

Teacher's Guide for

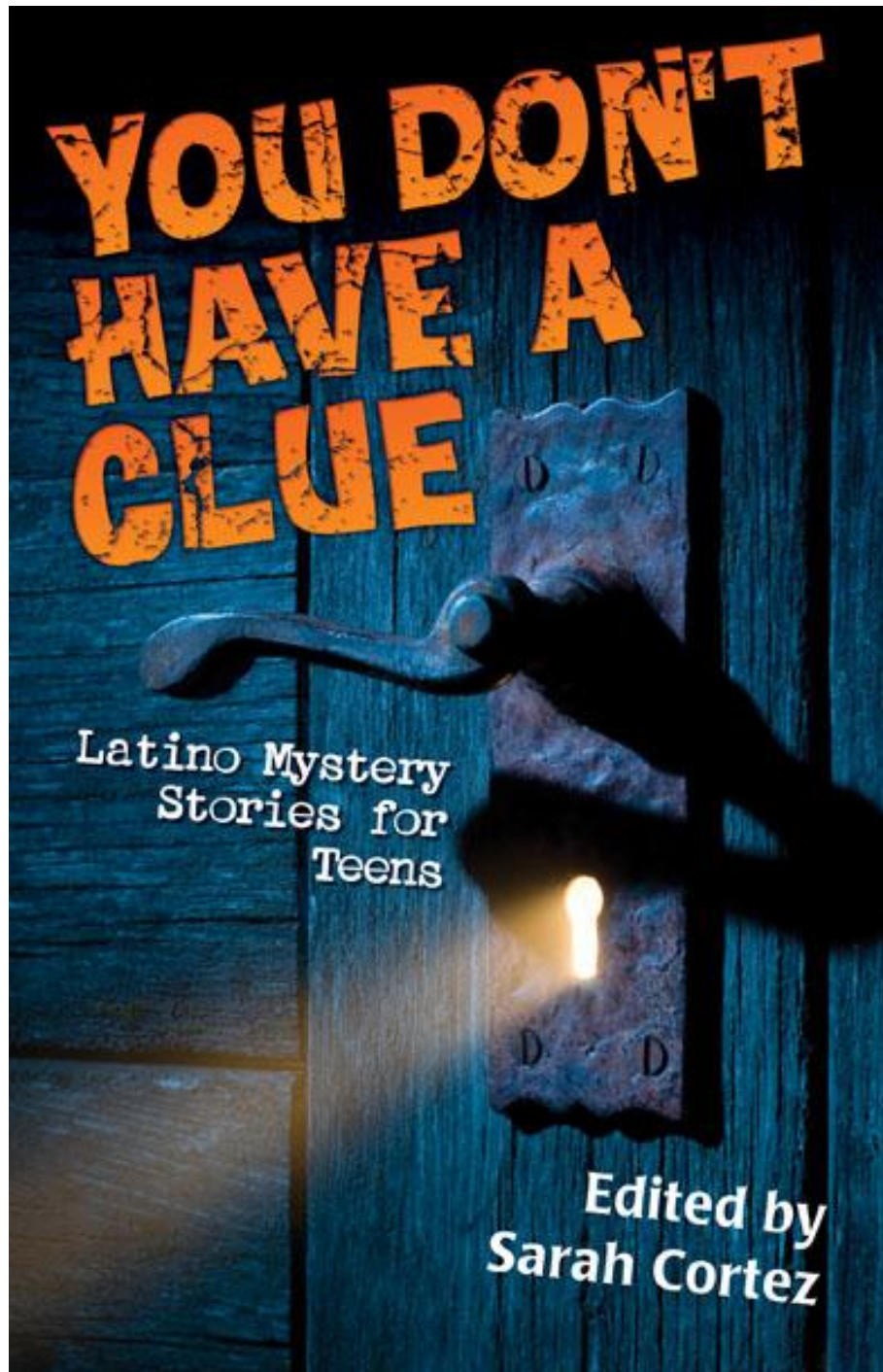


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Introduction

You Don't Have a Clue (YDHAC) is an anthology of 18 short stories in the mystery genre of fiction. All the protagonists are Hispanic teens, and the stories show them dealing with a variety of situations containing elements inherent in human nature that are especially important to young adults—loyalty, identity, self-esteem, cultural and societal expectations, and love for family. As these teen protagonists solve crimes or help avert danger, they are empowered. There are also stories showing teens making poor decisions, which illustrate the personal and societal consequences of those choices.

The guiding vision for this anthology was to create an original volume of edgy, engrossing mystery stories for teens written by Latino/a authors. The book contains stories that will interest everyone from the reluctant reader to the college-bound student.

Goals

The goal of this guide is to facilitate the meaningful use of YDHAC, whether by a classroom teacher, a reading/writing specialist or a librarian.

The guide contains “Before Reading,” “During Reading,” and “After Reading” segments for individual stories. There are three additional sections that go beyond these standard sections.

The first addition is a short statement by the story’s author about how he/she came to write this story. These quotations will be inspiring to those students who are aspiring

writers and, doubtlessly, instructive about how professional writers concoct a plot from a welter of both ideas and (in some cases) memories. It is also our hope that readers will connect powerfully with the authors and begin to see themselves as writers with stories worth pursuing.

The second addition is a section entitled “The Basics.” This section contains blocks of content related to mystery fiction that can be introduced to the students before beginning a segment on one of the individual mystery short stories.

The third addition is a section for each story entitled “The Student-Writer.” The purpose of this section is to suggest additional exercises for the student who is interested in writing his/her own mystery. Some of these exercises focus on writing craft; others focus on using the imagination to create a plot. This section could also be utilized for writing assignments for an entire class.

As you review the guide’s sections, you will find that many of the suggested activities may be used in the classroom/library as either discussion or writing prompts. While only you know your individual situation with your students, I encourage you whenever possible to direct your students to write. In grades ranging from primary to twelfth, research has shown that *writing improves reading comprehension*. (1)

Additionally, as someone who has taught writing in grade school, middle and high school, and at both traditional colleges and universities and community colleges, I also

encourage you—the teacher or librarian—to write along with your students during a given assignment, as I always do. You’ll be refreshed by your own creativity and become a better teacher because of it. This will also give you confidence in helping your students when they are stalled in their own writing.

Teachers and librarians might choose to create venues for the students to share stories with other students and/or faculty. There are many possibilities, such as creating online communities of young writers, setting up end-of-semester or end-of-unit readings or celebrations within the school community, creating a small “journal” of the class’s writing, sharing of mystery stories student-to-student or faculty-to-student, etc.

Approaching a Mystery

Of all the types of fiction, the mystery offers the reader an *implicit invitation* to enter the story and solve the mystery along with the sleuth. The mystery automatically engages the reader in wondering about such issues as what will happen next, who committed the crime, which clues are important, etc. No doubt, all these reasons are part of why mysteries are the most popular choice for “free selection” periods in school libraries.

In addition, the mystery story automatically encourages close reading as the plot drives forward to the mystery’s resolution. The reader is also engaged in trying to discern each main character’s personality, methodology of making decisions, and motivations. What better way to become attentive to details and nuances of both language and gesture, psychological as well as physical?

In terms of utilizing the energy from the detailed reading of a mystery, the teacher or librarian might choose to have the students read only a short portion of a mystery story. Then, each student could articulate or write a prediction of how the mystery will turn out along with the supporting “evidence.” This exercise could be done several times with the same story with radically different results each time for each student.

A Brief History of the Mystery Genre

The mystery genre arose in the nineteenth century with both American and British writers experimenting with creation of the genre. There are many types of mystery today, and the term “crime fiction” can be used as roughly synonymous with “mystery.”

The British author Wilkie Collins is regarded as the first author to publish a mystery novel. He published two mystery novels, *The Woman in White* (1860) and *The Moonstone* (1868), the second of which is regarded as his masterpiece. Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, the creator of the famous Sherlock Holmes, introduced this legendary sleuth (in short stories) in 1887. The huge popularity of the Sherlock Holmes novels and short stories is credited with igniting the reading public's fascination with the genre—a fascination which remains unabated to this day.

The American writer Edgar Allen Poe is credited with being the first American to write a mystery in his short story “The Murder in the Rue Morgue” (1841). Poe's unique blend of horrific detail and creepy locations and characters ensures that he is a perennial favorite among readers from middle school onward.

Both American and British writers continued working in the form in the decades at the beginning of the twentieth century, with the so-called “Golden Age” of the British mystery novel spanning the 1920s to 1940s. Such British talents as Dorothy L. Sayers, Agatha Christie, and Josephine Tey are from this period, with the great G.K. Chesterton preceding them and forming a bridge between the period of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle and the Golden Age writers, with some overlapping years. Authors Christie and Sayers focused on the “puzzle” aspect of the mystery plot, while authors such as Chesterton focused on the internal psychological aspects of character.

In America, experimentation with other uses of crime writing emerged, such as the “supernatural mystery,” where a crime may not have occurred, and the emphasis is on the other-worldly and the horrific. During the 1920s and the following decades, the hard-boiled detective story, where the emphasis is on action and the tone is of gritty realism, became a hallmark of American crime writing due to the work of authors Dashiell Hammett and Raymond Chandler.

Another important milestone occurred in the 1920s in America with the development of the “juvenile mystery” by Edward Stratemeyer, who, using pseudonyms, originally created the Hardy Boys and the Nancy Drew series.

Currently, the category of crime fiction enjoys enormous popularity among readers of all ages. The range of types of crime occurring varies widely with those mysteries labeled “cozy” (where the violence occurs off-stage and explicit eroticism is rare) to the “police procedural” (where the protagonist is a member of a police force, and the emphasis is on the procedures that he/she must follow to solve the crime) to the “noir” (where the criminal’s point to view is foremost and the story reflects the downward psychological spiral of the protagonist).

Such pioneering Latino/a authors as Lucha Corpi, Rolando Hinojosa-Smith, and Manuel Ramos began to write mysteries featuring Latino/a sleuths in titles that were published in the 1990s. One of the exciting payoffs for the non-Latino/a reader in such works is the

introduction to another culture, while the Latino/a reader may feel a pleasant sense of homecoming.

The history of the Latino sleuth has been admirably researched in Ralph E. Rodriguez' *Brown Gumshoes: Detective Fiction and the Search for Chicana/o Identity*. Professor Rodriguez also penned the introduction to *Hit List: The Best of Latino Mystery*, the only published compilation of Latino crime fiction other than *You Don't Have A Clue*.

Advanced readers in your classes may well enjoy the stories with adult Latino/a protagonists in *Hit List*. Potential research projects abound for students eager to explore the primary Latino/a authors writing contemporary mystery, most of whom are included in these two volumes.

The Basics

Conflict

A student's understanding of "conflict" within a short story can rely on that student's understanding of observed human behavior. For instance, what happens when two people want something different? When two people (in real life or in a fictional short story) have radically different goals in mind, then their desires automatically pit them against each other. This creates tension and the reader is pulled forward to see what will happen, i.e. who will win.

This discussion of conflict in daily life leads into an explanation of "conflict" between two fictional characters. An approach that is often effective is to give an example of an idealized (i.e. with no conflicts) and "perfect" life of a character, e.g. enough money, enough cool clothes, enough delicious food, etc. Then ask the students if they would enjoy reading about this idealized life in which a person wanted nothing because he/she had everything already. Most students will say that they wouldn't enjoy reading a story about this person's ideal life. You may wish to have the students describe "conflicts" in other fictional books they have recently read or television shows they have seen. For instance, those "reality" television shows that portray the turmoil-driven lives of celebrities. Even *telenovelas* are a fertile source for conflicts between two characters that the students can readily delineate.

Then, discuss the idea of the typical conflict in a mystery—a person has committed a crime and wishes to remain undetected versus the sleuth who wishes to discover who has committed the crime. This is the primary conflict.

You may also wish to mention that there are often additional conflicts between characters in a mystery story, and these are called secondary conflicts. Alert the students to be attentive to noticing the secondary conflicts in a story.

Clues

A large portion of the writer's skill in writing a mystery is in placing clues that mislead the reader but lead the sleuth to solving the crime.

There are several different entry points to discussing clues with your students. You may discuss clues in terms of the sleuth's solving the crime. It is important to remember that while *physical* clues, e.g. fingerprint, weapons, cars, etc. (these are the when, where, and how) may help the sleuth, there are also *psychological* clues as the sleuth tries to figure out motivation or the why of the crime.

There's no doubt that the puzzle aspect of solving a mystery is one of its greatest joys. An intriguing dynamic within the puzzle is the reader's realization at the story's end that he/she overlooked clues or misinterpreted them. Fun discussions with students result when they are asked who is the culprit at different points within the story. Then, the students can articulate orally or in writing which clues led to this conclusion. This is also

an excellent lead-in to vocabulary work as the students strive to understand nuances of meaning in following those clues.

Character

Students may find it useful to discuss briefly the different uses of the word “character.”

One of the common uses of this word is to denote the moral/ethical fiber of an individual.

However, in looking at fiction, we will use the term “character” to denote a fictional person in a short story or novel.

The success of a piece of mystery fiction depends upon the success of creating a believable character who acts in ways that are consistent with his/her personality and history. Therefore, the main characters—whether sleuth or villain—must be persons that the reader feels he/she knows intimately and understands. Just as the sleuth observes other characters and struggles to understand their motivations, the reader is engaged in a constant (and often unconscious) struggle to do the same.

INDIVIDUAL STORIES

Acevedo, Mario (author of) “No Soy Loco”

BEFORE READING: Discuss with students the information in “The Basics” section on Conflict, Clues, and Character.

Listening/Speaking – for the purposes of gaining information, enjoying, and appreciating.

Bloom’s Taxonomy – Remembering, Understanding

Author’s Statement: I told myself years ago that I would never write a story set in Las Cruces, New Mexico, or one set in the 1970s. So, with “No Soy Loco,” I’m circling the drain. I wrote this story because I’m fascinated with extraterrestrials though I never met any aliens as a kid. Too bad, because that would have made life in my dusty hometown a lot more interesting.

DURING READING:

Reading – drawing inferences and supporting with textual evidence; vocabulary development

Listening/Speaking – listening/speaking/appreciation

Writing – writing for a variety of purposes: to express, record, discover, develop, reflect on ideas or problem solve

Bloom’s Taxonomy – Remembering, Understanding, Applying, Analyzing, Evaluating

Discussion/Writing Questions

1. In this story, the diverse cultures that exist even within a small backwater town are depicted. For instance, Latinos mix with Anglos, but also with African-Americans, and there is a reference to the Jewish community. Also shown are the religious rituals that the author grew up in Roman Catholicism and Evangelical Christianity. What is the cultural diversity of your community? How might you use this in writing your own mystery?
2. What are the details that place this story in the 1970s?
3. Is dating today any different than it was in the story?
4. What kind of a young man is Victor? What is important to him? How would you characterize his relationships with family and friends?
5. What is Victor afraid of losing because of the voices?

6. What was the creepiest part of the story? Why?

AFTER READING:

Reading – analyzing characters; writing for a variety of purposes: to express, record, discover, develop, reflect on ideas or problem solve

Listening/Speaking – listening, speaking, appreciation; reflecting on ideas

Writing – writing for a variety of purposes: to express, record, discover, develop, reflect on ideas or problem solve

Bloom's Taxonomy – Analyzing, Evaluating, Creating

The Student-Writer

1. The author has made Victor a real person by giving him believable human qualities or personality traits. Write a list of Victor's believable human qualities in the story. If you were to imagine a fictional character to put in a short story, make a list of the human qualities you would give that character.

2. It is very important that Victor has a skill that he thinks will help him excel in his life. What skill can you give to your fictional character in the above question?

3. Place the character from number one in a room talking to someone he/she doesn't know well and doesn't trust, much like the situation with Victor talking to the psychiatrist. Write the conversation with the topic they are discussing being something that has just begun happening that they cannot figure out.

Write the external dialogue but also write the internal dialogue of the main character. In other words, write what one person is thinking inside his/her head as you also write what that character is saying out loud. You may wish to look at pages 8 and 9 in "You Don't Have a Clue" for an example of this writing strategy.

4. As a completely different piece of writing from the numbers 1-3 above, write how you personally would handle hearing voices in the middle of the night. Would the voices speak to you in your language or in another language? Would you enjoy the experience or feel a different emotion? Write a conversation between you and the mysterious beings talking to you.

Carrillo, Patricia S. (author of) “No One Remembers”

BEFORE READING: Discuss with students the information in “The Basics” section on Conflict, Clues, and Character.

Listening/Speaking – for the purposes of gaining information, enjoying, and appreciating.

Bloom’s Taxonomy – Remembering, Understanding

Author’s Statement: Fiction writers usually choose subject matter that is personal to them. In my story, the female protagonist has been kidnapped and is awaiting transport to a foreign country where she will be used in the illegal sex trade. When choosing a topic for writing, consider what it is about the human condition that pulls your heart.

DURING READING:

Reading – drawing inferences and supporting with textual evidence; vocabulary development

Listening/Speaking – listening/speaking/appreciation

Writing – writing for a variety of purposes: to express, record, discover, develop, reflect on ideas or problem solve

Bloom’s Taxonomy – Remembering, Understanding, Applying, Analyzing, Evaluating

Discussion/Writing Questions

1. Madeleine has lost her memory of who she is, and the neighbor, Mrs. Somerson, has a medical condition causing periodic memory loss. How do these two characters cope with their situations? Is one of them less anxious than the other and why?
2. Madeline does not initially believe that her friend, LeAnn, is telling the truth about Madeline’s identity. What types of information does LeAnn furnish that help establish her credibility?
3. What do the “fake” family members do and say to trigger Madeline’s sense of danger? How does the mother attempt to reassure Madeline? Why don’t these attempts comfort Madeline?
4. How important are the internet and cell phones to Madeline in discovering the secret to her identity? If Madeline hadn’t had these two types of modern technology, how would she have discovered her true identity? Would it have been possible for her to discover it?

5. When in the story did you begin to feel a sense of danger for Madeline and why? Was it before or after the time that Madeline felt a sense of danger?

AFTER READING:

Reading – analyzing characters; writing for a variety of purposes: to express, record, discover, develop, reflect on ideas or problem solve

Listening/Speaking – listening, speaking, appreciation; reflecting on ideas

Writing – writing for a variety of purposes: to express, record, discover, develop, reflect on ideas or problem solve

Bloom's Taxonomy – Analyzing, Evaluating, Creating

The Student-Writer

1. Think about the young boy Jimmy's place in this story. What do you imagine is going on in his head about Madeline?

Write this young boy's story of trying to solve the mystery of who these consecutive young girls are in his parents' house. Try to stay in his point-of-view and only write what he sees, hears, and does. Think hard about how a five-year-old boy would experience reality.

2. Make up a fictional character that wakes up with no memory of his/her past life. How does this person feel? Who can this person trust? Write the story of this character trying to find out who he/she is.

Suggested Reading:

The Vintage Book of Amnesia, edited by Jonathan Lethem, 2000, Vintage Books/Random House. (An anthology of fictional short stories from internationally acclaimed authors exploring the concept of memory loss.)

Cortez, Sarah (author of) “For You, Mother”

BEFORE READING: Discuss with students the information in “The Basics” section on Conflict, Clues, and Character.

Listening/Speaking – for the purposes of gaining information, enjoying, and appreciating.

Bloom’s Taxonomy – Remembering, Understanding

Author’s Statement: The genesis of this story was an account I read of an historical event during the Mexican Revolution in 1916 in the town of Camargo. I then created a fictional character using the criminal profile of a juvenile arsonist. A huge part of the reward for me in this story was in the research—about a year and a half of it—about Pancho Villa. All the details pertaining to him, his procedures, equipment, cars, clothing, etc., are historically accurate. I wove my fictional character’s story around and through the verified historical events.

DURING READING:

Reading – drawing inferences and supporting with textual evidence; vocabulary development

Listening/Speaking – listening/speaking/appreciation

Writing – writing for a variety of purposes: to express, record, discover, develop, reflect on ideas or problem solve

Bloom’s Taxonomy – Remembering, Understanding, Applying, Analyzing, Evaluating

Discussion/Writing Questions

1. The very first thing that the protagonist tells the reader about himself is that he saw his own mother killed and burned. Why does he tell this first and what does it make the reader feel or begin thinking about the protagonist?
2. What does the main character feel about Pancho Villa and why? Where in the story does he tell the reader what he feels and what are the exact words he uses? Make a list of these words or statements. If you don’t know exactly what the words mean, use a dictionary.
3. The main character seems to handle stress and tension quite well. Find at least one example in the story where he is under massive stress. Write about what he does and doesn’t do in response to the stress. Please also give your opinion about his actions or lack of actions in dealing with the stressful situations he encounters. How does this compare to you?

4. The main character feels that murdering Pancho Villa is justified because Pancho Villa's men murdered his mother years earlier. Write a defense of this conclusion. Then, write the arguments against this conclusion. Does the fact that during a revolution there is no "law and order" make a difference to your defense or argument?

AFTER READING:

Reading – analyzing characters; writing for a variety of purposes: to express, record, discover, develop, reflect on ideas or problem solve

Listening/Speaking – listening, speaking, appreciation; reflecting on ideas

Writing – writing for a variety of purposes: to express, record, discover, develop, reflect on ideas or problem solve

Bloom's Taxonomy – Analyzing, Evaluating, Creating

The Student-Writer

1. Is there a building or place in your neighborhood that feels creepy to you? Think of a fictional crime that happened there (or a real crime, such as in this story) and write about the young person who witnessed the crime but who has never told anyone about the crime.
2. This story is a type of story often called "suspense" (a sub-genre of "mystery") where the reader knows from the beginning what crime the main character wishes to commit. As the story unfolds, the suspense is generated by seeing whether or not the crime will happen.

Write a suspense story from the viewpoint of a young person wishing to commit a crime to "right a wrong." How many people does the narrator have to fool in order to commit his/her crime? Is the narrator liked by people around him/her? Do you like him/her?

Guadiano, Nanette (author of) “No Flowers for Marla”

BEFORE READING: Discuss with students the information in “The Basics” section on Conflict, Clues, and Character.

Listening/Speaking – for the purposes of gaining information, enjoying, and appreciating.

Bloom’s Taxonomy – Remembering, Understanding

Author’s Statement: “No Flowers for Marla” was inspired in part by an actual person with whom I attended high school over 16 years ago. Like Marla, she was illusive, beautiful, and distant. We had several classes together and became, if not friends, then close acquaintances. Through many small snippets of conversation over the course of our senior year, I learned that this girl had a strange and sinister dynamic at home. Her father was dead, and her mother had remarried a man in the military, who, from some of the things my acquaintance had let slip during our discussions, was abusive with her and her younger sister. As a young Latina, the only family dynamic I knew was the very close and loving one in which I had grown up. As a result, I found this Anglo girl’s sad situation both disturbing and compelling. I wanted to know more about her, but (as is often the case with abuse victims) she would not share. I urged her to seek help from our school staff, but she told me she was afraid of her stepfather. In hindsight, I wish I’d done more for her. She ‘disappeared’ shortly after graduation. I assumed her family was stationed elsewhere, but it always bothered me that I never got to say good-bye. All these years later, I still wonder what became of her, and this story is my imagination’s attempt at closure. I hope her life turned out much better than Marla’s.

DURING READING:

Reading – drawing inferences and supporting with textual evidence; vocabulary development

Listening/Speaking – listening/speaking/appreciation

Writing – writing for a variety of purposes: to express, record, discover, develop, reflect on ideas or problem solve

Bloom’s Taxonomy – Remembering, Understanding, Applying, Analyzing, Evaluating

Discussion/Writing Questions

1. “In every rumor there is an element of truth.” Rumors are a huge part of high school life. Think about your own high school experience and the rumors you have heard, perpetuated, or, perhaps, even started. In the story, what role do rumors play in influencing the reader? Which rumors in the story actually do contain truth? What evidence supports this?

2. Mr. Farley's death is suspicious to Gloria. Are her suspicions based in reality? What evidence supports this?
3. Mike runs away to join the military in a drastic decision. Why do you think he chose to do so? Describe the emotions you think he might have been feeling to make such a rash decision.

AFTER READING:

Reading – analyzing characters; writing for a variety of purposes: to express, record, discover, develop, reflect on ideas or problem solve

Listening/Speaking – listening, speaking, appreciation; reflecting on ideas

Writing – writing for a variety of purposes: to express, record, discover, develop, reflect on ideas or problem solve

Bloom's Taxonomy – Analyzing, Evaluating, Creating

The Student-Writer

1. Gloria believes Mr. Farley's death is a murder disguised as an accident. Using Marla's murder as a springboard, write a mystery story with Mr. Farley as the protagonist who is trying to solve the mystery of Marla's disappearance.
2. Gloria is constantly trying to decide if she is imagining a dark interpretation of events or seeing the real truth. Think of a mystery you have noticed in your school or family and write how you would solve it, if you could only trust your own judgment. Then, try writing about the same mystery as if you had one trusted friend whose advice you could rely on. Would that change how you solved the mystery?

Guijarro, Chema (author of) “As the Flames Rose”

BEFORE READING: Discuss with students the information in “The Basics” section on Conflict, Clues, and Character.

Listening/Speaking – for the purposes of gaining information, enjoying, and appreciating.

Bloom’s Taxonomy – Remembering, Understanding

Author’s Statement: The story came to me as I was driving past a school for the deaf and saw a kid run through the parking lot with only the top buttons of his shirt done up, like old-school cholos used to wear them. It made me consider what it would be like for a real cholo to be at a school for the deaf.

The expulsion hearing was from personal experience. Mine wasn’t as dramatic, but it was a defining moment in my life and I knew it would be the perfect setting for the climax to Nito’s journey.

DURING READING:

Reading – drawing inferences and supporting with textual evidence; vocabulary development

Listening/Speaking – listening/speaking/appreciation

Writing – writing for a variety of purposes: to express, record, discover, develop, reflect on ideas or problem solve

Bloom’s Taxonomy – Remembering, Understanding, Applying, Analyzing, Evaluating

Discussion/Writing Questions

1. Why was it a big deal for Nito that his mom didn’t tell him who the old paisa was? Do you think she was right keeping it a secret from him?
2. Nito says in the story that Scribbler earned his name by becoming a good artist. How do you think Nito has tried to earn the name Shwekito? And how is that different from how Scribbler earned his?
3. Why do you think Nito decided to let Josh get away easy and break away from what Chucho would have done?
4. Do you agree with Nito that his brother had to cripple the guy who left Nito deaf? Or do you agree with Susie that his brother would be of greater help if he were around? Write the reasons why.

5. How is Susie important to the story? Could anyone—Scribbler, Mom, the Old Paisa, Chucho, or any of his teachers—have the same effect on Nito?

AFTER READING:

Reading – analyzing characters; writing for a variety of purposes: to express, record, discover, develop, reflect on ideas or problem solve

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Bloom’s Taxonomy – Analyzing, Evaluating, Creating

The Student-Writer

1. In the story, the mystery of the old paisa is organic in that the elements are there for it—Chucho and Nito have different dads, there is a big age difference between them, and pictures and books from their former lives are there for Nito to consider. More importantly, though, the mystery affects his idea of family, which is the only sure thing in his life. In what other ways could this have happened in the story? What changes would you make to characters, plot, or setting to test Nito’s ideas of who he is or what his life is about? What changes would you make to any story to achieve this?
2. Think about creating a fictional character whose personality and goals are revealed through the books that he/she reads. Make a list of books that this fictional character has on his/her bookshelf. Write about what you can tell about this character just by looking at his/her bookshelf. Maybe, include books that he/she has to read for school and doesn’t really like. Give this list to other classmates and don’t tell them anything about the character you have in mind. Ask them to write down adjectives describing the character that they think of after reading the list of books.

Hernandez, Carlos (author of) “Losing Face”

BEFORE READING: Discuss with students the information in “The Basics” section on Conflict, Clues, and Character.

Listening/Speaking – for the purposes of gaining information, enjoying, and appreciating.

Bloom’s Taxonomy – Remembering, Understanding

Author's Statement: I based Igs, the detective in "Losing Face," on a student I had in one of my composition classes at the Borough of Manhattan Community College in New York City. That student was, quite simply, one of the smartest human beings I've ever encountered in my life. But the way he dressed and his body language made him look "street," to say the least. I am positive the only reason he didn't have straight As throughout his education is because he didn't look like what people expect a straight-A student to look like. But all you had to do was listen to him, and you'd hear poetry—hard, bare-knuckle poetry—but poetry, nonetheless. That got me thinking about, despite all the lip-service we pay to looking past appearances and seeing people for who they really are, we almost always believe what we see and stop listening.

It wasn't long after that I heard about the medical condition "face blindness." I was amazed to learn that there is a little part of your brain in charge of recognizing faces, and that, should it be damaged, you literally couldn't make sense of a face anymore. It's a stunning idea to contemplate, walking around the world without the ability to study people's countenances. But then I thought about how unobservant we can be, how we squander our gifts of perception: how we are all face-blind from time to time. And that's when the mystery of "Losing Face" was truly born.

DURING READING:

Reading – drawing inferences and supporting with textual evidence; vocabulary development

Listening/Speaking – listening/speaking/appreciation

Writing – writing for a variety of purposes: to express, record, discover, develop, reflect on ideas or problem solve

Bloom’s Taxonomy – Remembering, Understanding, Applying, Analyzing, Evaluating

Discussion/Writing Questions

1. What kind of person is Igs? Are there contradictory parts of his personality that make him hard to pin down?
2. Does the description of the NYPD, especially as represented by Detective Suárez-Balart, match up with how you think about big city police? Why or why not?

Does this story's portrayal of the police match up with how law enforcement works where you live?

3. In the middle of the story (pgs. 122-131), the method of storytelling changes: instead of Igs telling his story to the reader, he tells Detective Suárez-Balart Remy Mo's story. Why do think the author changed the storytelling method here? How does it affect the way you understand Remy Mo, Igs, and the detective?
4. Did anyone, in your opinion, act immorally in the story? Does anyone deserve jail time?
5. Think about the title of the story and how it relates to the main characters. Who, if anyone, loses face in the story? Who gains face?

AFTER READING:

Reading – analyzing characters; writing for a variety of purposes: to express, record, discover, develop, reflect on ideas or problem solve

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Bloom's Taxonomy – Analyzing, Evaluating, Creating

The Student-Writer

1. Brainstorm ways in which people might try to use the anonymity of social networks like Facebook to commit crimes. For instance, what if people created a donation page for "a little girl with cancer" that did not exist? Now think about the other side: what can society (and, specifically, law enforcement) do to help prevent people from getting away with those types of crimes? Pit those two against each other, and you have the beginning of a crime/mystery story!
2. A few times in "Losing Face," Igs mentions a girl in his high school named Rosario whom he is crazy about and says he is going to marry. What kind of girl do you think Rosario is to be so attractive to a guy like Igs? Write a paragraph where you describe her personality and what she looks like.
3. Remy Mo wins a Spoken Word contest at a young age with a poem called "Faceblind." Spoken Word is a lot like Rap and Hip-Hop, except that it doesn't have beats or music to support it. Instead, it depends on the rhythm of the language and the intensity of the performer. Now it's your turn: write a Rap or Spoken Word poem that is themed around some personal struggle you have had in your life.

Jacobson, Bertha (author of) “A Starring Role”

BEFORE READING: Discuss with students the information in “The Basics” section on Conflict, Clues, and Character.

Listening/Speaking – for the purposes of gaining information, enjoying, and appreciating.

Bloom’s Taxonomy – Remembering, Understanding

Author’s Statement: This story was developed like a recipe by mixing together four different ingredients of my daily life,

1. Fact: My neighborhood book club had just finished reading Isabel Allende’s “Daughter of Fortune.” In my opinion, this novel would make a wonderful musical.

Fiction: I wanted to incorporate the idea into a story. What type of story should I write?

2. Fact: My friend’s daughter, a senior in high school, was accepted at the prestigious Berklee College of Music in Boston, MA. Berklee’s alumni have been recipients of Grammys, Latino Grammys, Emmys and even Oscar Awards. The Latino singer and composer Juan Luis Guerra attended Berklee.

Fiction: My main character, Brianna, wants to apply to Berklee; she is very talented and has written the songs for the musical.

3. Fact: In the past few years, San Antonio’s population has boomed. A large percentage of newcomers are upper middle class families from Mexico immigrating to the north to escape the wave of crime and violence in Mexico due to the drug wars.

Fiction: My main character would befriend Natalia Cruz, a moody newcomer from Mexico who, unfortunately, had to grow up too soon by seeing more than her share of violence.

4. Fact: My teenage children joined Facebook. Being from a different generation, I acted more cautiously and warned them not to feed it too much personal information. I was appalled by the amount of private facts young high school students place on Facebook. I also received e-mails about hideous crimes where

the victims had been selected solely because of information on their Facebook profiles.

Fiction: My victim would be singled out because of her Facebook postings.

DURING READING:

Reading – drawing inferences and supporting with textual evidence; vocabulary development

Listening/Speaking – listening/speaking/appreciation

Writing – writing for a variety of purposes: to express, record, discover, develop, reflect on ideas or problem solve

Bloom's Taxonomy – Remembering, Understanding, Applying, Analyzing, Evaluating

Discussion/Writing Questions

1. Natalia takes the first step to get close to Brianna. Brianna is a little resentful since Natalia was selected to play the starring role of Eliza Sommers. Why do you think Brianna gives Natalia a chance? Have you ever been in a situation where you accepted a new friend's overtures even though you were not sure you liked the person?
2. As the relationship grows, Brianna sees only the glamour in Natalia's life. Have you ever been misled by outward appearances?
3. Having a bodyguard in the United States is reserved for the rich and famous. Because of the outrageous crime rate in Mexico, some upper middle class people hire private protection. How would your life be different if you had to be escorted by a bodyguard around the clock?
4. *Pozole* is considered comfort food in Mexico. It is a hot broth prepared with hominy, meat and spices. When served, it is topped with fresh radishes, onions, lime juice, oregano and hot sauce. What comfort food do you use within your culture or your family? Could you write a recipe for its preparation?

AFTER READING:

Reading – analyzing characters; writing for a variety of purposes: to express, record, discover, develop, reflect on ideas or problem solve

Listening/Speaking – listening, speaking, appreciation; reflecting on ideas

Writing – writing for a variety of purposes: to express, record, discover, develop, reflect on ideas or problem solve

Bloom's Taxonomy – Analyzing, Evaluating, Creating

The Student-Writer

1. Continue writing the story about what happens to Brianna next. Is she rescued? Do her relatives pay the ransom?
2. Once Brianna is released, what type of problems will she have to overcome? Write her story beginning with her release.
3. What do you think Natalia Cruz and Martín Lugo will do next? Write the story from Natalia's point of view.

López, Diana (author of) “All the Facts, A to Z”

BEFORE READING: Discuss with students the information in “The Basics” section on Conflict, Clues, and Character.

Listening/Speaking – for the purposes of gaining information, enjoying, and appreciating.

Bloom’s Taxonomy – Remembering, Understanding.

Author’s Statement: "All the Facts, A to Z" was inspired by my husband's great-grandmother who had shelves of saints just like those in the story. His grandmother also had what we called "a personality." She loved to tease people and stir up trouble.

DURING READING:

Reading – drawing inferences and supporting with textual evidence; vocabulary development

Listening/Speaking – listening/speaking/appreciation

Writing – writing for a variety of purposes: to express, record, discover, develop, reflect on ideas or problem solve

Bloom’s Taxonomy – Remembering, Understanding, Applying, Analyzing, Evaluating.

Discussion/Writing Questions

1. In most mysteries, the "crime" occurs in the opening scene, but in "All the Facts, A to Z," the crime occurs halfway through the story. Why do you think the author chose this plot structure? How would the story differ if it opened with the missing saints?
2. In what ways is the grandmother likeable and in what ways is she unlikeable? After listing these contrasting aspects of her personality, share your overall opinion by stating whether you believe she is or is not likeable and explaining why.
3. Protagonists often have a flaw that they must overcome. At the beginning of the story, what is Abigail's flaw and how does solving the mystery of the stolen saints help her overcome it?
4. Why do you think the saint figurines were so important to the grandmother?

AFTER READING:

Reading – analyzing characters; writing for a variety of purposes: to express, record, discover, develop, reflect on ideas or problem solve

Listening/Speaking – listening, speaking, appreciation; reflecting on ideas

Writing – writing for a variety of purposes: to express, record, discover, develop, reflect on ideas or problem solve

Bloom's Taxonomy – Applying, Analyzing, Evaluating, Creating

The Student-Writer

1. At the beginning of the story, Abigail mentions several articles she wrote for the school paper. Later, she writes titles for possible stories about the missing saints. Pretend you are Abigail and write out an investigative article based on one of the stories or titles that she mentions.
2. List saints' names that you know. Do you know how and why they became saints? Imagine what kind of deed would warrant being named a saint and write about it.

Narvaez, R. (author of) “Hating Holly Hernandez”

BEFORE READING: Discuss with students the information in “The Basics” section on Conflict, Clues, and Character.

Listening/Speaking – for the purposes of gaining information, enjoying, and appreciating.

Bloom’s Taxonomy – Remembering, Understanding.

Author’s Statement: I wanted to write a detective story that took place in a high school, but I wanted students to solve the mystery, not the police. I first wrote this story from Holly's perspective, since she is a teen detective like Nancy Drew. But then I decided I understood Xander better. I liked his humor and his constant sense of outrage. This is probably because, much like Xander, I felt like an outcast in high school. So I wrote the story from his perspective because it felt closer to me—and it was more fun.

DURING READING:

Reading – drawing inferences and supporting with textual evidence; vocabulary development

Listening/Speaking – listening/speaking/appreciation

Writing – writing for a variety of purposes: to express, record, discover, develop, reflect on ideas or problem solve

Bloom’s Taxonomy – Remembering, Understanding, Applying, Analyzing, Evaluating.

Discussion/Writing Questions

1. Who is the murderer? Why did he do it?
2. How did Xander and Holly figure it out? What qualities in their characters helped them solve the crime?
3. Unlike Xander, Holly seems like she has everything going well for her. What do you think about her life? Are there any clues that her life isn’t perfect?
4. We see Xander at home, but not Holly. What kind of home life do you think Holly has compared to Xander's?
5. Do you think Xander and Holly will be friends after this? Why or why not?

AFTER READING:

Reading – analyzing characters; writing for a variety of purposes: to express, record, discover, develop, reflect on ideas or problem solve

Listening/Speaking – listening, speaking, appreciation; reflecting on ideas

Writing – writing for a variety of purposes: to express, record, discover, develop, reflect on ideas or problem solve

Bloom’s Taxonomy – Applying, Analyzing, Evaluating, Creating

The Student-Writer

1. Think about the characters you want to write about. What are their hobbies? How do they talk? What do they look like? Then, think of a mystery you want to write about. Where is it? What kind of crime is involved? Now put them together—the characters and the mystery. Think: How would the characters you created act to solve that mystery?
2. Have you ever felt both annoyed by and attracted to someone? List the things you found attractive and the things you found annoying. Write a piece describing this person's annoying characteristics and why you are nonetheless attracted to him/her.

Olivas, Daniel A. (author of) “Carbon Beach”

BEFORE READING: Discuss with students the information in “The Basics” section on Conflict, Clues, and Character.

Listening/Speaking – for the purposes of gaining information, enjoying, and appreciating.

Bloom’s Taxonomy – Remembering, Understanding.

Author’s Statement: I am familiar with Carbon Beach (which is in the City of Malibu) where my teenage protagonist, Hernán Tafolla, discovers the dead man’s body buried up to his chin. That area is, in fact, in front of David Geffen’s beach house as noted in the story. The reason I know that area is due to my day job: since 1990, I have been an attorney in the Public Rights Division of the California Department of Justice. In that role, I’ve had the opportunity to represent the California Coastal Commission for many years. The Commission is a state agency that has regulatory oversight over land use and public access in California’s coastal zone. Thus, the public access way that my protagonist uses to get to the beach does, in fact, run along David Geffen’s property in Carbon Beach. It is an absolutely beautiful, pristine stretch of beach that can be enjoyed by all people because of that access way.

DURING READING:

Reading – drawing inferences and supporting with textual evidence; vocabulary development

Listening/Speaking – listening/speaking/appreciation

Writing – writing for a variety of purposes: to express, record, discover, develop, reflect on ideas or problem solve

Bloom’s Taxonomy – Remembering, Understanding, Applying, Analyzing, Evaluating.

Discussion/Writing Questions

1. Do you think Hernán Tafolla has told Detective Ana Urrea everything he knows about the man’s death? Support your answer with information from the story.
2. Do you think Detective Ana Urrea suspects that Hernán Tafolla might know more than he’s admitting? Support your answer with information from the story.
3. Would you describe Hernán Tafolla as a pragmatist or a dreamer?
4. Hernán Tafolla is from Canoga Park, a district in the San Fernando Valley region of Los Angeles, California. Canoga Park has diverse demographics with people of all

income levels and many ethnicities including a sizeable Latino population. On the other hand, Carbon Beach is in Malibu, an affluent beachfront city that includes some of the most expensive homes in California. Do you think Hernán Tafolla feels comfortable in Malibu? What descriptions in the story would support your belief that he feels comfortable in Malibu? What supports your belief that he doesn't feel comfortable there?

AFTER READING:

Reading – analyzing characters; writing for a variety of purposes: to express, record, discover, develop, reflect on ideas or problem solve

Listening/Speaking – listening, speaking, appreciation; reflecting on ideas

Writing – writing for a variety of purposes: to express, record, discover, develop, reflect on ideas or problem solve

Bloom's Taxonomy – Applying, Analyzing, Evaluating, Creating

The Student-Writer

1. A note from the author: I enjoy writing very short stories which are known by many different names such as flash fiction, sudden fiction, and short-short fiction. Because these types of stories are very short, they can leave a lot to the reader's imagination, which includes allowing the reader to imagine how the story ends.

My story purposely has an ambiguous ending: we really don't know how much Hernán Tafolla knows about the dead body, but we do know he's developed a crush on Detective Urrea and that he enjoys this beautiful stretch of beach.

Now, try writing a very short story (about 500-1000 words) that: (1) is set in a place that you know and that makes you happy; (2) involves a young person who is based on yourself or someone you know; and (3) leaves the ending as a bit of a mystery so that the reader can imagine what might happen. Make sure your story includes clues for your reader to base his/her imaginings on.

2. Close your eyes and imagine a place that you really enjoy. What does it smell like? Look like? Sound like? Write a piece describing this place.

Pérez-Duthie, Juan Carlos (authors of) “The Librarian”

BEFORE READING: Discuss with students the information in “The Basics” section on Conflict, Clues, and Character.

Listening/Speaking – for the purposes of gaining information, enjoying, and appreciating.

Bloom’s Taxonomy – Remembering, Understanding.

Author’s Statement: I write the kinds of stories that I would like to read, and which, perhaps, I don’t find too often. They usually combine fictional elements with historical elements, and I always love a surprise factor in the story, especially at the ending. Rather than tell a budding teen writer “write what you know,” I would say “go beyond that, and write what you would like to read, or what nobody else is writing!”

DURING READING:

Reading – drawing inferences and supporting with textual evidence; vocabulary development

Listening/Speaking – listening/speaking/appreciation

Writing – writing for a variety of purposes: to express, record, discover, develop, reflect on ideas or problem solve

Bloom’s Taxonomy – Remembering, Understanding, Applying, Analyzing, Evaluating.

Discussion/Writing Questions

1. Who were the Nazis?
2. What were Nazi doctors famous for?
3. Who was Dr. Mengele and what is his relationship to the main character in this story? How does the protagonist figure out this relationship?
4. Why did twins have a special appeal to Nazi doctors?
5. Did Nazis escape to the U.S. and other countries after World War II?

AFTER READING:

Reading – analyzing characters; writing for a variety of purposes: to express, record, discover, develop, reflect on ideas or problem solve

Listening/Speaking – listening, speaking, appreciation; reflecting on ideas

Writing – writing for a variety of purposes: to express, record, discover, develop, reflect on ideas or problem solve

Bloom’s Taxonomy – Applying, Analyzing, Evaluating, Creating

The Student-Writer

1. Choose a period in history that fascinates you. Do the research to see how people of that period made a living, ate, clothed themselves, and worshipped. Then write a mystery story set in that time period. Remember that the protagonist will have to think according to what people of that time period believed in and what they knew, which may be very different than today's beliefs and knowledge.
2. Investigate Nazi war criminals, choose one and write about him / her.
3. Imagine you're a twin. Make a list of the pros and cons of being a twin. Write a persuasive piece arguing whether it's better to be a twin or not.

Quinn, L.M. (author of) “The Red Lipstick”

BEFORE READING: Discuss with students the information in “The Basics” section on Conflict, Clues, and Character.

Listening/Speaking – for the purposes of gaining information, enjoying, and appreciating.

Bloom’s Taxonomy – Remembering, Understanding.

Author’s Statement: I love mysteries, just like Yoli in my story. She looks for mysteries to solve everywhere in her daily world, not just in high-profile murders or bombings. And she finds one in her father’s business—the mystery of the missing auto parts. Yoli is inspired to do something good for her father and family, as we all want to do.

On the surface, this looks like a mystery that everyone would be happy to see solved, with the person stealing the auto parts punished. But what Yoli doesn’t realize, until she solves the crime, is that a lot of people can get hurt from her information, not just the thief.

Whatever decisions you make in life, you have to consider all of the consequences, as Yoli realizes. Once you do that, you make your move to solve the mystery, and live with it. Not always an easy choice. Small, but significant, mysteries like this one have been a part of my life, as I suspect is the same for all readers of this anthology.

DURING READING:

Reading – drawing inferences and supporting with textual evidence; vocabulary development

Listening/Speaking – listening/speaking/appreciation

Writing – writing for a variety of purposes: to express, record, discover, develop, reflect on ideas or problem solve

Bloom’s Taxonomy – Remembering, Understanding, Applying, Analyzing, Evaluating

Discussion/Writing Questions

1. Does Yoli have a vision for herself and her life?
2. What has Yoli done to make sure that her education will help accomplish her goal?
3. Does she stick to her goal no matter what anyone thinks about her decision to be a P.I.?

AFTER READING:

Reading – analyzing characters; writing for a variety of purposes: to express, record, discover, develop, reflect on ideas or problem solve

Listening/Speaking – listening, speaking, appreciation; reflecting on ideas

Writing – writing for a variety of purposes: to express, record, discover, develop, reflect on ideas or problem solve

Bloom's Taxonomy –Applying, Analyzing, Evaluating, Creating

The Student-Writer

1. Read the newspaper to find an interesting story and imagine the unknown details.

For instance, how did the fire start that burned down an entire apartment complex?.

- Write down everything you know about this mystery. Who? What? Where? When? How?
- Who will be the good guy/girl and who or what will be the villain?
- Write the mystery story.
- Share your story with other friends who write mystery.
- Edit your story and rewrite it until it's the best you can do.

2. Look around at school or work for something that seems out of place. Imagine and create a story to explain this unusual situation.

Saldaña, Jr., René (author of) “The Right Size”

BEFORE READING: Discuss with students the information in “The Basics” section on Conflict, Clues, and Character.

Listening/Speaking – for the purposes of gaining information, enjoying, and appreciating.

Bloom’s Taxonomy – Remembering, Understanding.

Author’s Statement: I forget exactly what prompted me to begin to think about the lengths to which I, as a dad of three boys, would go in defending them if the situation arose, but thinking about such things is what started me on this story. It had to have been an item on the news or in a movie I watched, but the exact one I can’t recall.

I asked myself whether in spite of my teaching my boys that we must do everything in our power to talk through problems with other folks, are there still situations that would trump my attempt at teaching them to turn the other cheek. My answer was that yes, indeed, I would do whatever I had to do to take care of my kids, including choosing violence. I hope that I’ll never have to resort to what the dad in my story does, but if I had to, I would be ready.

DURING READING:

Reading – drawing inferences and supporting with textual evidence; vocabulary development

Listening/Speaking – listening/speaking/appreciation

Writing – writing for a variety of purposes: to express, record, discover, develop, reflect on ideas or problem solve

Bloom’s Taxonomy – Remembering, Understanding, Applying, Analyzing, Evaluating

Discussion/Writing Questions

1. Certain parts of this story happen in the present moment. Other parts of the story happened before the present moment. The reader is told about past events by flashback. What do you as a reader find out in the flashbacks about the different characters?
2. Is there ever a situation when you can see someone doing something that goes against the community standard to accomplish something positive? Please explain your answer.
3. What is Tommy’s first mistake that leads to his current situation?

AFTER READING:

Reading – analyzing characters; writing for a variety of purposes: to express, record, discover, develop, reflect on ideas or problem solve

Listening/Speaking – listening, speaking, appreciation; reflecting on ideas

Writing – writing for a variety of purposes: to express, record, discover, develop, reflect on ideas or problem solve

Bloom's Taxonomy – Analyzing, Evaluating, Creating

The Student-Writer

1. As an exercise, base a character on a real life figure, preferably someone you know well, someone whom you admire. Next, place him/her in a situation in which his/her moral standards are certain to be challenged. For example, you know your grandmother is not a thief in real life, because she would never consider taking something that doesn't belong to her. Ask yourself this question about your newly created character: under what circumstances would he/she commit a crime? Then try to explain why she would commit that crime in the plot of your story. For an extra challenge: use flashback to divulge important information about at least one of your characters.
2. Have you ever done something that you knew was wrong? How did you feel? Did you get caught? Write about that experience.
3. Can you imagine a situation where you would do something completely against what you have been taught all your life? Write about it.

Troncoso, Sergio (author of) “Nuts”

BEFORE READING: Discuss with students the information in “The Basics” section on Conflict, Clues, and Character.

Listening/Speaking – for the purposes of gaining information, enjoying, and appreciating.

Bloom’s Taxonomy – Remembering, Understanding

Author’s Statement: I wrote "Nuts" because I wanted to write a story to make the reader think about what really happened and to prompt the reader to figure out the puzzle. I believe in 'close reading,' that is, reading so that every word is important and has a reason to be there in the story. "Nuts" is written for that careful reader who will not miss any detail, or whether a detail matches other details in the story. I also want the reader to think in-between the lines of the story, to understand the relationships between the characters, and what is left unsaid between them. I have two teenage sons, and one of them is allergic to tree nuts, so I also wanted to write about that hidden, quotidian danger he faces. By the way, my sixteen-year-old figured out what really happened in "Nuts" on his first reading!

DURING READING:

Reading – drawing inferences and supporting with textual evidence; vocabulary development

Listening/Speaking – listening/speaking/appreciation

Writing – writing for a variety of purposes: to express, record, discover, develop, reflect on ideas or problem solve

Bloom’s Taxonomy – Remembering, Understanding, Applying, Analyzing, Evaluating

Discussion/Writing Questions

1. What telling detail about the cookies gives the reader a vital clue to understand that what happened to Ethan was not an accident?
2. How does Zendon really feel about his best friend Ethan? Does Zendon really know how he feels, or is he confused? How does the mention of a particular scene in the movie "Juno" give you a clue as to what Zendon is thinking about Ethan? What other clues reinforce what Zendon is thinking, but not saying, to his friend Ethan?
3. Isn't that a strange name for the person, 'Doable HePrey,' who writes Ethan that email at the end? Did anybody figure out that 'Doable HePrey' is an anagram?

What does it stand for? Who is the author of that email? Why is that person writing Ethan?

AFTER READING:

Reading – analyzing characters; writing for a variety of purposes: to express, record, discover, develop, reflect on ideas or problem solve

Listening/Speaking – listening, speaking, appreciation; reflecting on ideas

Writing – writing for a variety of purposes: to express, record, discover, develop, reflect on ideas or problem solve

Bloom’s Taxonomy – Analyzing, Evaluating, Creating

The Student-Writer

1. Think about how you are vulnerable as a person, vulnerable everyday. Perhaps you have a nut allergy. Or you cross a dangerous intersection often. Or you walk by a tall building with air conditioners sticking out of every other window! Then think about what happens in your school, in jealousies between people, or misunderstandings that lead to anger, or rivalries. Then how would you go about figuring out if someone is trying to get you?

Write a story set in your own school with a series of happenings that could be explained away but which could also be that enemy trying to get someone.

2. Describe your relationship with your best friend. How are you alike or dissimilar? Write about your relationship and what makes you friends.

Villareal, Ray (author of) “Belle”

BEFORE READING: Discuss with students the information in “The Basics” section on Conflict, Clues, and Character.

Listening/Speaking – for the purposes of gaining information, enjoying, and appreciating.

Bloom’s Taxonomy – Remembering, Understanding.

Author’s Statement: One of the most common questions a writer is asked is: Where do you get your ideas? The answer? From experiences. Everything we've ever felt, seen, thought, or dreamed of is a story. We just have to recognize them as such.

"Belle" came to me in a dream. In my dream, I met a beautiful girl who I was immediately attracted to. But I soon discovered that the girl wasn't exactly who she said she was. Nothing she said matched up with what I was learning about her.

Also, I was intrigued by recent news stories I read about adults, pretending to be students, who enroll in schools to try to relive their high school years.

DURING READING:

Reading – drawing inferences and supporting with textual evidence; vocabulary development

Listening/Speaking – listening/speaking/appreciation

Writing – writing for a variety of purposes: to express, record, discover, develop, reflect on ideas or problem solve

Bloom’s Taxonomy – Remembering, Understanding, Applying, Analyzing, Evaluating.

Discussion/Writing Questions

1. What are the best/worst things about being a high school student?
2. How do you think you will see your high school experiences five or six years from now? Interview your parents or other adults. Find out if they would ever want to relive their high school years. If they could go back in time, what would they do differently?
3. Is Belle a ghost? Or is she mentally disturbed? Reflect and explain your reasoning.

AFTER READING:

Reading – analyzing characters; writing for a variety of purposes: to express, record, discover, develop, reflect on ideas or problem solve

Listening/Speaking – listening, speaking, appreciation; reflecting on ideas

Writing – writing for a variety of purposes: to express, record, discover, develop, reflect on ideas or problem solve

Bloom’s Taxonomy – Analyzing, Evaluating, Creating

The Student-Writer

1. Imagine a person at your school who has a secret to hide. Then, imagine another person at the school who discovers the secret by figuring out clues in everyday life and events at the school.

When you imagine these two characters for your story, make them have some interests that are the same, but some that are totally different. Your primary conflict will be that one person wants to hide the secret and the other person wants to discover the secret, but also add in secondary conflicts, which arise from their different interests or their personalities. For instance, could you have a character that is brainy and studies all the time and a second character who is not interested in academics?

2. What would you do if you found out that one of your classmates was actually twenty-three/twenty four years old and was only pretending to be a student at your school? Write the story about the clues that would help you to discover that person’s real age.

Zepeda, Gwendolyn (author) of “Valentine Surprise”

BEFORE READING: - Discuss with students the information in “The Basics” section on Conflict, Clues, and Character.

Listening/Speaking – for the purposes of gaining information, enjoying, and appreciating.

Bloom’s Taxonomy – Remembering, Understanding.

Author’s Statement: This was the first mystery story I ever wrote. When I was invited to submit a story to this collection, my first thought was “Mystery – that means it has to be about murder.” But then I researched by reading a bunch of other people’s mystery short stories and realized that mine could be about anything. I wanted to write about an experience that could happen to anyone, so I chose shoplifting. I thought it’d be a fun story for all the people who have to work retail for a living.

DURING READING:

Reading – drawing inferences and supporting with textual evidence; vocabulary development

Listening/Speaking – listening/speaking/appreciation

Writing – writing for a variety of purposes: to express, record, discover, develop, reflect on ideas or problem solve

Bloom’s Taxonomy – Remembering, Understanding, Applying, Analyzing, Evaluating.

Discussion/Writing Questions

1. What does the protagonist believe about each of the other characters at the beginning of this story? How do her feelings about them change by the end?
2. What do we learn about the protagonist’s background? How does her background affect the way she feels about the other characters?
3. How important is perspective in this story? Think about what happens in this plot. How would the story change if it was told from someone else’s point of view?

AFTER READING:

Reading – analyzing characters; writing for a variety of purposes: to express, record, discover, develop, reflect on ideas or problem solve

Listening/Speaking – listening, speaking, appreciation; reflecting on ideas

Writing – writing for a variety of purposes: to express, record, discover, develop, reflect on ideas or problem solve

Bloom’s Taxonomy – Analyzing, Evaluating, Creating

The Student-Writer

1. The key to this story—what makes it a mystery—is perspective. The person telling the story doesn't understand what's going on until the very end. Was there ever a situation in which you couldn't figure out what was going on? When you did figure it out, were you surprised? You can make that experience into a mystery story. Describe what happened a way that makes your reader work to figure it out, just like you had to.
2. Have you ever worked in a store or restaurant? Or volunteered for a club or other organization? Write about an odd, funny or annoying experience that you had while working.

Lesson Plan for “Carbon Beach”

Length of Lesson: Approximately 50 minutes

Age Range: Middle school through high school

Required materials:

- One photocopy of this entire story (two pages) for each student. Photocopies should not be two-sided.
- Blank lined paper for writing
- Pens or pencils
- Flip-chart or chalk board/dry erase board for teacher to write on

Goals:

- To read and comprehend the mystery story
- To learn basic information about Conflict, Clues, and Character in a mystery story
- To write the beginning of a new mystery story based on the prompt
- To use the imagination in creating a fictional character’s thoughts
- To learn new vocabulary

- I. Introduce “The Basics” of Mystery Fiction
 - a. Conflict
 - b. Clues
 - c. Character
- II. Allow the Students to Read “Carbon Beach” silently
 - a. Ask the students to jot down any unfamiliar words for vocabulary development
 - b. Encourage the students to re-read the story to be sure they understand it
- III. Discuss the characters in the story
 - a. Who is the villain?
 - b. Who is the sleuth?
 - c. What does the reader know about each one of these people?
 - d. From whose point of view is the story told from? Why did the author choose this person?
- IV. Discuss the clues in the story
 - a. Let the class generate a written list of clues on the chalkboard
- V. Conflict
 - a. This story’s conflict is simple: a crime has been committed and the detective wishes to solve it. Hernán appears to be the criminal who wishes to get away with committing the crime.

- b. What are the secondary conflicts?
- VI. Discuss Point of View
- a. This story is told from Hernán's point of view only. Discuss how this limits what the reader knows.
- VII. Writing (15 minutes)
- a. Ask the class to write the story from Detective Urrea's point of view. Only what she knows and sees and feels will be in the story. Encourage the students to add details, such as sand in her shoes from the beach or lipstick caking in the sun. However, the writing has to stay true to what has already been told in Daniel Olivas' version of the story.
- VIII. Reading Out Loud
- a. Encourage any student who wishes to read his/her story to do so. Guide the class in positive feedback. Be sure to praise creative use of vocabulary, effective additional details from Detective Urrea's viewpoint, etc.
- IX. Homework
- a. The students can finish their "mystery story" at home.

Footnotes

1. Graham and Hebert, *Writing to Read*, 13-18.

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