her own definition of a prodigy, unleashing the strong, willful girl within herself.

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Two basic points in this thesis need to be proven:

Point 1: Jing-mei is “tired of failing to be the sort of prodigy her mother would like her to be.”

Is she tired of failing? Or is she tired of being pushed so much? Is this the motivation that causes her identity crisis? We have to prove that our reading is correct.

Point 2: “Jing-mei creates her own definition of a prodigy, unleashing the strong, willful girl within herself.”

Is this true? What is Jing-mei’s idea of what a prodigy is? Is her definition actually the same as her mother’s? How is it different? What does willfulness have to do with being a prodigy?

In order to address these questions, we need to go back to the text.

Gathering Evidence

There are lots of ways to gather evidence. Some people use note cards, some people highlight and annotate as they reread, and others take notes in a document or graphic organizer. What system you use is up to you. As you reread the text, you should begin selecting quotes that best support your ideas, or counter your ideas. Don’t just ignore things that go against your thesis, tackle them head on! Quotes alone, however, are not enough to prove your point. It is your job as the writer to point out *how* the quote proves the point you’re making.

One way to make sure you are connecting your quote to your thesis is with a chart like this. It will help make the connection clear, and help you think through the purpose of each quote and how it connects to your larger point.

WORKING THESIS: Tired of failing to be the sort of prodigy her mother would like her to be, Jing-mei creates her own definition of a prodigy, unleashing the strong, willful girl within herself.	
Quote	How the Quote Supports My Point
“One night I had to look at a page from the Bible for three minutes and then report everything I could remember. ‘Now Jehoshaphat had riches and honor in abundance and . . . that’s all I remember, Ma,’ I said.”	Jing-mei’s tone in her response demonstrates her fatigue with the constant pressures to become the prodigy her mother desires. (supports point 1 in the working thesis)

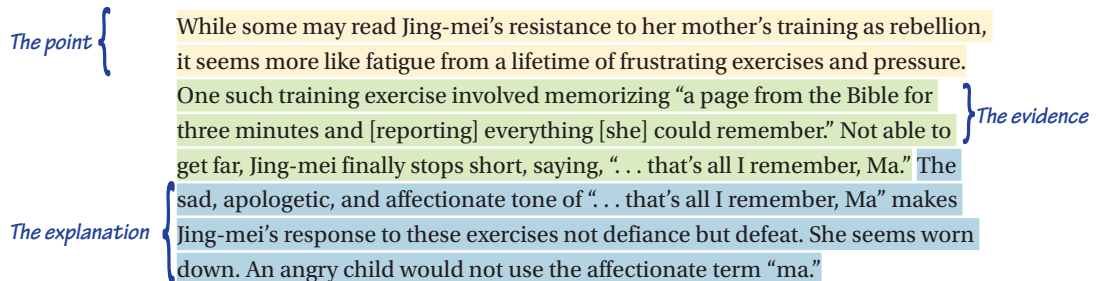
ACTIVITY GATHERING EVIDENCE

Go back to the passage you have been working with in this workshop's activities, and gather evidence to support your working thesis. Remember that whether you use note cards, take notes in a document, or fill in a graphic organizer is up to you. This activity is a good opportunity to try out a system and see how it works.

Presenting Evidence

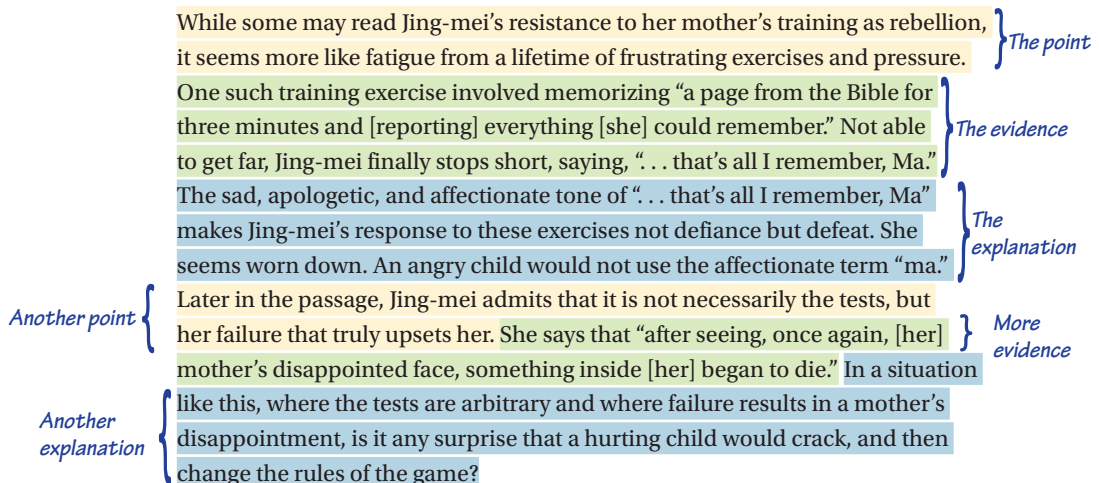
When you present your ideas, there are specific parts that you will need to include. You must make your point, frame your quotes, and explain how the two are connected.

In the writing chapter of this book, on pages 53–54, we talked about how to use evidence by making the point, backing up the point with evidence, and then commenting on how the evidence proves the point. If we begin to incorporate our point, evidence, and explanations in a paragraph, it might look something like this:



What we have created here is a short but focused analytical paragraph.

If we find more quotes to support our points, we can continue to build the paragraph by continuing with this structure, as long as we stay on the same topic, like this:



With evidence and explanations that connect the evidence to your point presented like this, you have a credible analytical paragraph.

The second point of our working thesis is:

Jing-mei creates her own definition of a prodigy, unleashing the strong, willful girl within herself.

If we were to follow the same steps as the body paragraph above, we would have a second body paragraph that uses supporting evidence to prove this point. Depending on how you structured your thesis, you may or may not have a second point to argue.

WRITER'S CORNER ANALYZING LITERATURE

Here are some basic conventions to follow when writing about literature:

- Write using present tense verbs. Literature *lives*, so the analysis you do should discuss how the author *uses* literary devices, and that the characters *are* portrayed in a certain way.
- Use third person point of view and avoid the use of pronouns like *I* and *you*.
- If the verb tense or pronoun is not in the correct form, change it in the sentence and use brackets [] to indicate the change. *Example:* Jing-mei realizes that “the girl staring back at [her is] angry, powerful.” The words “me was” in the original quote was replaced with [her is] in the integrated quote to make sense.
- Do not summarize the plot or events in the text. Although some summary may be necessary for establishing context, summary is not analysis.

ACTIVITY WRITING A BODY PARAGRAPH

Using the model above as a guide, write a body paragraph for your own working thesis which states your point, incorporates at least two pieces of textual evidence, and explains how your evidence supports your point.

Step 5: Expanding to an Essay

Whether you realize it or not, we’ve come a long way in writing an analytical essay. We have a thesis, and we even have a solid body paragraph or two. If we add an

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introduction and a conclusion, we'd probably have a decent paper on this passage. If we were asked to write about the entire story, our paper would get longer, as we'd have a lot more to say about where Jing-mei's relationship with her mother ends up, and how her willful idea of a prodigy works out.

The key parts missing from our essay at this point are the introduction and conclusion. Let's work on those.

Introductory Paragraph

The point of the introductory paragraph is to engage your reader and create interest in the topic. A standard introduction has three parts:

1. An opening hook
2. A connection to the piece being analyzed
3. A thesis statement

The Hook

The hook is about drawing the reader in and getting them thinking about the kinds of ideas or issues that are at play in your analysis. This is a great place to just raise questions or identify issues. No one is expecting you to have the answers to these questions, or solutions to these problems!

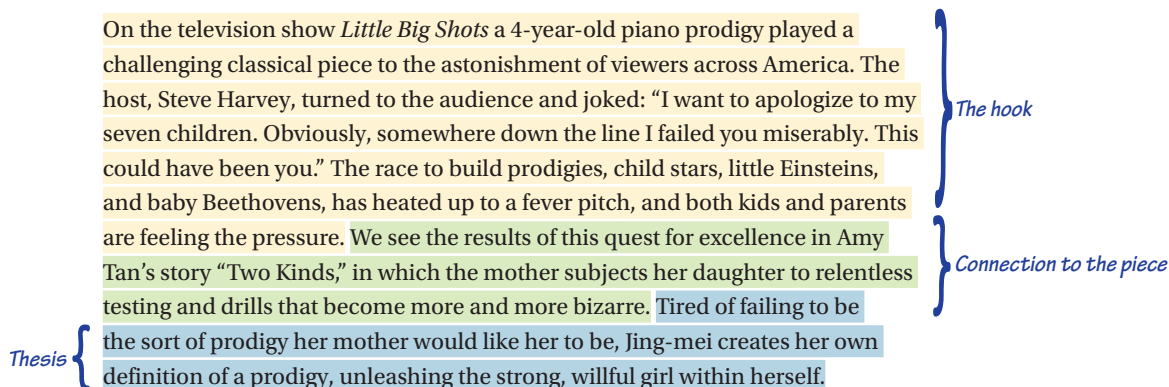
For this essay on Jing-mei and her mother, we might think about what role parents have in making their kids successful. We might ask whether we define our own identity, or whether those around us play a larger role in defining who we are. We might think about what a prodigy is and why having a daughter who is one seems so important to Jing-mei's mother.

Every writer will tell you that the first sentence is always the hardest to write. Here are a few classic ways to begin your introductory paragraph:

- | | |
|----------------------------------|--|
| With a question: | "How often are people pressured to be someone they are not?" |
| With a definition: | "Self-awareness is the recognition of one's own strengths, weaknesses, beliefs, and motivations." |
| With a statement: | "The act of self-discovery can lead to powerful consequences, both positive and negative." |
| With a story or anecdote: | "On the television show <i>Little Big Shots</i> a 4-year-old piano prodigy played a challenging classical piece to the astonishment of viewers across America. The host, Steve Harvey, turned to the audience and joked: 'I want to apologize to my seven children. Obviously, somewhere down the line I failed you miserably. This could have been you.'" |

Connection to the Piece

Once we have a hook, it's time to show our readers how the ideas we've brought up apply to the reading we are about to analyze. This transition doesn't have to be fancy. It's usually a simple connecting statement that includes a bit of summary.



ACTIVITY WRITING AN INTRODUCTION

Following the model, write a draft of your introductory paragraph. Think about the way you want to hook the reader and how you want to lead into your thesis statement.

Concluding Paragraph

As with any essay you write, a solid conclusion will bring your paper full circle by restating (not repeating!) your thesis and the main points you analyzed in each of the body paragraphs. It should bring completeness and closure to the reader with the satisfaction that your assertion is a sound one.

Notice how the draft of the concluding paragraph for the model text below ties back to the thesis and connects to the ideas in the body paragraph(s).

The push for excellence motivated from within can be a challenge, but the push for excellence under someone else's terms can be near impossible. Jing-mei's constant failures at her mother's persistent attempts to invent her daughter as a prodigy reach a breaking point. Jing-mei's inner strength emerges when she realizes, in an act of thoughtful, willful defiance, that she wants to follow her own path. Her epiphany reveals Jing-mei's new identity as one who wants to be in control of her own destiny. In her way, she has redefined *prodigy* as one who succeeds on his or her own terms.

ACTIVITY WRITING A CONCLUSION

Write a concluding paragraph for your essay. Remember to tie it back to your thesis, the points in your body paragraphs, and avoid simply repeating what you have already stated.

Bringing It All Together

If you take all of the pieces you've written and put them together, you should have a short analytical essay.

Remember that all of these tips and tricks are just here to help you get started. Once you feel more in control of what it means to make an interpretation, prove a point, and comment on evidence, you can start to bend these rules to suit your purposes. Writing is not about formulas or templates. It's about communicating ideas.

Step 6: Revising and Editing

Since this is a first draft, it is likely that further revisions and editing will be necessary. Revising and editing are two separate activities. When you revise a paper, you fix incoherent sentences, organization of ideas, and other structural or content issues. Editing involves cleaning up spelling, punctuation, or grammar mistakes. Use the checklists below to give your paper a thorough review.

Editing Checklist	Revision Checklist
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Present tense verbs • Third person (no <i>I</i> or <i>you</i>) • Punctuation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commas • Quotations • Spelling 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Each paragraph supports the thesis • Properly embedded relevant evidence • Commentary linking each piece of evidence to a point • Clear, connected ideas • No awkward sentences

If you need more help with grammar and style, see the Appendix: Grammar Workshops at the back of the book.

ACTIVITY REVISING AND EDITING

Read through your paper looking for specific revising and editing opportunities. Instead of looking for everything all at once, look for grammar errors first—spelling, punctuation, subject-verb agreement. Each time you read through your draft, focus on one particular element and fix those errors before moving on to another.

Next, read your paper aloud from top to bottom to ensure that the information is organized and makes sense and that the evidence you have selected to embed supports your statements.

Finally, create a clean draft of your essay with all corrected revisions and edits included.