

Afro-Latina By ELIZABETH ACEVEDO

Afro-Latina,
Camina conmigo.
Salsa swagger
anywhere she go
como
'jla negra tiene tumbao!
¡Azúcar!
Dance to the rhythm.
Beat the drums of my skin.
Afrodescendant,
the rhythms within.
The first language
I spoke was Spanish.
Learned from lullabies
whispered in my ear.
My parents' tongue
was a gift
which I quickly forgot
after realizing
my peers did not understand it.
They did not understand me.
So I rejected
habichuela y mangú,
much preferring Happy Meals
and Big Macs.
Straightening my hair
in imitation of Barbie.
I was embarrassed
by my grandmother's
colorful skirts
and my mother's
eh brokee inglee
which cracked my pride
when she spoke.
So, shit, I would poke fun
at her myself,
hoping to lessen
the humiliation.
Proud to call myself
American,
a citizen
of this nation,
I hated
Caramel-color skin.
Cursed God
I'd been born
the color of cinnamon.
How quickly we forget
where we come from.
So remind me,

remind me
that I come from
the Tainos of the río
the Aztec,
the Mayan,
Los Incas,
los Españoles
con sus fincas
buscando oro,
and the Yoruba Africanos
que con sus manos
built a mundo
nunca imaginado.
I know I come
from stolen gold.
From cocoa,
from sugarcane,
the children
of slaves
and slave masters.
A beautifully tragic mixture,
a sancocho
of a race history.
And my memory
can't seem to escape
the thought
of lost lives
and indigenous rape.
Of bittersweet bitterness,
of feeling innate,
the soul of a people,
past, present and fate,
our stories cannot
be checked into boxes.
They are in the forgotten.
The undocumented,
the passed-down spoonfuls
of arroz con dulce
a la abuela's knee.
They're the way our hips
skip
to the beat of cumbia,
merengue
y salsa.
They're in the bending
and blending
of backbones.
We are deformed
and reformed
beings.
It's in the sway
of our song,

the landscapes
of our skirts,
the azúcar
beneath our tongues.
We are
the unforeseen children.
We're not a cultural wedlock,
hair too kinky for Spain,
too wavy for dreadlocks.
So our palms
tell the cuentos
of many tierras.
Read our lifeline,
birth of intertwine,
moonbeams
and starshine.
We are every
ocean crossed.
North Star navigates
our waters.
Our bodies
have been bridges.
We are the sons
and daughters,
el destino de mi gente,
black
brown
beautiful.
Viviremos para siempre
Afro-Latinos
hasta la muerte.

TEXT DEPENDENT QUESTIONS

1. What does the speaker mean when she says, "My parents' tongue was a gift."
2. What caused the speaker to feel humiliated? How would she "lessen the humiliation"?
3. What is the effect of intertwining Spanish with the English in this piece?
4. Reread from "Our stories cannot be checked into boxes" to the end of the piece. Does the speaker's history and cultural identity persist?

Afro-Latina

 learningforjustice.org/classroom-resources/texts/afrolatina

<http://www.acevedowrites.com/poetics>

Text Dependent Questions

1. What does the speaker mean when she says, "My parents' tongue was a gift."

She means that their Spanish language was something special and something to be proud of, not something to be embarrassed by.

2. What caused the speaker to feel humiliated? How would she "lessen the humiliation"?

She was embarrassed by her grandmother's colorful clothing and her mother's poor English. To lessen the humiliation, she would make fun of her mother herself, so it didn't hurt as bad when others made fun of her.

3. What is the effect of intertwining Spanish with the English in this piece?

It emphasizes the layered identity of the speaker. She is able to switch back and forth effortlessly, because she thinks/feels/exists in both of these realms effortlessly. It's who she is.

4. Reread from "Our stories cannot be checked into boxes" to the end of the piece. Does the speaker's history and cultural identity persist?

It persists through food, dance, music, clothing and physical features such as hair.

Classroom Discussion Questions for *Breaking Through* by Francisco Jimenez (7th grade)

Chapter 1 -- "Forced Out"

1. Why does Francisco say that he was constantly afraid between the ages of four and fourteen?
2. What was the main reason that Francisco did not want to return to Mexico?
3. When Francisco is picked up at school by immigration officials, why is the situation ironic?
4. How do the differing attitudes of Mama and Papa about their deportation and uncertain future show through in their observations of nopales cacti?
5. How does the family travel back to Mexico after reaching the immigration office?
6. Francisco takes a rock from the motel office and then returns it. What does this action tell the reader about his character?
7. Why is it good news for the family when they are granted an immigrant visa?
8. Is it a good decision to send Roberto (a high school student) and Francisco (a middle school student) back to Santa Maria to live and work by themselves? Why or why not? Do you think this situation still happens today?
9. Why does Francisco cry after he boards the bus and sees a little boy on his father's lap?

Chapter 2 -- "Home Alone"

1. What is a bedpan? Why does the family have to use one at night?
2. Francisco and Roberto wake up early to do household chores every morning before going to school. What does this tell you about their character?
3. Roberto loses his job as a janitor at the school, which forces the brothers to leave school and return to the fields. Why do both brothers see this as a hopeless turn of events?
4. When Roberto and Francisco are invited out to dinner, why is this an important and somewhat stressful event? How is this occasion different for them than it is for you?
5. After Roberto gets his job back cleaning the school, what is the daily routine like for the Jimenez brothers? Do you think there are still kids with similar responsibilities and daily lives in Mason today? How does this compare with your responsibilities and daily life?

Chapter 3 -- "Stepping Out"

1. How does school help Francisco deal with his loneliness?
2. In what ways do Francisco and Roberto try to live up to their father's saying "If you respect others, they will respect you"?
3. What does his Elvis impersonation tell the reader about Francisco's personality?
4. What does Francisco do at his first dance to make sure that he and his brother will be respected the next time they go?
5. Why does Francisco feel uncomfortable when his friend Peggy wants to show him her room?
6. Why do you think Peggy starts to ignore and avoid Francisco after she has asked him to walk her home from school? What is Francisco's reaction to her ostracism?

Chapter 4 -- "Together Again"

1. Why do you think that Roberto and Francisco spend so much time fixing up and decorating their home before their family arrives?
2. What are the religious beliefs of the Jimenez family? Why is faith so important to them?

Chapter 5 -- "Back to the Fields"

1. Why does Papa decide to become a sharecropper? How does this decision ultimately affect him? How does it affect his family?
2. Why does Papa not want Roberto and Francisco to attend the dance?

Chapter 6 -- "Saint Christopher Medal"

1. Francisco writes a creative journal about a fictitious journey through the solar system and earns a grade of A+. Why is this a particularly amazing accomplishment?
2. What does Papa's gift of a used religious medal tell about his feelings toward Francisco?
3. Why do you think that Francisco's parents do not attend his graduation?

Chapter 7 -- "Summer Skirmishes"

1. Why does the Jimenez family take such pains to prepare for Mr. Ito's weekly visit? What are the different ways that they try to demonstrate respect for him?
2. Based on his paycheck, how many hours per day does Papa usually work, typically working at least 6 days a week? Do you think that his wage of \$1 per hour is reasonable for picking

strawberries? What wage would you require per hour to pick strawberries all day long?

3. Why does Mr. Ito not tell Papa about Francisco's behavior in the fields?
4. What does the goldfish-selling venture tell you about the character of the Jimenez children?
5. Why is it a big deal that Papa cuts Francisco's hair?

Chapter 8 -- "Becoming a Saint"

1. What assumptions does the school counselor, Mr. Kinkade, first make about Francisco and his plans for the future? Do you think Mr. Kinkade is justified in his thinking? Why or why not?
2. Unlike his classmates, why is Francisco so excited about having to take a shower in gym class?
3. What does Francisco's reaction to the social studies movie tell about his character?
4. What is Francisco's overall attitude toward high school? How does his attitude compare with the attitude of high school students that you know?

Chapter 9 -- "If the Shoe Fits"

1. How does having his gym shoes lost or stolen affect Francisco? How does the loss affect his family? If you were to lose your gym shoes, would you be affected similarly?
2. Compared with other chapters in this book, "If the Shoe Fits" is one of the shortest. Why do you think the author decided to include it?

Chapter 10 -- "A Promotion"

1. What are the reasons for Papa's nearly constant bad mood? Does he deserve to feel this way? Why or why not?
2. Why do you think Mike Nevel hires Roberto and Francisco on the spot?
3. Why does Francisco not touch the cookies until the sign says, "Janitor, please help yourself"?

Chapter 11 -- "A Typing Machine"

1. What need does Mr. Twitchel see in Francisco that causes him to sell him the typewriter and new ribbon for five dollars instead of just giving it to him? Why is this observation important?

Chapter 12 -- "Making Connections"

1. What are some of the reasons that Francisco has difficulty with reading and writing in English, besides the fact that his native language is Spanish?
2. Why do you think his English teacher, Miss Bell, gives Francisco the novel *The Grapes of Wrath* to read?
3. Have you ever had the same experience as Francisco connecting with a book? What exactly do you think he learned from reading this book?

Chapter 13 -- "Broken Heart"

1. What does this story tell you about stereotyping and prejudice?
2. Does rejection like Roberto experiences still happen today, more than fifty years later? Why or why not?

Chapter 14 -- "Behind the Wheel"

1. Why does Roberto allow Francisco to ride with him to school in his car?
2. Why do you think the two brothers are always helping each other, even at great personal sacrifice? Do you have a similar relationship with your siblings or know someone who does? What is the driving force behind such a close relationship?

Chapter 15 -- "Turning a Page"

1. What are the things that Francisco worries about with regard to college? Do you think these are the same things that other kids worried about then? What do you think you will worry about as you prepare for college?
2. Why is this chapter called "Turning a Page"? Is Francisco only talking about turning the page in the American History book, or could he be describing something else entirely?

Chapter 16 -- "Los Santitos"

1. How is Francisco's suggestion to collect food donations for needy families ironic?
2. What does this decision tell you about how Francisco views his family's situation now?

Chapter 17 -- "Choosing Sides"

1. Francisco describes his surprise when he reads that some voters rejected Kennedy because he was Catholic. Do similar situations still happen today in politics? Give some examples.
2. What is Papa's explanation for why people are prejudiced? Do you think this is true?

Chapter 18 -- "Junior Scandals"

1. What skills and abilities does Francisco show in his decision to participate in the Junior Scandals variety show? Why do you think he decides to perform?

Listen and watch a modern mariachi presentation of “Cielito Lindo”

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yjJDv1IeF8I>

Or to see an old performance by Pedro Infante (mentioned on page 130),

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?NR=1&v=ObDWtMQ93ws>

Chapter 19 -- “Running for Office”

1. Why is it important that Francisco meets Paul Tagaki?
2. How would you describe Francisco’s way of campaigning and dealing with his competition in the school election? Do you think this a good strategy? Why or why not?

Chapter 20 -- “A New Life”

1. Why does Roberto ask his father’s blessing before getting engaged?
2. Why did the author call this chapter “A New Life?” Is he only referring to Roberto, or are there other people with new lives?
3. How does Roberto’s decision to marry affect the lives of his entire family?

Chapter 21 -- “A Test of Faith”

1. How do you think Francisco contracted mononucleosis, since he did not have a girlfriend? Read more about the disease: <http://kidshealth.org/teen/infections/common/mononucleosis.html>
2. Why is this disease particularly bad for Francisco and his family?
3. When problems confront the Jimenez family, what do they always rely on to solve them? Why do you think this is their ultimate solution?

Chapter 22 -- “A Fumble”

1. Why is Francisco invited to the Rotary Club luncheon? Read more about Rotary and how youth can become involved at <http://www.rotary.org>.
2. What do you think of Francisco’s reaction when asked to give an impromptu speech? Do you think this reaction is to be expected from him? Why or why not?

Chapter 23 -- “A Breakthrough”

1. Why do you think Mr. Penney goes to extraordinary lengths to help Francisco to apply for college and scholarships?

2. Why do you think Papa reacts to Francisco's desire for college as he does? What are the emotions that Papa must be feeling?

4. Why does Mr. Penney send the Spanish teacher to speak with Papa?

Chapter 24 -- "Graduation Day"

1. Why is it such a big decision for Francisco to apply for a college loan of \$1,000?

2. Why do you think Papa always gets sick on graduation day? Is he really ill or pretending?

3. Papa did not attend Roberto's high school graduation but does attend Francisco's ceremony. This is the first event that he has ever attended. Why do you think he decided to go?

Chapter 25 -- "Still Moving"

1. How does his entire family help Francisco to go off to college successfully?

2. As Francisco drives away toward college in Santa Clara, he sees other migrant workers in the strawberry fields. "I felt sad, then angry" (p. 191). Why do you think Francisco feels sadness and anger on what should be one of the happiest days of his life?

3. Why do you think Mama dreams of living in a house?

"A Note from the Author" and pictures

1. Francisco Jimenez writes that he wrote *Breaking Through* "to voice the experiences of many children and young adults who confront numerous obstacles in their efforts to 'break through....and become butterflies'" (p. 195). What does he mean by "break through....and become butterflies?"

2. Do you think there are families today who face the same challenges as those encountering the Jimenez family? Are there kids in Mason who face the same challenges as Francisco? Why or why not? If so, what are ways that others can help them to "break through?"

2. In all the photographs included, the people are smiling and look happy. Why do you think the author chose these pictures to bring the book to life?

In Solidarity

At the beginning of the third quarter of my senior year, I made a decision with which my mother strongly disagreed and which affected my midterm grade in my ethics class: I decided to support César Chávez's efforts to unionize farm workers. "We'll lose our jobs; we'll get fired if we go on strike, *mijo*," my mother told me. "Who's going to feed our family while we're out of work?" I explained to her that by workers' going on strike and joining the National Farm Worker's Association growers would be forced to provide us and other farm workers with unemployment insurance and better working conditions and guarantee a minimum wage. "Ay, *mijo*, *piénsalo bien*," she said. Think about it carefully. "Growers have all the power. Poor farm workers like us don't have a chance against them." I stopped arguing with her out of respect. Besides, I understood her fears.

I became more convinced I had made the right decision after attending a forum on the issue of farm workers that took place at noon on Monday, April 4, in front of the student union. Father Tenant Wright, a young and energetic

Jesuit priest who organized the event, stood in the middle of a small group of students and asked, "Is it necessary to form a union to represent farm labor?" He looked around and shouted the same question, beckoning students who were passing by to join the growing crowd. As the gathering grew, I spotted Laura several feet away. I elbowed my way through and stood next to her. I was glad she was there.

Father Wright explained the purpose of the forum. He said that the Delano grape strike began seven months before when farm workers in Delano walked off the farms of table grape growers, demanding wages on a level with the federal minimum wage. The strike was being led by César Chávez and Dolores Huerta of the National Farm Workers Association. They were asking farm workers to join their labor union. "Again, is this necessary?" Father Wright asked. "To help us answer this question, I have invited two people to speak to this issue."

Father Wright introduced Frank Bergon, the son of a grower, who presented the growers' position, and Les Grube, an egg distributor and longtime activist in Catholic welfare programs, who defended the NFWA's viewpoint. Bergon argued that the farm laborers were already well paid and that the number of strikers was small.

"How can he say that?" I whispered, rolling my eyes and shaking my head. Farm laborers were paid eighty-five cents an hour and sometimes less.

"Why don't you say something?" Laura whispered.

I felt my heart pounding and a fire in my stomach, but I was still shy about speaking out in groups. I knew I was disappointing Laura and wished I had not been with her at that moment. She excused herself and left for class.

After the debate I picked up a flyer from the NFWA representative and hurried back to my room to prepare for my ethics class that afternoon. I completed the reading assignment in our textbook *Right and Reason* and then read the flyer. It was an open invitation from César Chávez to join him on a march to Sacramento.

On March 17, 1966, the National Farm Workers Association will begin a 300-mile "Peregrinación" from Delano to Sacramento. It is a march of farm workers. It will begin in Delano and will involve workers from all parts of the state. . . .It will be a pilgrimage by members of all races and religions. In order to be successful, we will need the help of our friends around the state and nation. We ask you to . . . join us for a day on the march and especially for the last day in Sacramento. Although this is primarily a march of farm workers, it is important that all who have a concern for social justice and human dignity demonstrate their unity with us.

I set the flyer down on my desk and paced the floor, thinking about whether or not I should join the march. I had learned in Sodality and my religion and philosophy classes

that it was a moral obligation to fight for social justice. Father Shanks had told us that leaders must have a strong sense of personal responsibility and give something of themselves to make a difference in society. In my mind joining the march was the right thing to do, but I also felt this in my heart as I thought of my family and other migrant laborers working in the fields from dawn to dusk, seven days a week, living in army tents and suffering hunger during cold winter months when there was no work. I remembered my mother weeping and praying for Torito, who was dying, and we had no money to take him to the doctor. I remembered my father agonizing from constant back pain and reaching out to me when I found him alone in the storage shed. I remembered Gabriel, a *bracero*, being fired because he refused to tie a rope around his waist and pull a plow like an ox. I heard his words in my head: "*Díaz me puede correr. Pero no puede forzarme a hacer lo que no es justo. El no puede quitarme la dignidad. Eso no lo puede hacer.*" Díaz can fire me. But he can't force me to do what isn't right. He can't take away my dignity. That he can't do.

A wave of sadness and anger came over me. I had to join the pilgrimage to Sacramento.

At the end of my ethics class, I told Father Charles McQuillan, the instructor, that I would be missing class on Thursday because I had decided to join the march to Sacramento. He reminded me that we had an exam on that day. "I am assuming you thought about this carefully and

know the consequences,” he said, adjusting his Roman collar.

“Yes. But I was hoping you would let me make up the test.”

“You know I don’t give makeups.”

“Yes, I know, but . . . ”

“So, is sacrificing your grade to go on the march worth it?” he asked, looking me in the eye.

I didn’t hesitate. “It is.”

“Then go ahead. Sometimes we have to make sacrifices for what we believe in.” He smiled and shook my hand.

I thanked him and headed to see Jerry McGrath, the dean of students, who had hired me again that year to be a prefect. I needed his approval to leave campus. I was glad that he was already aware of the march and supported it. He authorized my request. I then asked Tim Taormina, my roommate with whom I shared prefect responsibilities, if he would cover for me. Tim agreed to take over my duties in exchange for my standing in for him the following two weekends.

Three days before Easter, on Holy Thursday morning, April 7, at five a.m., Jerry McGrath drove four other students and me in an eight-passenger van for an hour and a half until we spotted the tail end of the pilgrimage. It was a long, thin, serpentine line inching its way along the flat Central Valley on Highway 99, near the city of Lodi. He dropped us off and we joined the peaceful journey to Sacramento. I hurried toward the front of the procession, leaving my schoolmates behind.

Several feet in front of me walked César Chávez. He was flanked by farm workers carrying the American flag, the Mexican flag, the flag from the Philippines, and a large banner of the Virgen de Guadalupe. Excited to see him, I tried to bypass other marchers to get closer, but one of the monitors stopped me and asked me to fall back in line. I ended up behind a young man who wore shorts, a white T-shirt, a Giants cap, and a red armband with an Aztec black eagle. I looked behind me and saw an older man who reminded me of my father. His face and hands were weather-beaten. He wore khaki pants, a long-sleeve shirt, and a sweat-stained cap. In each hand he carried a *huelga*, a flag. When I smiled at him, he stretched out his arm to hand me one of his strike flags.

The blazing sun hung above the pale blue sky. I could feel the blistering asphalt on the bottoms of my tired feet as we continued walking by hundreds of acres of green fields that stretched for miles on either side of Highway 99. My family had traveled this same road every year, for nine years, looking for work during the grape and cotton seasons. We had passed through Tulare, Visalia, Selma, Fowler, Parlier, and Fresno. At a distance, I spotted a yellow crop-duster sweeping over the fields, leaving a trail of gray clouds behind. It reminded me of picking strawberries and having to crouch down as crop-dusters flew above our heads and sprayed the fields with chemicals that caused our eyes to burn and water for days. Today I felt anger and pity

when I saw farm workers bent over thinning sugar beets with the same type of short-handle hoes that Roberto and I used when we thinned lettuce in Santa Maria. I could feel their back pain from stooping all day. The farm workers slowly straightened up and watched us. "*Vénganse con nosotros,*" one of the organizers yelled out, trying to persuade them to join the march. The farm workers waved and continued working. *They must be afraid, like my mother, to lose their jobs,* I thought.

As passersby honked their car horns and waved, I smiled and raised my flag. One pickup driver flipped us off and yelled out the window, "Go back to Mexico!"

What an idiot, I thought, fuming inside. Along the way, local supporters joined us for a while; others offered us rice and bean tacos and water for lunch.

That night we gathered outside of Galt, a small town where the organizers had planned a program for us. They passed out flyers to residents, asking them to boycott table grapes and all Schenley products until Schenley recognized the National Farm Workers Association. We were given copies of "El Plan de Delano," which described the purpose for the march to Sacramento. We chanted "*Sí se puede.*" Yes we can. We sang songs like "De Colores." Luis Valdez, a stocky and vigorous young man with jet black hair and a Zapata-style mustache, jumped onto a makeshift wooden platform and began reading "El Plan de Delano" in a deep and powerful voice.

This is the beginning of a social movement in fact and not in pronouncements. We seek our basic, God-given rights as human beings. Because we have suffered—and are not afraid to suffer—in order to survive, we are ready to give up everything, even our lives, in our fight for social justice. We shall do it without violence because that is our destiny . . .

We seek, and have, the support of the Church in what we do. At the head of the Pilgrimage we carry LA VIRGEN DE LA GUADALUPE because she is ours, all ours, Patroness of the Mexican people. We also carry the Sacred Cross and the Star of David because we are not sectarians, and because we ask the help and prayers of all religions. All men are brothers, sons of the same God . . .

Our men, women, and children have suffered not only the basic brutality of stoop labor, and the most obvious injustices of the system; they have also suffered the desperation of knowing that the system caters to the greed of callous men and not to our needs. Now we will suffer for the purpose of ending the poverty, the misery, and the injustice, with the hope that our children will not be exploited as we have been . . .

We shall unite. We have learned the meaning of UNITY. We know why these United States are just that—united. The strength of the poor is also in union. We know that the poverty of the Mexican or Filipino

worker in California is the same as that of all farm workers across the country, the Negroes and poor whites, the Puerto Ricans, Japanese, and Arabians; in short, all of the races that comprise the oppressed minorities of the United States. The majority of the people on our Pilgrimage are of Mexican descent, but the triumph of our race depends on a national association of all farm workers . . .

We shall strike . . . We want to be equal with all the working men in the nation; we want a just wage, better working conditions, a decent future for our children. To those who oppose us . . . we say that we are going to continue fighting until we die, or we win. WE SHALL OVERCOME.

The time has come for the liberation of the poor farm worker.

History is on our side.

MAY THE STRIKE GO ON!

¡VIVA LA CAUSA!

¡VIVA LA HUELGA!

“*Viva la causa! Viva la huelga!*” we all shouted. Hurray for the cause. Hurray for the strike. I felt a wave of energy I had never experienced before. When César Chávez took the stage, we quieted down. He thanked us for our support and said, “If you are outraged at conditions, then you cannot possibly be free or happy until you devote all your time to chang-

ing them and do nothing but that. Fighting for social justice, it seems to me, is one of the profoundest ways in which men can say yes to human dignity, and that really means sacrifice. The best source of power, the best source of hope, is straight from you, the people. The boycott is not just grapes and lettuce. The boycott is essentially people, essentially people's concern for people." His words about sacrificing and caring for others echoed the ideas I had learned in Sodality and in my ethics class. They touched me and gave me courage.

That evening we were hosted by local families whose homes were like many of the places my family had lived in: small farm workers' cabins with no electricity or running water. Some marchers slept outside on the grass, others underneath trees.

On Easter Sunday thousands of us entered Sacramento. We swarmed the capitol steps, where César Chávez announced that Schenley had agreed to recognize the union. We all clapped and shouted with joy "*¡Sí se puede!*" for several minutes. After thanking the unions, the church, and all the students and civil rights workers who had helped win this one victory, César Chávez told us: "*Es bueno recordar que debe haber valor, pero también que, en la victoria, debe haber humildad.*" It is well to remember there must be courage, but also, that in victory there must be humility.

As he continued speaking, I looked at the banner of the Virgen de Guadalupe and felt deeply the suffering and pain of migrant workers. *What can and should I do in my life to help them?* I asked myself. I did not have the answer yet.

Breaking Through – Discussion – Speed Dating

1. How different would this book be if it were about migrant farm workers of Mexican descent today? (The book is about events that occurred approx. 65 years ago).
2. How would these stories be different if they were told from the eyes of the father in the story? From one of Francisco's teachers? From one of the landowners?
3. If you are an immigrant to this country how was Professor Jiménez's life story similar or different than your own story? If you were born in this country, how has your life or your family's been similar to or different from the Jiménez family?
4. There is great controversy in many communities about "English - only" education. What are the arguments about it? Who is making the arguments? Who has power in these arguments and how are they using this power? What do you think about the "English - only" debate?
5. This book is for adults and children. If you were giving this book as a gift to a child what would you want the child to know about the book and how young a child would you give this book to?
6. Jimenez talks about being given *The Grapes of Wrath* as a teenager and realizing it was the first book he had read to which he could relate. What are the stories of your cultural heritage and when did you read them? What stories are the children in your community being asked to read and does it relate to their cultural heritage?
7. What times have there been in your life when you have had a Breaking Through experience?
8. What teachers made an impact in your life and why?
9. What do you still wish to know more about and will explore on your own?
10. What did you like most and least about the book?
11. **Watch the trailer for the film *Unbroken Sky*. If you were in charge of creating a film based on *Breaking Through* what two scenes/events would you be sure to include? Why?**

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11. **Watch the trailer for the film *The Unbroken Sky*. If you were in charge of creating a film based on *Breaking Through* what two scenes/events would you be sure to include? Why?**

Breaking Through Ch. 8-12

Chapter 8 -- "Becoming a Saint"

1. What assumptions does the school counselor, Mr. Kinkade, first make about Francisco and his plans for the future? Do you think Mr. Kinkade is justified in his thinking? Why or why not?
2. Unlike his classmates, why is Francisco so excited about having to take a shower in gym class?
3. What does Francisco's reaction to the social studies movie tell about his character?
4. What is Francisco's overall attitude toward high school? How does his attitude compare with the attitude of high school students that you know?

Chapter 9 -- "If the Shoe Fits"

5. Compared with other chapters in this book, "If the Shoe Fits" is one of the shortest. Why do you think the author decided to include it?

Chapter 10 -- "A Promotion"

6. What are the reasons for Papa's nearly constant bad mood? Does he deserve to feel this way? Why or why not?
7. Why do you think Mike Nevel hires Roberto and Francisco on the spot?
8. Why does Francisco not touch the cookies until the sign says, "Janitor, please help yourself"?

Chapter 11 -- "A Typing Machine"

9. What need does Mr. Twitchel see in Francisco that causes him to sell him the typewriter and new ribbon for five dollars instead of just giving it to him? Why is this observation important?

Chapter 12 -- "Making Connections"

10. What are some of the reasons that Francisco has difficulty with reading and writing in English, besides the fact that his native language is Spanish?
11. Have you ever had the same experience as Francisco connecting with a book? What exactly do you think he learned from reading this book?

CHARACTER RESUME



Imagine that you are a character from your reading, and you are developing your resume to apply for a new job. Based on what you have learned about the character, fill out the resume template below using the guide on the left of the page. Demonstrate your understanding of the character's skills, personality traits, interests, and qualifications in your response using as much detail and support from your reading as possible.

Your Name

Home Address
Email address
Cell Number

Objective

What is the job?

Summary

Give the employer a brief summary of your abilities and characteristics.

Education

College/Training
Name of School
Years Attended

Experience

Job/Volunteer Title
Company Name
Years Worked

Skills

Describe what skills and traits make you qualified for the available job.

Accomplishments

Describe successes you have had or something you have accomplished.

References

Names and contact information for those who would speak highly of you.

Objective

Summary

Education

Experience

Skills

Accomplishments

References

The Hat Project (A Great Project for the End of a Short Story Unit)

davidrickert.com/the-hat-project-a-great-project-for-the-end-of-a-short-story-unit

May 14, 2015

I teach seniors. At the end of the year it can be difficult to engage them in anything academically, especially writing papers, even in AP Lit. Therefore, I like projects that fool them into demonstrating their understanding of what we've read.

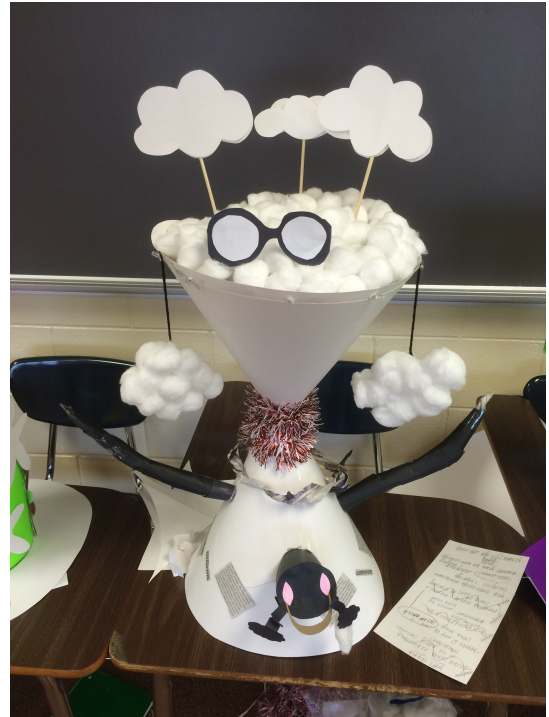
My son did an art class in the winter and the final project was to construct a hat out of posterboard inspired by something they liked. His class went wild with it. Some students created the tallest hat they possibly could, and many of them included moving parts – curly spirals, or doors that opened. When I saw them I thought “This is perfect for a final project for our Flannery O'Connor unit.”

So at the end of our study of Flannery O'Connor my students chose their groups and made hats that were inspired by one of her stories. The requirements were:

1. The hat must look cool.
2. They could only use three pieces of posterboard for the structure of the hat which they had to provide (however, they could decorate it with other stuff.)
3. The hat had to include two tangible items from the story, two intangible items (themes, main ideas) and the moment of clarity that happens in each O'Connor story.
4. The hat had to have a moving part. It could be something that moved when you walked, or something on the hat you could manipulate.
5. The hat had to be wearable.

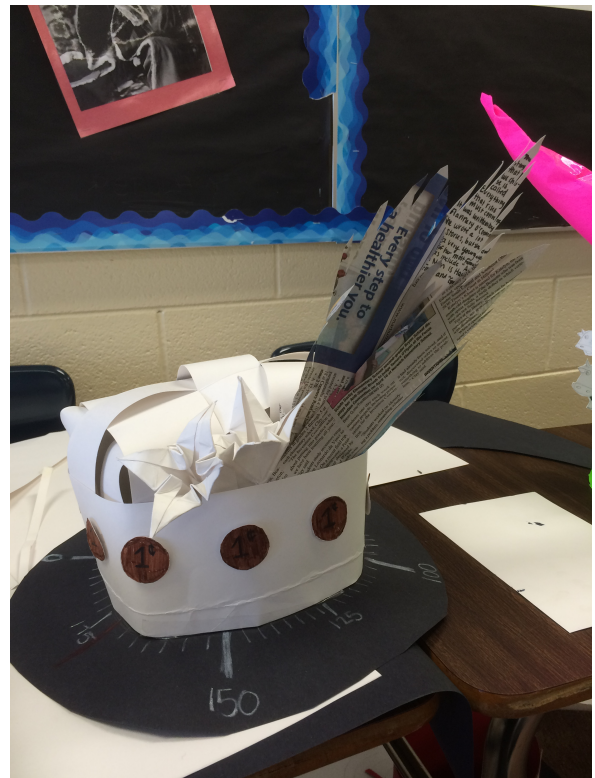
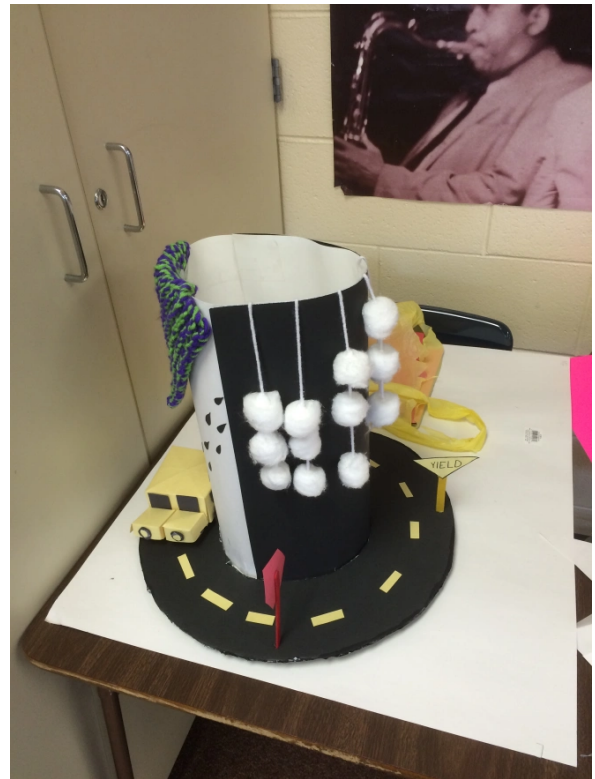
Here are some more hats:

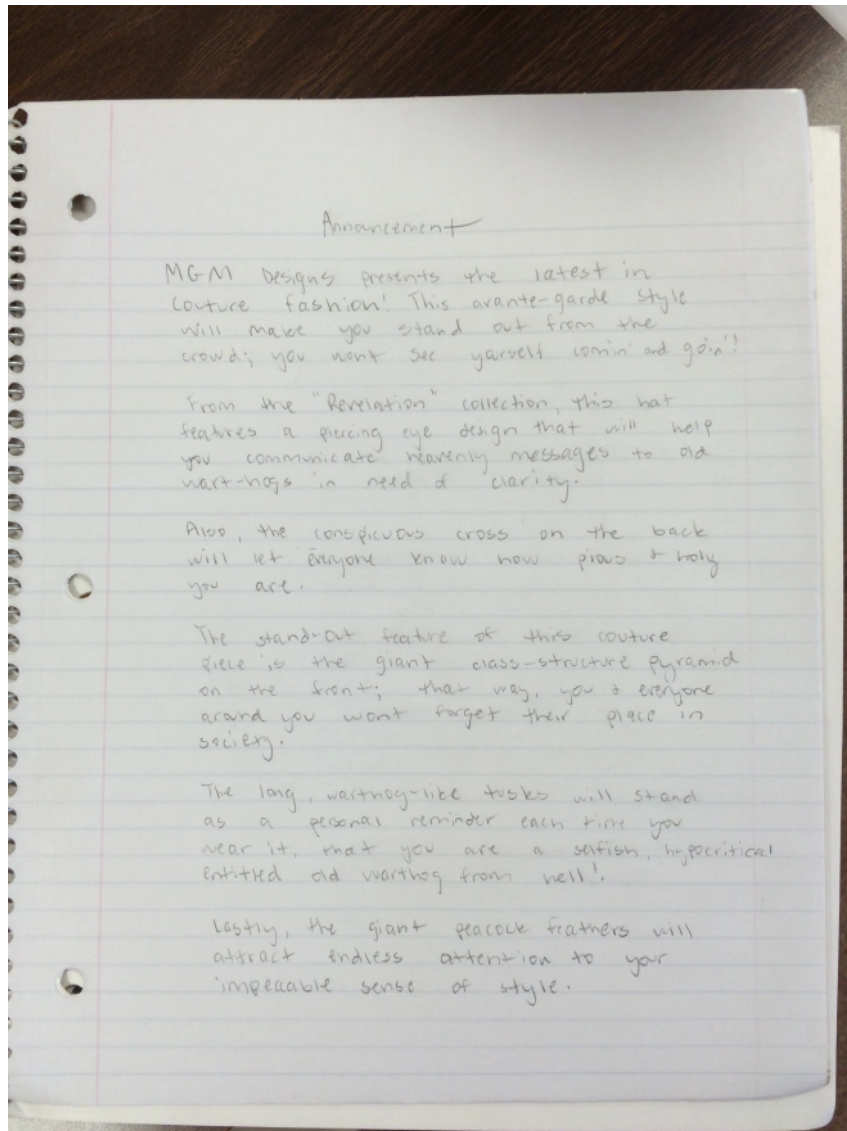
The construction of the hats took about four days of class time – one day of planning and three days of putting it together. Since I teach AP Lit four classes out of the day, I was able to move the desks out of the way and use my room as a studio and move my freshman class to



another room for four days.

At the end we had a fashion show. Someone from the group had to model the hat by walking down an imaginary runway in the classroom (one of my students made a CD of appropriate runway music.) Another member of the group had to sell the hat by describing what was on it like this:





Announcement

MGM Designs presents the latest in
Couture fashion! This avante-garde style
will make you stand out from the
crowd; you won't see yourself comin' ad goin'!

From the "Revelation" collection, this hat
features a piercing eye design that will help
you communicate heavenly messages to old
wart-hogs in need of clarity.

Also, the conspicuous cross on the back
will let everyone know how pious & holy
you are.

The stand-out feature of this couture
piece is the giant class-structure pyramid
on the front; that way, you & everyone
around you won't forget their place in
society.

The long, wart-hog-like tusks will stand
as a personal reminder each time you
wear it, that you are a selfish, hypocritical
entitled old wart-hog from hell!

Lastly, the giant peacock feathers will
attract endless attention to your
impeccable sense of style.

I would encourage others to do this project for other stories or novels. The kids were definitely engaged and had to use serious problem solving skills.

The author of this article is David Rickert, who leads parallel lives as a cartoonist and teacher. When not creating comics out of thin air, David teaches high school English Language Arts in Columbus, Ohio. His witty and engaging cartoons turn abstract and complicated concepts into concrete and concise images to embed content into our long term memories. Let's face it: he makes boring topics entertaining. Check out his Grammar Comics and more resources to bring life to your ELA instruction at his [store](#).

Exploring Cultural Identity Through Literature

Exploring the Cultural Identities of Students and Book Characters with Identity Intersections

Janine M. Schall

As a professor of undergraduate and graduate children's literature courses, I have always encouraged my students to read global and multicultural literature. I believe it is important for students to experience the breadth and variety of available literature and to explore new cultures. When books are set in unfamiliar cultures, however, some readers have difficulty understanding the culturally driven behaviors and motivations of characters. It is easy for readers who do not understand how culture shapes behavior within a particular cultural setting to misinterpret the actions, beliefs and values of characters and how the characters interact with others within that setting.

Many students have simplistic understandings of culture and cultural identity, which leads to essentialized expectations of human behavior as people reduce the complexity of what it means to be human to labels and stereotypes. When readers approach multicultural or global literature with such a limited set of labels and understandings, it is easy to misconstrue the reasons characters act in the ways that they do. Instead of characters' actions making sense within their cultural setting, readers may view their actions as weird, exotic, or wrong.

Rather than being essentialized and simple, culture and the cultural identities of people living within a culture are hybrid, interrelated, and constantly changing. Every person participates in a number of different cultural groups, which wax and wane in importance depending on time, location, and context.

Identity Intersections

One way I have encouraged readers to explore the cultural backgrounds and cultural identities of book characters is through a learning engagement that uses identity intersections. An identity intersection (Foss, 2002) is a graphic representation of interrelated and interconnected aspects of one person's cultural identity (see Figure 1). The intersection identifies the cultural groups that a person claims affiliation with and indicates how those cultural groups interact to influence the way that person lives their life. Depending on how it is used, this learning engagement can help students recognize the importance of their own cultural identities to how they live their lives and the influence of cultural identities on how book characters live their lives.

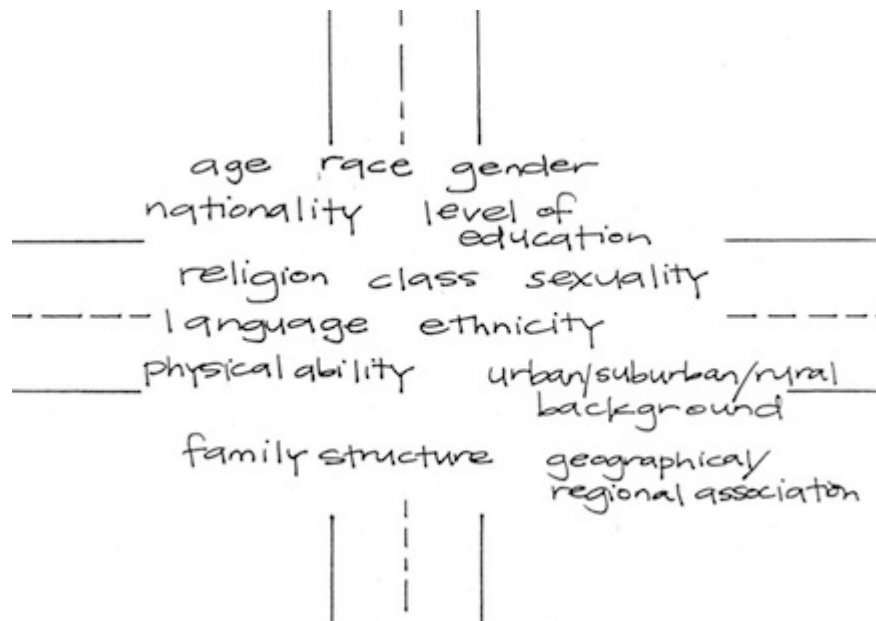


Figure 1. Identity Intersection format.

Identity intersections are created when one carefully considers how different aspects of a person’s cultural identity have shaped her/his life. This includes membership in easily recognized cultural groups based on race, ethnicity, religion, language, socioeconomic status and gender, but also other types of group membership such as geographic region, education level, physical ability, and family. Although the identity intersection begins with the format developed by Foss (2002), students are encouraged to add or remove any aspects that they perceive as important or unimportant to the cultural identities under examination. Students often choose to add memberships in groups based on professions and hobbies to their identity intersections.

Once students have decided which aspects belong on their identity intersections, they think about the influence each aspect has had on their lives or the life of a book character. Each aspect of cultural identity may be more or less important at different points in life or in different contexts. For example, Beth, a recently married female student, talked about how both her perception of herself as a woman and the way other people treat her have changed since her marriage. She reported that her gender had gained a more prominent role in her life as she and her husband were figuring out their roles in the marriage and as she was beginning to think about having children.



Students also consider how various aspects of their cultural identities are connected. Aspects of cultural identity are interrelated and influence each other. For example, after reading the realistic fiction novel *La Línea* by Ann Jaramillo (2008), one small group created an identity intersection for the character of Elena. They discussed how her fierce independence had been fostered by her family structure, the absence of her parents who had migrated to the United States, and the guidance of her loving grandmother.

Students create a graphic representation of the cultural identities in an identity intersection. Some students choose to use the same format as Foss’ original identity intersection, but I encourage them to emphasize perceived importance and interrelatedness through the way they organize aspects, and how they use size, color and font. Aspects that are perceived as most important can be emphasized by making them larger than less important aspects. They may also be placed in such a way as to show their importance, perhaps by putting highly important aspects at

the top of the identity intersection or by placing them at the center and arranging other aspects around them. Connections between aspects can also be shown, for example, by writing connected aspects on the same line or in the same color.

Finally, students reflect on their work through writing or discussion. Like many learning engagements, an identity intersection can be a rote formulaic assignment if students are merely labeling aspects. The power of the identity intersection as a learning tool is in how it supports thinking about culture and cultural identities. Opportunities for reflection and thought should be woven throughout this engagement.

Beginning with an Exploration of Students' Own Cultural Identities

Before we begin using identity intersections to examine book characters, we examine our own cultural identities. We do this so that students have an example of what kind of thinking is expected in this engagement, but also because I believe that students need to understand the role culture plays in their own lives in order to understand how important it is for others. Many students, particularly those from white, middle-class American settings, are not accustomed to thinking about themselves in this way. They believe strongly that the way they live their lives is an individual choice and the idea that membership in various cultural groups influences their choices is a difficult concept for them to grapple with. Because of this, as we begin working with identity intersections students are reading professional articles about identity and exploring children's literature related to the theme of identity. Modeling my own identity intersection has also been extremely important. I introduce this engagement by creating my identity intersection on the projector and talking about how each aspect shown on the intersection influences how I live my life. Next, students create their own. Sometimes this is done in class; other times it is a homework assignment. When done as a class assignment, students have time to talk about whatever parts of their identity intersection they'd like to share. When done as a homework assignment, students write a 1-2 page reflection as part of the assignment.

The two examples below are from identity intersections completed as homework. Excerpts from their written reflections are below each identity intersection.

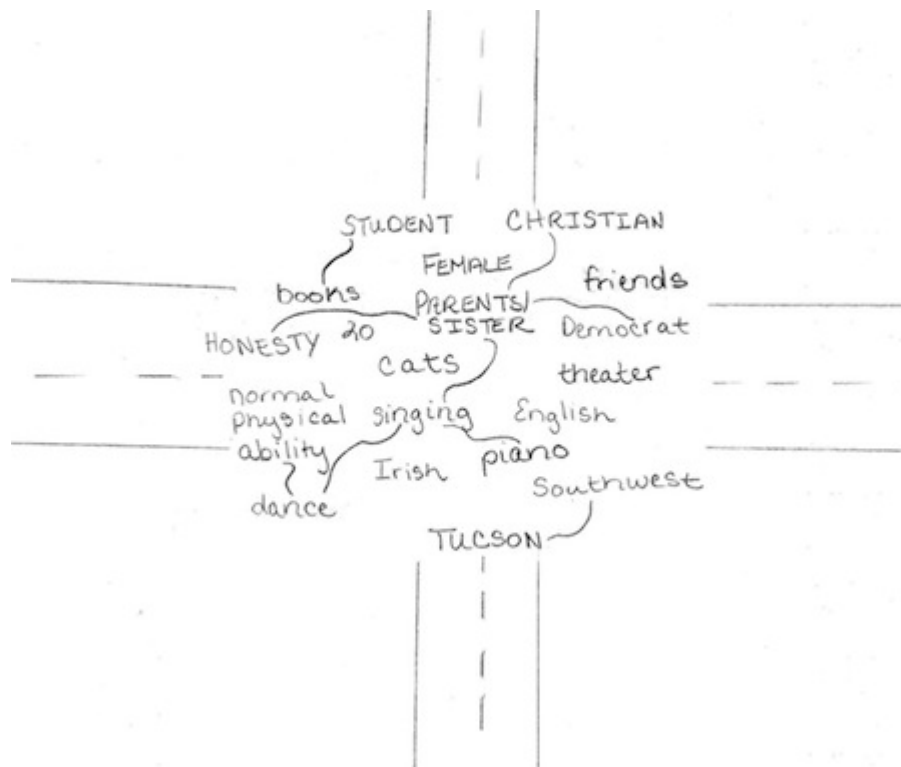


Figure 2. Elena's identity intersection.

In her reflection, Elena described her identity intersection:

For my identity intersection I capitalized the things that I find most contribute to my identity. These were things such as my family, my religion, and my school. I also connected the things which I felt had a strong link. The things that connected were mostly hobbies that I enjoy doing. Although this is my identity now, my identity is continually changing....I do not have a certain system to my identity intersection except that I tried to keep the things closely connected together.

Elena used Foss' basic format and included many of the aspects that appear on that format, including age, gender, religion, language, ethnicity, physical ability, geographic association, and family structure. She also added her political affiliation and hobbies/interests. Elena did not include anything about her race, nationality, or sexuality, most likely because she did not believe that they influenced her life in a significant way.



Figure 3. Mara's identity intersection.

In this excerpt from her reflection, Mara describes her identity intersection:

I made my identity intersection a one-way circle because right now in my life, things are pretty circular. Eventually, when I graduate next May, I will exit onto one of those streets. My life is one-way because I don't believe in going backwards or having regrets. I try to learn from my experiences and grow from them, always moving forward, closer to my dreams.

The words I chose to identify myself are pretty self explanatory. The words closest to the rainbow are those things that are most important to my identity today, especially being a 26 year old female student who is also a recovering alcoholic/addict. The fact that I am Jewish and from New York is significant also since it affects how I relate to people.

Mara chose to modify Foss' format into an organization more meaningful to her life. She included aspects such as age, gender, religion, class, ethnicity, urban background/geographic association and family structure. Like Elena, she added political affiliations. She also added some values and personality traits. Mara chose not to include anything about her race, sexuality, language, or physical ability.

Using Identity Intersections to Explore the Culture and Cultural Identities of Book Characters

After students have had the opportunity to explore their own cultural identities through identity intersections, we use them to examine book characters, particularly for books that portray unfamiliar cultural settings. Students have done identity intersections both as individual reflections and as an engagement to support and extend talk during literature discussions.

In our children's literature course students regularly choose multicultural and global children's literature to read for literature discussions. To prepare for these discussions, students are asked to complete an individual reflection about the book. Students are sometimes assigned the reflection format and other times can choose whether they want to reflect through writing, art, music, graphic organizers, or other methods. These reflections give the students a place to record their initial thinking about the book, which leads to richer, more thoughtful discussions.

Jenny used an identity intersection in her reflection to examine the main character in *Catherine, Called Birdy* (Cushman, 1994), a historical fiction novel set in medieval England. In this book, spirited and independent Birdy struggles with her constrained role as a noble female while also trying to thwart her father's plans of marrying her off to a rich man.

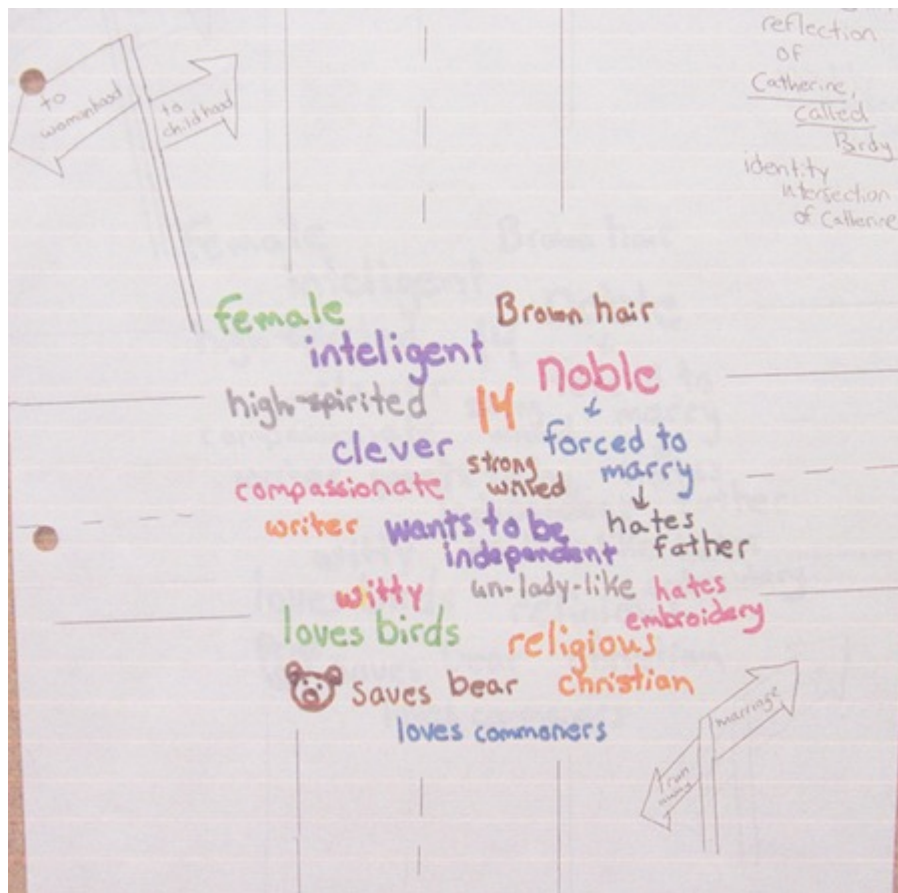


Figure 4. Individual reflection in preparation for a literature discussion over *Catherine, Called Birdy*.

In her identity intersection, Jenny included aspects such as gender, age, class and religion. She also added many personality traits. Jenny brought this identity intersection to her small group literature discussion and shared her work as the group began talking about the book. This gave the group an initial direction. Throughout the discussion, Jenny referred back to the identity intersection, explaining why she included these particular aspects and connecting them with specific events in the book. The group spent a long time talking about what it would be like to be female in medieval England.

At other times we used identity intersections as a group engagement in order to extend and support talk during literature discussions. The small groups always had time to freely discuss the book, but after this open discussion, I

often asked them to focus their discussion on an exploration of a single theme or character. When focusing on characters, the group chose which character to talk about, and created an identity intersection as they examined the character. In the example below, a group discussing *Esperanza Rising* by Pam Muñoz Ryan (2002), focused on the central character of Esperanza. In this historical fiction novel, Esperanza lives a privileged and pampered life in Mexico until her father dies and she and her mother are forced to flee to the United States for a life as migrant workers.

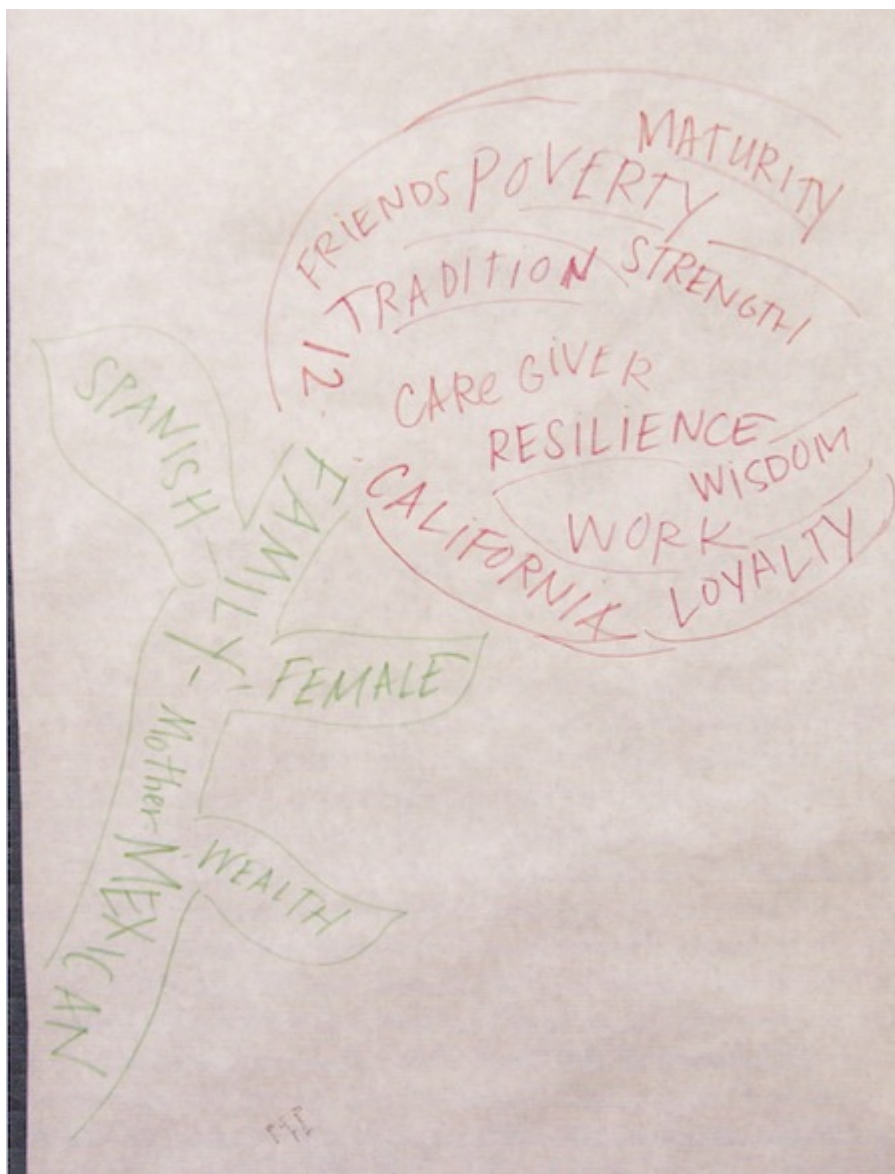
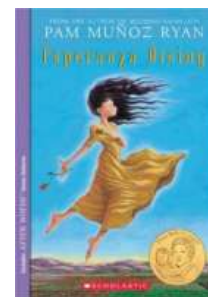


Figure 5. Group identity intersection for the character of Esperanza in *Esperanza Rising*.

At the end of the discussion, the group explained to the class that they organized the aspects of Esperanza's identity into the shape of a rose, because roses were important symbols in the novel. The aspects of her identity that they perceived as foundational to the immature Esperanza at the beginning of the novel were written in green on the stem, and included nationality, language, class, gender and family structure. The group created the bloom of the rose with aspects of Esperanza's mature identity at the end of the novel, including age, class, geographic association, family role, and several personality traits.

Creating identity intersections as a group activity during a literature discussion extends discussion as group members debate what aspects are important to the character and how each aspect affects their lives. Group members tend to return often to the book to find proof for their assertions about the character. Although the focus in this part of the literature discussion is on one specific character, it is common for the discussion to be wide-ranging, touching on other characters, plot, intertextual connections, and connections between the text and group members' lives.

Final Thoughts

There are challenges with using identity intersections. One recurring challenge is simply getting students to grapple with the idea that the way people live their lives is influenced by their membership in various cultural groups. Because dominant American cultures are highly individualistic, many students believe that values, beliefs, and actions are entirely personal choices. Related to this is the difficulty in helping students understand the difference between aspects of cultural identities and personality traits. Students are often more comfortable talking about personality traits and must be encouraged to focus on cultural identities.

It is important to provide students with multiple opportunities to think about cultural identities through class engagements such as identity intersections, discussion, children's and young adult literature, and professional readings. I find that though some students will be unable or unwilling to shift their thinking about cultural identities, using identity intersections several times across a semester will show growth in the complexity of their thinking.

Using identity intersections with undergraduate and graduate students has helped them think about culture and cultural identities in more sophisticated ways. The opportunity to reflect on their own lives has shown them how aspects of their cultural identity encourage certain behaviors or ways of thinking and how membership in particular cultural groups influences how people live their lives.

As a tool for exploring book characters, identity intersections focus and support thinking about cultures that are unfamiliar to the reader. This support, along with the talking, thinking, and learning that students do in relation to global and multicultural literature, adds to the understanding students build and the enjoyment they receive from reading books set in unfamiliar cultures.

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Based on a work at <https://wowlit.org/on-line-publications/stories/storiesiv6/>.

1 2 3 4 5 6

Fly Swatter Game – Ethnic Lit, BT, Literary Theory

1. Black is an example of...	Race
2. This character said, "Have you read The Grapes of Wrath?"	Miss Bell
3. This literary theory analyzes, interprets, or evaluates the inherent features of a text (grammar, syntax, literary devices, etc.)	Formalism
4. This character sold Francisco a typewriter.	Bob Twitchel
5. This character said, "Because you're Mexican! What do you mean?"	Francisco
6. Papa needing to be seen as the provider and decision maker in the Jimenez family.	Machismo
7. This character said, "How about Los Diablitos..."	Papa
8. This character was very passionate about his car and nicknamed it "The Little Stinker."	Roberto
9. This criticism looks at analyzing how the social construction of race and institutionalized racism exist in society and social structures.	Critical Race Theory
10. Panchito having to work to provide for the family instead of attending school activities is an example of...	Familism
11. The person who dated Susan secretly.	Roberto
12. Panchito's very impressive math teacher.	Mr. Coe
13. This criticism looks at how a text approaches ableism.	Critical Disability Studies
14. The idea that your customer service representative is probably South Asian is an example of....	Stereotype.
15. This criticism looks at the reader's reaction to the text.	Reader Response Theory.
16. The sharecropper Papa worked for...	Ito
17. This criticism looks at the influence of dreams in a text.	Psychoanalytic Criticism
18. This character said, "You have a good arm, Panchito."	Ito
19. This character said gave her blessing by saying, "Que Dios los bendiga"	Mama
20. Panchito's main inspiration to become a teacher.	Mr. Lema
21. Who got the disease commonly known as the kissing disease?	Panchito
22. Who was the advisor for Los Santitios?	Mr. Osterveen
23. This is a group one belongs to because of racial, cultural, or national characteristics	Ethnicity
24. Wearing a sombrero on Cinco de Mayo is an example of...	Cultural appropriation.
25. Straightening one's curly hair to better "fit in" with the dominant group is an example of...	Cultural assimilation.

Name: _____

Class: _____

Identity

By Julio Noboa
1973

*In this poem, the speaker imagines a vastly different life. **Skills Focus:** In this lesson, you'll analyze how the author uses word choice and figurative language to develop the meaning of a poem. As you read, take notes on how the speaker describes flowers and weeds.*

[1] Let them be as flowers,
always watered, fed, guarded, admired,
but harnessed to a pot of dirt.

[5] I'd rather be a tall, ugly weed,
clinging on cliffs, like an eagle
wind-wavering above high, jagged rocks.

To have broken through the surface of stone,
to live, to feel exposed to the madness
of the vast, ¹eternal sky.

[10] To be swayed by the breezes of an ancient sea,
carrying my soul, my seed,
beyond the mountains of time or into the abyss² of the bizarre.

I'd rather be unseen, and if
then shunned by everyone,

[15] than to be a pleasant-smelling flower,
growing in clusters ³in the fertile valley,
where they're praised, handled, and plucked
by greedy, human hands.

I'd rather smell of musty, green stench
than of sweet, fragrant lilac.

[20] If I could stand alone, strong and free,
I'd rather be a tall, ugly weed.



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"Identity" from Nosotros Anthology, Revista Chicano-Riqueña by Julio Noboa. Copyright © 1977 by Julio Noboa. Used with permission. "Identidad" translated by Julio Noboa. Copyright © 2017 by Julio Noboa.

1. **Vast (adjective)** huge or enormous
2. a seemingly deep or bottomless opening
3. **Cluster (noun)** a group of things or people close together

Name: _____

Class: _____

Immigrants in Our Own Land

By Jimmy Santiago Baca
1979

Jimmy Santiago Baca (b. 1952) is an American writer of Apache and Chicano descent. This poem describes the experiences of people who leave their homes in search of a better life. As you read, take notes on the speaker's attitude toward dreams.

[1] We are born with dreams in our hearts,
looking for better days ahead.
At the gates we are given new papers,
our old clothes are taken

[5] and we are given overalls like mechanics wear.
We are given shots and doctors ask questions.
Then we gather in another room
where counselors orient¹ us to the new land
we will now live in. We take tests.

[10] Some of us were craftsmen in the old world,
good with our hands and proud of our work.
Others were good with their heads.
They used common sense like scholars
use glasses and books to reach the world.

[15] But most of us didn't finish high school.

The old men who have lived here stare at us,
from deep disturbed eyes, sulking, retreated.
We pass them as they stand around idle,
leaning on shovels and rakes or against walls.

[20] Our expectations are high: in the old world,
they talked about rehabilitation,²
about being able to finish school,
and learning an extra good trade.
But right away we are sent to work as dishwashers,

[25] to work in fields for three cents an hour.
The administration says this is temporary
so we go about our business, blacks with blacks,
poor whites with poor whites,
chicanos and indians³ by themselves.



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-
1. to help someone become familiar with a new place or situation
 2. the process of bringing someone back to a healthy and independent condition after an illness, an injury, substance addiction, or time in prison

[30] The administration says this is right,
no mixing of cultures, let them stay apart,
like in the old neighborhoods we came from.

We came here to get away from false promises,
from dictators in our neighborhoods,
[35] who wore blue suits and broke our doors down
when they wanted, arrested us when they felt like,
swinging clubs and shooting guns as they pleased.
But it's no different here. It's all concentrated.
The doctors don't care, our bodies decay,
[40] our minds deteriorate,⁴ we learn nothing of value.
Our lives don't get better, we go down quick.

My cell is crisscrossed with laundry lines,
my T-shirts, boxer shorts, socks and pants are drying.
Just like it used to be in my neighborhood:
[45] from all the tenements⁵ laundry hung window to window.
Across the way Joey is sticking his hands
through the bars to hand Felipé a cigarette,
men are hollering back and forth cell to cell,
saying their sinks don't work,
[50] or somebody downstairs hollers angrily
about a toilet overflowing,
or that the heaters don't work.

I ask Coyote next door to shoot me over
a little more soap to finish my laundry.
[55] I look down and see new immigrants coming in,
mattresses rolled up and on their shoulders,
new haircuts and brogan boots,⁶
looking around, each with a dream in their heart,
thinking they'll get a chance to change their lives.

[60] But in the end, some will just sit around
talking about how good the old world was.
Some of the younger ones will become gangsters.
Some will die and others will go on living
without a soul, a future, or a reason to live.
[65] Some will make it out of here with hate in their eyes,
but so very few make it out of here as human

-
3. Here, the terms "Chicanos" and "Indians" refer to Mexican American and Native American people.
 4. to become worse over time
 5. an apartment or similar residence
 6. heavy, ankle-high boots

[70] as they came in, they leave wondering what good they are now
as they look at their hands so long away from their tools,
as they look at themselves, so long gone from their families,
so long gone from life itself, so many things have changed.

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Name: _____

Class: _____

Inside Out

By Francisco Jiménez
1997

Francisco Jiménez is a Mexican American writer and professor in Santa Clara, California. His stories are influenced by his experiences working on a migrant labor camp as a child. As you read, take notes on the importance of the caterpillar in the story.

[1] "I remember being hit on the wrists with a twelve-inch ruler because I did not follow directions in class," Roberto answered in a mildly angry tone when I asked him about his first year of school. "But how could I?" he continued, "the teacher gave them in English."

"So what did you do?" I asked, rubbing my wrists.

"I always guessed what the teacher wanted me to do. And when she did not use the ruler on me, I knew I had guessed right," he responded. "Some of the kids made fun of me when I tried to say something in English and got it wrong," he went on. "I had to repeat first grade."



"Untitled" by Nathan Dumlao is licensed under CC0.

I wish I had not asked him, but he was the only one in the family, including Papá and Mamá, who had attended school. I walked away. I did not speak or understand English either, and I already felt anxious. Besides, I was excited about going to school for the first time that following Monday. It was late January and we had just returned, a week before, from Corcoran where my family picked cotton. We settled in "Tent City," a labor camp owned by Sheehey Strawberry Farms located about ten miles east of Santa Maria.

[5] On our first day of school, Roberto and I got up early. I dressed in a pair of overalls, which I hated because they had suspenders, and a flannel checkered shirt, which Mamá had bought at the Goodwill store. As I put on my cap, Roberto reminded me that it was bad manners to wear a hat indoors. I thought of leaving it at home so that I would not make the mistake of forgetting to take it off in class, but I decided to wear it. Papá always wore a cap and I did not feel completely dressed for school without it.

On our way out to catch the school bus, Roberto and I said goodbye to Mamá. Papá had already

left to look for work, either topping carrots or thinning lettuce.¹ Mamá stayed home to take care of Trampita, and to rest because she was expecting another baby.

When the school bus arrived, Roberto and I climbed in and sat together. I took the window seat and, on the way, watched endless rows of lettuce and cauliflower whiz by. The furrows² that came up to the two lane road looked like giant legs running alongside us. The bus made several stops to pick up kids and, with each stop, the noise inside got louder. Some kids were yelling at the top of their lungs. I did not know what they were saying. I was getting a headache. Roberto had his eyes closed and was frowning. I did not disturb him. I figured he was getting a headache too.

By the time we got to Main Street School, the bus was packed. The bus driver parked in front of the red brick building and opened the door. We all poured out. Roberto, who had attended the school the year before, accompanied³ me to the main office where we met the principal, Mr. Sims, a tall, redheaded man with bushy eyebrows and hairy hands. He patiently listened to Roberto who, using the little English he knew, managed to enroll me in the first grade.

Mr. Sims walked me to my classroom. I liked it as soon as I saw it because, unlike our tent, it had wooden floors, electric lights, and heat. It felt cozy. He introduced me to my teacher, Miss Scalapino, who smiled, repeating my name, "Francisco." It was the only word I understood the whole time she and the principal talked. They repeated it each time they glanced at me. After he left, she showed me to my desk, which was at the end of the row of desks closest to the windows. There were no other kids in the room yet.

[10] I sat at my desk and ran my hand over its wooden top. It was full of scratches and dark, almost black, ink spots. I opened the top and inside were a book, a box of crayons, a yellow ruler, a thick pencil, a pair of scissors. To my left, under the windows, was a dark wooden counter the length of the room. On top of it, right next to my desk, was a caterpillar in a large jar. It looked just like the ones I had seen in the fields. It was yellowish green with black bands and it moved very slowly, without making any sound.

I was about to put my hand in the jar to touch the caterpillar when the bell rang. All the kids lined up outside the classroom door and then walked in quietly and took their seats. Some of them looked at me and giggled. Embarrassed and nervous, I looked at the caterpillar in the jar. I did this every time someone looked at me.

Miss Scalapino started speaking to the class and I did not understand a word she was saying. The more she spoke, the more anxious I became. By the end of the day, I was very tired of hearing Miss Scalapino talk because the sounds made no sense to me. I thought that perhaps

1. the process of removing smaller plants to make room for the other plants to grow bigger
2. **Furrow** (*noun*) a deep row or line between plants in a field
3. **Accompany** (*verb*) to go with someone

by paying close attention, I would begin to understand, but I did not. I only got a headache, and that night, when I went to bed, I heard her voice in my head.

For days I got headaches from trying to listen, until I learned a way out. When my head began to hurt, I let my mind wander. Sometimes I imagined myself flying out of the classroom and over the fields where Papá worked and landing next to him and surprising him. But when I daydreamed, I continued to look at the teacher and pretend I was paying attention because Papá told me it was disrespectful⁴ not to pay attention, especially to grownups.

It was easier when Miss Scalapino read to the class from a book with illustrations because I made up my own stories, in Spanish, based on the pictures. She held the book with both hands above her head and walked around the classroom to make sure everyone got a chance to see the pictures, most of which were of animals. I enjoyed looking at them and making up stories, but I wished I understood what she was reading.

[15] In time I learned some of my classmates' names. The one I heard the most and therefore learned first was "Curtis." Curtis was the biggest, strongest, and most popular kid in the class. Everyone wanted to be his friend and to play with him. He was always chosen captain when the kids formed teams. Since I was the smallest kid in the class and did not know English, I was chosen last.

I preferred⁵ to hang around Arthur, one of the boys who knew a little Spanish. During recess, he and I played on the swings and I pretended to be a Mexican movie star, like Jorge Negrete or Pedro Infante, riding a horse and singing the *corridos* we often heard on the car radio. I sang them to Arthur as we swung back and forth, going as high as we could.

But when I spoke to Arthur in Spanish and Miss Scalapino heard me, she said "NO!" with body and soul. Her head turned left and right a hundred times a second and her index finger moved from side to side as fast as a windshield wiper on a rainy day. "English, English," she repeated. Arthur avoided me whenever she was around.

Often during recess I stayed with the caterpillar. Sometimes it was hard to spot him because he blended in with the green leaves and twigs. Every day I brought him leaves from the pepper and cypress trees that grew on the playground.

Just in front of the caterpillar, lying on top of the cabinet, was a picture book of caterpillars and butterflies. I went through it, page by page, studying all the pictures and running my fingers lightly over the caterpillars and the bright wings of the butterflies and the many patterns on them. I knew caterpillars turned into butterflies because Roberto had told me, but I wanted to know more. I was sure information was in the words written underneath each picture in large

-
4. **Disrespectful** (*adjective*) showing a lack of respect, honor, or importance
 5. **Prefer** (*verb*) to like one choice better than all the other choices

black letters. I tried to figure them out by looking at the pictures. I did this so many times that I could close my eyes and see the words, but I could not understand what they meant.

[20] My favorite time in school was when we did art, which was every afternoon, after the teacher had read to us. Since I did not understand Miss Scalapino when she explained the art lessons, she let me do whatever I wanted. I drew all kinds of animals but mostly birds and butterflies. I sketched them in pencil and then colored them using every color in my crayon box. Miss Scalapino even tacked one of my drawings up on the board for everyone to see. After a couple of weeks it disappeared and I did not know how to ask where it had gone.

One cold Thursday morning, during recess, I was the only kid on the playground without a jacket. Mr. Sims must have noticed I was shivering because that afternoon, after school, he took me to his office and pulled out a green jacket from a large cardboard box that was full of used clothes and toys. He handed it to me and gestured for me to try it on. It smelled like graham crackers. I put it on, but it was too big, so he rolled up the sleeves about two inches to make it fit. I took it home and showed it off to my parents. They smiled. I liked it because it was green and it hid my suspenders.

The next day I was on the playground wearing my new jacket and waiting for the first bell to ring when I saw Curtis coming at me like an angry bull. Aiming his head directly at me, and pulling his arms straight back with his hands clenched, he stomped up to me and started yelling. I did not understand him, but I knew it had something to do with the jacket because he began to pull on it, trying to take it off me. Next thing I knew he and I were on the ground wrestling. Kids circled around us. I could hear them yelling Curtis's name and something else. I knew I had no chance, but I stubbornly⁶ held on to my jacket. He pulled on one of the sleeves so hard that it ripped at the shoulder. He pulled on the right pocket and it ripped. Then Miss Scalapino's face appeared above. She pushed Curtis off of me and grabbed me by the back of the collar and picked me up off the ground. It took all the power I had not to cry.

On the way to the classroom Arthur told me that Curtis claimed the jacket was his, that he had lost it at the beginning of the year. He also said that the teacher told Curtis and me that we were being punished. We had to sit on the bench during recess for the rest of the week. I did not see the jacket again. Curtis got it but I never saw him wear it.

For the rest of the day, I could not even pretend I was paying attention to Miss Scalapino, I was so embarrassed. I laid my head on top of my desk and closed my eyes. I kept thinking about what had happened that morning. I wanted to fall asleep and wake up to find it was only a dream. The teacher called my name but I did not answer. I heard her walk up to me. I did not know what to expect. She gently shook me by the shoulders. Again, I did not respond. Miss Scalapino must have thought I was asleep because she left me alone, even when it was time for recess and everyone left the room.

6. **Stubbornly** (*adverb*) to do in a way that shows you will hold firm and not change

[25] Once the room was quiet, I slowly opened my eyes. I had had them closed for so long that the sunlight coming through the windows blinded me. I rubbed my eyes with the back of my hands and then looked to my left at the jar. I looked for the caterpillar but could not see it. Thinking it might be hidden, I put my hand in the jar and lightly stirred the leaves. To my surprise, the caterpillar had spun itself into a cocoon⁷ and had attached itself to a small twig. It looked like a tiny, cotton bulb, just like Roberto had said it would. I gently stroked it with my index finger, picturing it asleep and peaceful.

At the end of the school day, Miss Scalapino gave me a note to take home to my parents. Papá and Mamá did not know how to read, but they did not have to. As soon as they saw my swollen upper lip and the scratches on my left cheek, they knew what the note said. When I told them what happened, they were very upset but relieved that I did not disrespect the teacher.

For the next several days, going to school and facing Miss Scalapino was harder than ever. However, I slowly began to get over what happened that Friday. Once I got used to the routine in school and I picked up some English words, I felt more comfortable in class.

On Wednesday, May 23, a few days before the end of the school year, Miss Scalapino took me by surprise. After we were all sitting down and she had taken role, she called for everyone's attention. I did not understand what she said, but I heard her say my name as she held up a blue ribbon. She then picked up my drawing of the butterfly that had disappeared weeks before and held it up for everyone to see. She walked up to me and handed me the drawing and the silk blue ribbon that had a number one printed on it in gold. I knew then I had received first prize for my drawing. I was so proud I felt like bursting out of my skin. My classmates, including Curtis, stretched their necks to see the ribbon.

That afternoon, during our free period, I went over to check on the caterpillar. I turned the jar around, trying to see the cocoon. It was beginning to crack open. I excitedly cried out, "Look, look," pointing to it. The whole class, like a swarm of bees, rushed over to the counter. Miss Scalapino took the jar and placed it on top of a desk in the middle of the classroom so everyone could see it. For the next several minutes we all stood there watching the butterfly emerge from its cocoon, in slow motion.

[30] At the end of the day, just before the last bell, Miss Scalapino picked up the jar and took the class outside to the playground. She placed the jar on the ground and we all circled around her. I had a hard time seeing over the other kids so, Miss Scalapino called me, and motioned for me to open the jar. I broke through the circle, knelt on the ground, and unscrewed the top. Like magic, the butterfly flew into the air, fluttering its wings up and down.

After school I waited in line for my bus in front of the playground. I proudly carried the blue ribbon in my right hand and the drawing in the other. Arthur and Curtis came up and stood

7. **Cocoon** (*noun*) a protective home for when a caterpillar changes into a butterfly

behind me to wait for their bus. Curtis motioned for me to show him the drawing again. I held it up so he could see it.

"He really likes it, Francisco," Arthur said to me in Spanish.

"¿Cómo se dice 'es tuyo' en inglés?"⁸ I asked.

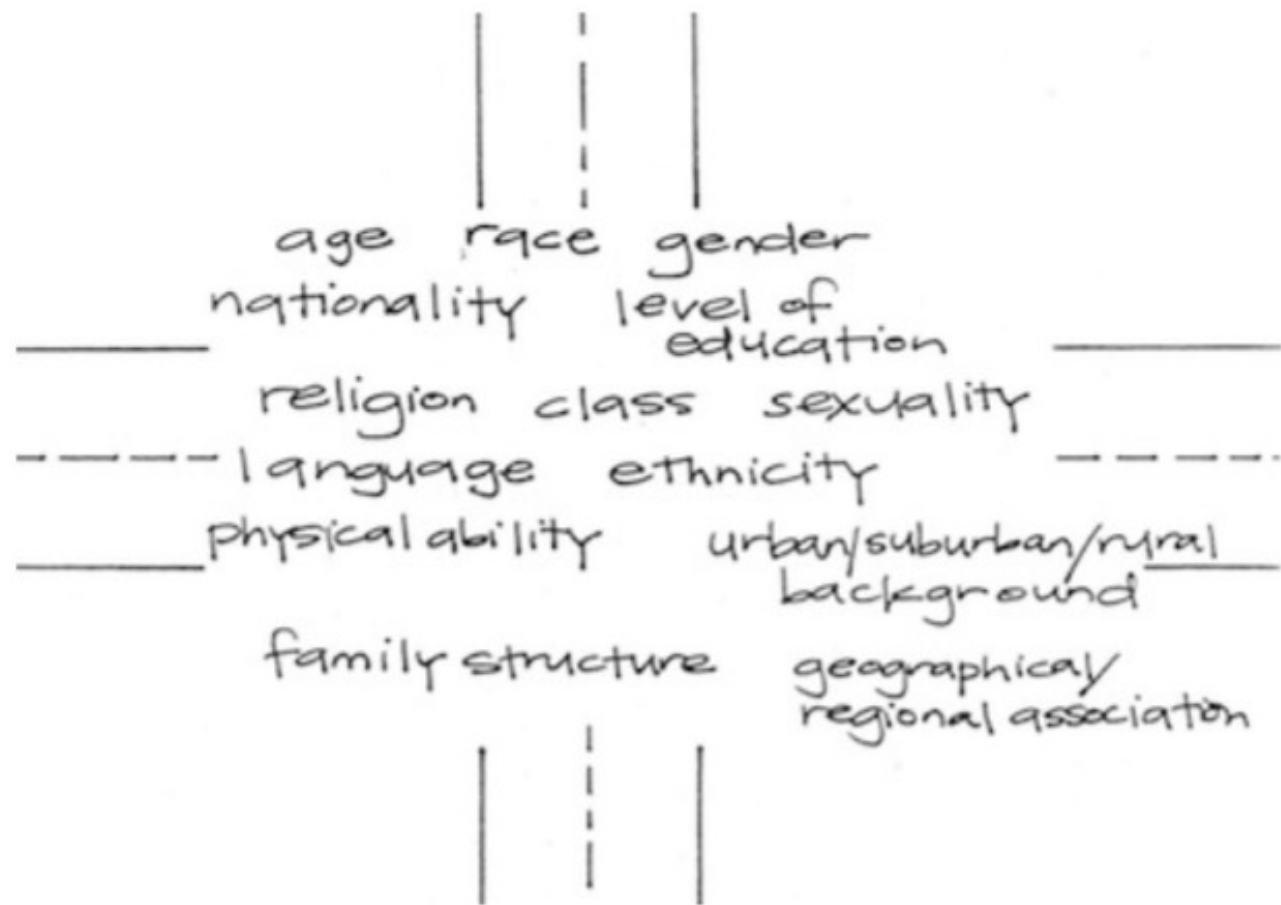
"It's yours," answered Arthur.

[35] "It's yours," I repeated, handing the drawing to Curtis.

*From The Circuit: Stories From the Life of A Migrant Child by Francisco Jiménez. Copyright © 1997
University of New Mexico Press, 1997.*

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8. The phrase translates to "How do you say 'this is yours' in English."



Janitor

by: Bobby LeFebre

She begins her workday when the rest of us unloosen our ties
And fight rush hour traffic on the way home.
Starts late enough to calentar tortillas y frijoles para sus hijos en casa
Then leaves the oldest in charge to tuck her babies in at bedtime
See, the evening shift, it pays just a little bit better
And, these days, every penny counts

She is bruised from pinching
Sore from stretching dollar bills into small miracles
Her magic makes Jesus look like a common man
She daydreams of sleep
Contemplates how she's supposed to make paper
When they tell her she needs papers
But she doesn't complain
Partly, because she's afraid to
But mostly because she was taught not to
She wears pride like Prada

There are evenings when the unmanageability of
My social worker workload
Gets the best of me
Sometimes, it's procrastination that keeps me in the office
Longer than I'd like to be
En estas noches calladas, our paths cross
The way distant relatives run into each other
After time has clouded familiarity

We two share an invisible relationship
She is gravity: a necessary force unseen,
Keeping the galaxy in order,
Taken advantage of,
An urban legend to most
A story tucked away in the blindness of self-entitlements
But she leaves us the braille of clean workspaces every evening

Work is sewn into her smile
Her hands are kept covered to keep chemicals from dehydrating her skin
And I can't help but wonder:
Are her nails pretty?

You here tarde! Lots of work?

She asks in a broken accent that screams, "I am trying,"

Le contesto, "Sí. Mucho trabajo."

Her eyes illuminate like the candles

She lights every morning to the image of La Virgen de Guadalupe

¿Hablas español?

Yo soy Angela. I'm the janitor.

"Bobby," I reply

Now, she's old enough to be my mother,

Which means wise enough to know that I have questions

But she has work to do

And so do I

But we shoot the breeze, anyway

She tells me stories about her beloved Mexico

I tell her about my first time visiting

She shows me emotional scars

Left from the beast of barbed wire bites

Thanks God she isn't one of thousands of makeshift crosses

Left stranded in a desert

Desecrated by minutemen

She tells me I'm the first to converse with her

Says most act as though she isn't even visible

And I tell her that, to most, she isn't

But I see her

And I tell her she's appreciated

I remind her that it's nightfall that dresses the stars in their brilliance,

The cook that makes the restaurant's reputation,

And the landscaper that brings out the life in tulips,

The immigrants that built this nation

She breaks her back so that her children will one day sprout wings

May they fly

High above walls being constructed

To destroy bridges being built between despair and dreams

May they see you, Angela

And your child's college degree

And the smiles of the babies you raised for them

May they grow compassion in the gardens you tend to

May they see you for who you are

Respect you for who you are

May they see you, Angela

May they see you

THEORIES	Group Names	Definition	how to apply that theory to a text possible questions to ask	apply that theory to well-known fairytale	helpful pictures!
		5 points	7 points	5 points	3 points
Moral Criticism, Dramatic Construction					
Formalism, New Criticism, Neo-Aristotelian Criticism					
Psychoanalytic Criticism, Jungian Criticism					
Marxist Criticism					
Reader-Response Criticism					
Structuralism/Semiotics					
Post-Structuralism/Deconstruction					
New Historicism/Cultural Studies					
Post-Colonial Criticism					
Feminist Criticism					
Gender/Queer Studies					
Critical Race Theory					
Critical Disability Studies					

Reflection and Discussion Questions

Breaking Through

1. What did you learn about the experience of Mexican-American migrant farmworkers of the 1940s? What did you learn about the European-American landowners?
 2. How different would this book be if it were about migrant farm workers of Mexican descent today?
 3. How would these stories be different if they were told from the eyes of the father in the story? From one of Francisco's teachers? From one of the landowners?
 4. What stereotypes are there about Mexican-Americans? Mexico? Migrant farm workers?
 5. What are some examples of racial prejudice in this story?
 6. What are some examples of power in this story? How is it used?
 7. There is great controversy in many communities about "English - only" education. What are the arguments about it? Who is making the arguments? Who has power in these arguments and how are they using this power? What do you think about the "English - only" debate?
 8. What do you know of migrant farm workers in your community? Of Mexican-Americans? How could you find out more? What do the Mexican-Americans in your community express as their needs (if they are heard in your community)?
 10. In the section about the author, Jimenez talks about being given *The Grapes of Wrath* as a teenager and realizing it was the first book he had read to which he could relate. What are the stories of your cultural heritage and when did you read them? What stories are the children in your community being asked to read and does it relate to their cultural heritage? What values does this book share in its telling? How is this book helpful in unlearning racism?
-

Things to Discuss

Breaking Through

Overall Reaction

2. What do you think contributed to the author Breaking Through successfully?

Comparing the Immigrant Experience

1. If you are an immigrant to this country how was Professor Jiménez's life story similar or different than your own story?
2. If you were born in this country, how has your life or your family's been similar to or different from the Jiménez family?
3. Given that the story was written about events nearly 45 years ago, how do you think things are similar or different for immigrants in 2003?
4. Given the continuous controversies surrounding immigration laws in the state and country, are there any changes you think need to be made?

The Role of Our Community in Educating Our Children

1. What teachers made an impact in your life and why?
2. Should the community play a role in supporting the education of ALL students?
3. What suggestions do you have for assisting and improving bilingual education?

Relating One's Own Personal Story

1. What times have there been in your life when you have had a Breaking Through experience? What helped you succeed?

Resume Writing Assignment

For this writing assignment, you will be completing a resume as if you are Francisco Jimenez (during the time of Breaking Through). You will be writing a resume for a job you want to apply for in the future. You must include the following information on your resume:

Checklist:

- Contact Information (name, phone number, address, phone number and email)
- Written Objective: What job do you want? Why do you want it?
- Education: List the institutions the individual has attended. List most recent first.
- Work Experience: Usually you would only include work relevant to the objective. List most recent first.
- Volunteer Work
- Achievements and Awards
- Special Skills

Rubric:

<u>Category</u>	<u>5pts</u>	<u>4pts</u>	<u>3pts</u>	<u>2-1pts</u>
Knowledge and Understanding: <i>Includes all elements outlined in the checklist in great detail.</i>	Demonstrates thorough understanding of elements required for a successful resume. Includes all elements on the checklist and goes above and beyond with detail.	Demonstrates considerable understanding of elements required for a successful resume. Includes all elements on the checklist.	Demonstrates some understanding of elements required for a successful resume. Includes some elements on the checklist.	Demonstrates limited understanding of elements required for a successful resume. Includes very few to none of the elements on the checklist.
Thinking and Inquiry: <i>Completes planning page in detail before moving onto writing.</i>	Uses planning skills with a high degree of effectiveness.	Uses planning skills with considerable effectiveness.	Uses planning skills with some effectiveness.	Uses planning skills with limited effectiveness.
Mechanics: <i>Grammar, spelling, punctuation and full sentences)</i>	Communicates information and uses conventions with a high degree of effectiveness.	Communicates information and uses conventions with considerable effectiveness.	Communicates information and uses conventions with some effectiveness.	Communicates information and uses conventions with limited effectiveness.
Application: <i>Written Objective (Makes connections between existing skills and how they would apply to success in that particular position)</i>	Makes connections between skills and how they would apply to success in specific position with a high degree of effectiveness.	Makes connections between skills and how they would apply to success in specific position with considerable effectiveness.	Makes connections between skills and how they would apply to success in specific position with some effectiveness.	Makes connections between skills and how they would apply to success in specific position with limited effectiveness.

Use the samples posted in the module and the template link below to help you with proper formatting of a resume. **It should NOT be more than 2 pages. It should be neat, tidy and concise.** This is something that can be useful to you in the future, so please do your very best work! Resumes will be presented to the class. We will then vote for the version of Francisco that is the best fit for the job!

Online Resume Template: <https://resumegenius.com/resume-samples>

Name: _____

Class: _____

Taco Head

By Viola Canales
1956

Viola Canales is a Mexican American author who grew up in south Texas. She celebrates her Latinx culture through her writing. "Culture" refers to beliefs, values, traditions, and customs shared by a particular group. In "Taco Head," Canales writes about a young girl who struggles with taking tacos, a traditional Mexican dish, to school for lunch. The following text also contains language that some may find hurtful or offensive. As you read, take notes on how Sofia feels about eating tacos for lunch throughout the story.

- [1] Mama used to pack two bean tacos for my school lunch each day. Every morning she'd get up at five to make a fresh batch of flour masa.¹ She'd roll out and cook one tortilla at a time until she had a big stack of them, nice and hot, and then she'd fill each with beans that she'd fried in bacon grease and flavored with chopped onion in her huge cast-iron skillet.



"Untitled" by Jeswin Thomas is licensed under CC0.

And each morning I would sit at the kitchen table and say, "Mama, can I please have some lunch money too, or a sandwich instead?" But the reply was always the same: "Why, mi'ja?² You already have these delicious bean tacos to eat."

It wasn't that the tacos weren't good; it was that some kids called all Mexican Americans beaners,³ so the last thing I needed was to stand out like a big stupid sign. All the other kids either bought their lunch at the cafeteria or took nice white sandwiches.

I started going to the very end of the cafeteria, to turn my back and gobble up my tacos.

- [5] Then I started eating each taco by first putting it in a bag.

It would take me all of five minutes to eat, and then I'd go outside to the playground. I was always the first one there, often the only one for quite a while. But I didn't mind, except on really cold days, when I wished I were still inside.

On one cold day, I so dreaded going outside that I started eating my second taco rather slowly. "Hey, you!" someone shouted. I turned and found a big girl standing right 'smack in front of me, her arms crossed over her

-
1. a dough used to make a variety of Latin American dishes
 2. Spanish for "my daughter"
 3. a slur or offensive word toward Mexicans and Mexican Americans

chest like bullet belts.⁴

"What's in that paper bag?" She glared and poked at the bag with her fat finger.

I was stunned stupid. She grabbed the bag.

[10] "Taco head! Taco head!" She yelled. In seconds I was surrounded by kids chanting "Taco head! Taco head!"

I wanted the ground to open up and swallow me whole. Not only was I found out, but the girl had caused my taco to fly open and splatter all over my white sweater.

This nightmare went on forever, until Coach Clarke, the girls' PE teacher, blew her whistle and ordered everyone back to their seats.

"Sofia," she said, "don't pay attention to them. They're just being mean and silly." She took me to the teachers' lounge and helped me clean up.

For two days after that, I went directly to the playground and didn't eat my lunch until I got home after school. And then for two days after *that*, I ate inside a stall in the girls' restroom.

[15] The next Monday, Coach Clarke stopped me in the hall. "Sofia, how about we eat lunch together in the cafeteria?"

When the lunch bell rang, I found Coach Clarke sitting in the middle of the cafeteria, with students standing all around her. She looked up and waved me over.

"Here, Sofia," she said as she pulled out the chair beside her. "Everyone else was begging to sit with me, but I said no, that I was saving this chair for you."

I sat down, feeling sick, nervous.

"How about we trade?" Coach said. She opened her lunch bag and pulled out a half-sandwich wrapped in plastic. "I'll trade this for one of your tacos."

[20] All the kids were staring at us.

"Oh, please, I really want to trade."

I hesitated and pulled out my lunch. I unwrapped the foil.

"Those look good," Coach said, reaching for a taco. "Better than any stupid sandwich I've ever had. See for yourself. Take a bite."

4. a strap used for holding bullets

I carefully unwrapped the half-sandwich and took a little bite. It was *awful*, something between sardines and bologna.

[25] “Ha! Told you!” Coach Clarke said, laughing. “Here,” she said, taking the rest of the sandwich, “you don’t have to eat it. Have your taco instead.”

As I ate one and Coach Clarke ate the other, she kept making all these loud *mmmmm* sounds. I knew everyone in the cafeteria could hear.

And the next day we ate lunch together in the middle of the cafeteria. We traded. Again, her half sandwich was truly awful. *Do all sandwiches taste like something between sardines and bologna?* I wondered.

But this time, as she ate one taco and I the other, she told me stories about herself: about how she became a coach because she’d fallen in love with sports at school; how she loved playing soccer most but had also been good at playing field hockey and softball. We laughed when she described the funny skirt she had worn playing field hockey.

I told her I liked to play soccer too, with my father and cousins in the street. Then I remembered Clara and her stories, so I told Coach Clarke about Clara and how she told me that I had inherited⁵ my great-great-grandmother’s gift for kicking like a mule. I hesitated, then said, “I wish I’d kicked the girl who made fun of me.”

[30] “Sofia, learn to kick with your head instead.”

“Like in soccer?”

“No, like with your brain. And you know how you can really kick that girl, and really hard?”

“How?”

“By kicking her butt at school, by beating her in English, math, everything — even sports.”

[35] Coach Clarke and I had lunch together the rest of that week. She asked me for the recipe for the tacos. I had to ask both Papa and Mama for this, since Papa cleaned and cooked the beans before Mama fried them.

After that, I wanted to “kick that girl” so bad that I asked Coach Clarke if I could go to the library to study after lunch instead of wasting time on the playground. She arranged it for me. She also told me, “Part of ‘kicking that girl’ is to eat your tacos proudly, and right in the middle of the cafeteria.”

That year I kicked that girl in all classes and sports, especially soccer.

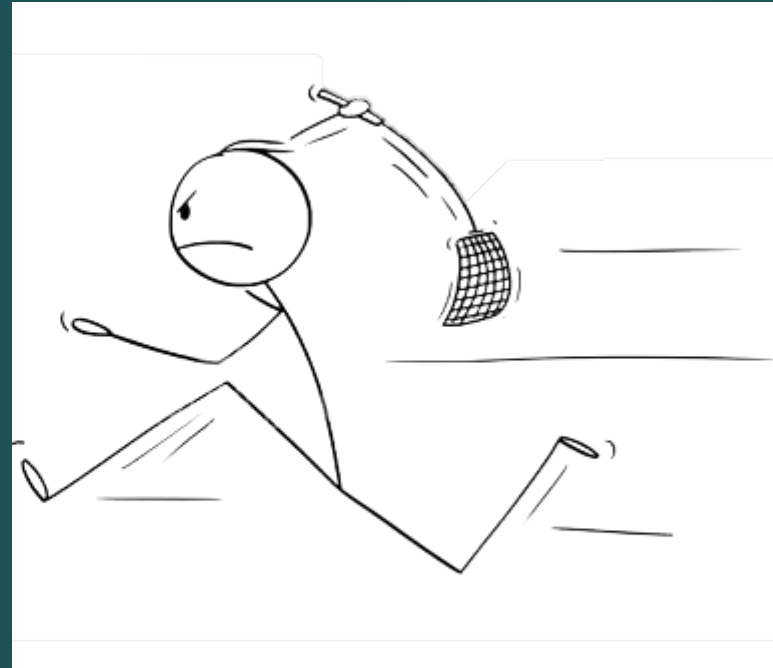
It wasn’t long after my lunches with Coach Clarke that some of the other Mexican American kids started eating their foods out in the open too. And sometimes when I pulled out my lunch, I got offers to trade for sandwiches. But I always ate both my tacos before heading off to the library.

5. **Inherit** (*verb*) to receive a passed down quality or trait

The Fly Swatter Game

RULES

1. YOU WILL BE SPLIT INTO 2 TEAMS.
2. EVERYONE ON YOUR TEAM GETS A TURN, BEFORE ANY REPEATS.
3. YOU MAY NOT HIT EACH OTHER WITH THE FLY SWATTERS. YOU MAY NOT SWORD FIGHT EITHER.
4. YOU MAY "BOX OUT" BUT YOU MAY NOT TOUCH THE OTHER PLAYER.
5. YOU DO NOT NEED TO SLAP THE PROJECTOR SCREEN VERY HARD.
6. DO NOT THROW YOUR BODY INTO THE BOARD.
7. HAVE FUN! 😊



Papa

Deconstruction

Mr. Osterveen

Bob Twitchel

CRT

Cultural Assimilation

Critical Disability

Race

Passing

Semiotics

Feminist

Reader Response

Mr. Lema

Machismo

Post Colonial

Moral Criticism

Model Minority

Mr. Coe

Formalism

Mama

Roberto

Culture

Cultural Studies

Mr. Kinkade

Other

Ethnicity

Cultural Appropriation

Immigrant

Stereotype

Psychoanalytic

Marxist

Refugee

Ito

Gender/Queer

Familism

Panchito

Name: _____

Class: _____

The Scholarship Jacket

By Marta Salinas
1986

*"The Scholarship Jacket" is one of the best-known stories by Mexican American author Marta Salinas. It describes a difficult situation that Marta is faced with after she earns excellent grades in school. **Purpose for Reading:** To understand and track a character's thoughts, feelings, and actions so that we can build our understanding of how people are changed through their relationships and experiences. As you read this story, take notes on the descriptive language and word choice that help reveal Marta's point of view.*

[1] The small Texas school that I went to had a tradition carried out every year during the eighth-grade graduation: a beautiful gold and green jacket (the school colors) was awarded to the class valedictorian, the student who had maintained the highest grades for eight years. The scholarship ¹jacket had a big gold S on the left front side and your name written in gold letters on the pocket.



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My oldest sister, Rosie, had won the jacket a few years back, and I fully expected to also. I was fourteen and in the eighth grade. I had been a straight A student since the first grade and this last year had looked forward very much to owning that jacket. My father was a farm laborer who couldn't earn enough money to feed eight children, so when I was six I was given to my grandparents to raise. We couldn't participate in sports at school because there were registration fees, uniform costs, and trips out of town; so, even though our family was quite agile² and athletic there would never be a school sports jacket for us. This one, the scholarship jacket, was our only chance.

In May, close to graduation, spring fever had struck as usual with a vengeance.³ No one paid any attention in class; instead we stared out the windows and at each other, wanting to speed up the last few weeks of school. I despaired every time I looked in the mirror. Pencil thin, not a curve anywhere. I was called "beanpole" and "string bean," and I knew that's what I looked like. A flat chest, no hips, and a brain; that's what I had. That really wasn't much for a fourteen-year-old to work with, I thought, as I absent-mindedly wandered from my history class to the gym. Another hour of sweating in basketball and displaying my toothpick legs was coming up. Then I remembered my P.E. shorts were still in a bag under my desk where I'd forgotten them. I had to walk all the way back and get them. Coach Thompson was a real bear if someone wasn't dressed for P.E. She had said I was a good forward and even tried to talk Grandma into letting me join the team once. Of course Grandma said no.

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1. **Scholarship (noun)** a high level of academic achievement
 2. **Agile (adjective)** able to move quickly and easily
 3. "With a vengeance" is an idiom that means "with great force, energy, violence, or power."

I was almost back at my classroom door when I heard voices raised in anger as if in some sort of argument. I stopped. I didn't mean to eavesdrop,⁴ I just hesitated, not knowing what to do. I needed those shorts and I was going to be late, but I didn't want to interrupt an argument between my teachers. I recognized the voices: Mr. Schmidt, my history teacher, and Mr. Boone, my math teacher. They seemed to be arguing about me. I couldn't believe it. I still remember the feeling of shock that rooted me flat against the wall as if I were trying to blend in with the graffiti written there.

- [5] "I refuse to do it! I don't care who her father is, her grades don't even begin to compare to Martha's.⁵ I won't lie or falsify⁶ records. Martha has a straight A-plus average and you know it." That was Mr. Schmidt and he sounded very angry. Mr. Boone's voice sounded calm and quiet.

"Look. Joann's father is not only on the Board,⁷ he owns the only store in town: we could say it was a close tie and — "

The pounding in my ears drowned out the rest of the words, only a word here and there filtered through. "... Martha is Mexican ... resign⁸ ... won't do it..." Mr. Schmidt came rushing out and luckily for me went down the opposite way toward the auditorium, so he didn't see me. Shaking, I waited a few minutes and then went in and grabbed my bag and fled from the room. Mr. Boone looked up when I came in but didn't say anything. To this day I don't remember if I got in trouble in P.E. for being late or how I made it through the rest of the afternoon. I went home very sad and cried into my pillow that night so Grandmother wouldn't hear me. It seemed a cruel coincidence that I had overheard that conversation.

The next day when the principal called me into his office I knew what it would be about. He looked uncomfortable and unhappy. I decided I wasn't going to make it any easier for him, so I looked him straight in the eyes. He looked away and fidgeted with the papers on his desk.

"Martha," he said, "there's been a change in policy this year regarding the scholarship jacket. As you know, it has always been free." He cleared his throat and continued. "This year the Board has decided to charge fifteen dollars, which still won't cover the complete cost of the jacket."

- [10] I stared at him in shock, and a small sound of dismay escaped my throat. I hadn't expected this. He still avoided looking in my eyes.

"So if you are unable to pay the fifteen dollars for the jacket it will be given to the next one in line." I didn't need to ask who that was.

Standing with all the dignity⁹ I could muster,¹⁰ I said, "I'll speak to my grandfather about it, sir, and let you know

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4. **Eavesdrop (verb)** to listen secretly to what someone else is saying
 5. the narrator's teachers refer to her as Martha, though her real name is Marta, as her grandfather calls her in paragraph 19
 6. **Falsify (verb)** to change with the intention of misleading
 7. the School Board; a group of people elected to make important decisions about a district's schools
 8. **Resign (verb)** to announce that one is leaving a job or position; to quit
 9. **Dignity (noun)** a sense of pride in oneself
 10. **Muster (verb)** to gather together

tomorrow." I cried on the walk home from the bus stop. The dirt road was a quarter mile from the highway, so by the time I got home, my eyes were red and puffy.

"Where's Grandpa?" I asked Grandma, looking down at the floor so she wouldn't ask me why I'd been crying. She was sewing on a quilt as usual and didn't look up.

"I think he's out back working in the bean field."

[15] I went outside and looked out at the fields. There he was. I could see him walking between the rows, his body bent over the little plants, hoe ¹¹in hand. I walked slowly out to him, trying to think how I could best ask him for the money. There was a cool breeze blowing and a sweet smell of mesquite ¹²fruit in the air, but I didn't appreciate it. I kicked at a dirt clod. I wanted that jacket so much. It was more than just being a valedictorian and giving a little thank you speech for the jacket on graduation night. It represented eight years of hard work and expectation. I knew I had to be honest with Grandpa; it was my only chance. He saw my shadow and looked up.

He waited for me to speak. I cleared my throat nervously and clasped my hands behind my back so he wouldn't see them shaking. "Grandpa, I have a big favor to ask you," I said in Spanish, the only language he knew. He still waited silently. I tried again. "Grandpa, this year the principal said the scholarship jacket is not going to be free. It's going to cost fifteen dollars, and I have to take the money in tomorrow, otherwise it'll be given to someone else." The last words came out in an eager rush. Grandpa straightened up tiredly and leaned his chin on the hoe handle. He looked out over the field that was filled with the tiny green bean plants. I waited, desperately hoping he'd say I could have the money.

He turned to me and asked quietly, "What does a scholarship jacket mean?"

I answered quickly; maybe there was a chance. "It means you've earned it by having the highest grades for eight years and that's why they're giving it to you." Too late I realized the significance ¹³of my words. Grandpa knew that I understood it was not a matter of money. It wasn't that. He went back to hoeing the weeds that sprang up between the delicate little bean plants. It was a time-consuming job; sometimes the small shoots were right next to each other. Finally he spoke again as I turned to leave, crying.

"Then if you pay for it, Marta, it's not a scholarship jacket, is it? Tell your principal I will not pay the fifteen dollars."

[20] I walked back to the house and locked myself in the bathroom for a long time. I was angry with Grandfather even though I knew he was right, and I was angry with the Board, whoever they were. Why did they have to change the rules just when it was my turn to win the jacket? Those were the days of belief and innocence.

It was a very sad and withdrawn ¹⁴girl who dragged into the principal's office the next day. This time he did look

11. a gardening tool used to remove small weeds and break up the surface of soil

12. a spiny tree in the pea family found in desert areas in the southwestern U.S. and Mexico

13. **Significance** (*noun*) meaning or importance

14. **Withdrawn** (*adjective*) very quiet; not wanting to talk to others

me in the eyes.

“What did your grandfather say?”

I sat very straight in my chair.

“He said to tell you he won’t pay the fifteen dollars.”

- [25] The principal muttered something I couldn’t understand under his breath and walked over to the window. He stood looking out at something outside. He looked bigger than usual when he stood up; he was a tall, gaunt¹⁵ man with gray hair, and I watched the back of his head while I waited for him to speak.

“Why?” he finally asked. “Your grandfather has the money. He owns a two-hundred acre ranch.”

I looked at him, forcing my eyes to stay dry. “I know, sir, but he said if I had to pay for it, then it wouldn’t be a scholarship jacket.” I stood up to leave. “I guess you’ll just have to give it to Joann.” I hadn’t meant to say that, it had just slipped out. I was almost to the door when he stopped me.

“Martha — wait.”

I turned and looked at him, waiting. What did he want now? I could feel my heart pounding loudly in my chest and see my blouse fluttering where my breasts should have been. Something bitter and vile¹⁶ tasting was coming up in my mouth; I was afraid I was going to be sick. I didn’t need any sympathy speeches. He sighed loudly and went back to his big desk. He watched me, biting his lip.

- [30] “Okay. We’ll make an exception in your case. I’ll tell the Board, you’ll get your jacket.”

I could hardly believe my ears. I spoke in a trembling rush. “Oh, thank you, sir!” Suddenly I felt great. I didn’t know about adrenaline in those days, but I knew something was pumping through me, making me feel as tall as the sky. I wanted to yell, jump, run the mile, do something. I ran out so I could cry in the hall where there was no one to see me.

At the end of the day, Mr. Schmidt winked at me and said, “I hear you’re getting the scholarship jacket this year.”

His face looked as happy and innocent as a baby’s, but I knew better. Without answering I gave him a quick hug and ran to the bus. I cried on the walk home again, but this time because I was so happy. I couldn’t wait to tell Grandpa and ran straight to the field. I joined him in the row where he was working, and without saying anything I crouched down and started pulling up the weeds with my hands. Grandpa worked alongside me for a few minutes, and he didn’t ask what had happened. After I had a little pile of weeds between the rows, I stood up and faced him.

“The principal said he’s making an exception for me, Grandpa, and I’m getting the jacket after all. That’s after I

15. **Gaunt** (*adjective*) very thin

16. **Vile** (*adjective*) disgusting

told him what you said.”

[35] Grandpa didn’t say anything; he just gave me a pat on the shoulder and a smile. He pulled out the crumpled red handkerchief that he always carried in his back pocket and wiped the sweat off his forehead.

“Better go see if your grandmother needs any help with supper.”

I gave him a big grin. He didn’t fool me. I skipped and ran back to the house whistling some silly tune.

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