What lies beneath the surface of your life?

Analysing hidden depths starts with taking things apart. Then you can reassemble them—and understand them—in a new way. So focus your mental telescope…and look closely.
Sabrina, fifteen, was just hanging out with her friends, laughing and telling jokes as usual. But some of the guys started making fun of the new boy she was dating. The jokes turned cruel. Sabrina knew Brian was different from her crowd, but she really liked him. He had his own way of looking at things, and spending time with him was fun. Should she quit seeing him? Or should she stand up for him?
Problems like Sabrina’s result from the very nature of cliques. A clique is an exclusive crowd of teens who have many of the same interests. The key word is *exclusive*, but not in the sense of “special”; cliques *exclude* people who do not fit in. Cliques may not be “nice,” but these crowds serve a purpose for the people in them.

Teens face tremendous physical and mental changes. It helps to know that these changes are normal. When friends speak, dress, and act the same way, it helps them feel good about themselves. Cliques reinforce those positive feelings. The negative side is that people who do not speak, dress, and act the same are left out. And some clique members feel better about themselves by shutting others out.

**“We Say Who Sits Here”**

One day Thea, thirteen, was eating lunch with Sarah and some other kids in her crowd. Then Amanda brought her tray to the table. Amanda and Thea were working on a project together and just starting to be friends.

Sarah said, “Hey, you can’t sit here! This is our table, and we say who sits here and who doesn’t.”

Amanda’s face fell. Thea could tell Sarah had really hurt her. Sarah was Thea’s best friend, but Thea didn’t like what she was doing to Amanda.

Thea said, “Amanda can sit here if she wants to.”

Then Sarah turned on Thea. “If you want to sit with Amanda, do it at another table.”

Thea had only a few seconds to choose. Should she go along to get along with Sarah and the others? Or should she do what she thinks is right?

**Making Choices**

Learning to deal with a clique—deciding when to go along with the group and when to follow your own feelings—is part of growing up.

In the case of Sarah and Amanda, Thea faced a conflict. Sarah wanted to keep Amanda out of the group. The two had very different personalities, and Sarah saw Amanda as a threat. So Sarah treated her badly. Putting someone else down gives some people a feeling of power. It hides their own lack of self-esteem.

But Thea told Sarah, “Amanda and I are staying here. If you don’t like it, you can go sit somewhere else.” Sarah and the others moved to another table. But later, they apologized to Thea and Amanda.

Thea felt good about herself and was able to make her point without being dropped by her group.

For Sabrina, things were a little different. She got angry at her friends and walked away. She went for days without speaking.
to them. She really didn’t know if she wanted to be part of the group anymore. Her interests were changing, and she really didn’t need her crowd as much as she had just a year before. Maybe it was time to make new friends.

**Getting Shut Out**

Thea and Sabrina both made choices. But many people don’t have the option of choosing whether or not to be part of a group. The crowd makes it clear it doesn’t want them. In fact, almost everyone has been shut out by a clique at one time or another. And that can hurt.

“Those who are rejected by cliques may become upset, depressed, and form a poor self-concept,” says Susan Forman, a psychology professor at the University of South Carolina. “Some resent the clique and become vindictive. But those who have been rejected may find friendship in other groups.”

Owen was recently shut out. He’d always been friends with Bobby, Mark, and their crowd. But Bobby and Mark got better and better at sports, and Owen was no jock. Then Bobby told Owen he didn’t want to hang out with him after baseball games. Owen felt hurt. Bobby and Mark were part of the crowd of jocks and cheerleaders, and now Owen wasn’t.

Mark underlined the point one day when he made fun of Owen’s Metallica T-shirt. “You think you’re so tough!” Mark said, pointing at the T-shirt. “I bet you don’t even know the words to their songs.”

“You want me to sing them for you now?” Owen said, looking around uncomfortably at the guys who had once been his friends.
Bobby and some others began poking fun at Owen, too. Owen had never felt as bad in his life.

Turning Things Around

Owen didn’t know what to do when he lost his old friends. At first, he moped around school and stayed in his room at home. Later, he started spending afternoons by himself skateboarding. He began hanging around a local skateboard shop to pick up some tips. There he met a few other guys who were into skateboards. Being with them helped him feel better about himself. It also made Owen think about what was important to him and understand himself better. And he figured out that no matter how bleak life may seem, things can change.

Both Thea and Owen turned bad experiences into good ones. They learned skills they will be able to use again and again—because cliques are not just a problem for teens. Adults who move to new communities or start new jobs know that there may be people who try to exclude them.

So what do you do if you have a problem with a clique? It might be tempting to sleep until it’s over. But, says Stephanie Impellitiere, a guidance counsellor at Garrison (NY) Union Free School, the way to get your way in a clique is to assert yourself. “Listen to what’s going on in the group,” she says. “Then be assertive about what you want.”

One reason that Thea was able to get what she wanted—making a new friend and staying in the group—was that she reacted strongly to what Sarah told Amanda. And she let the others know exactly how she felt. If she had gone along, Sarah would have taken her silence as approval of her behaviour. Thea found a positive way to deal with the problem.

Finally, it’s important to keep communication lines open. “If you are having a problem,” says Impellitiere, “tell someone about it. Share your story with a friend in or outside your clique or with your parents or a teacher.” They may be able to help you get perspective.

How Cliques Tick

It’s a need to matter to others that makes cliques tick. According to Gerald Adams, program director of Research Lab for Adolescence at the University of Utah, cliques generally begin in late elementary school. The groups usually include boys or girls, but not both. In junior high, these crowds begin to mix. As teens get older, the groups break into true cliques made up of people with similar interests and economic backgrounds. But during the late high school years, the groups may begin to lose
some of their power as teens begin to pair off. Then the stage is set for dating and establishing adult friendships.

Cliques often do serve a purpose. The groups “sort out” kids and teach them what others think is socially acceptable, says Adams. Having a peer group that sets rules can help kids make the transition from being a child in a family with rules to being an independent adult.

Some things about cliques are not obvious, says Stephanie Impellitiere, and dealing with them is easier when you understand how they work. Things to remember:

• Cliques are made up of people with a common bond that is not always stated. For example, people with alcoholic parents may be attracted to each other, even though they are unaware that they share the same problem.
• There is a leader in a clique, whether or not other members say so. Trouble occurs when another crowd member attempts to take over.
• People in cliques have a strong need to be accepted. Going along with certain behaviour may be the only way to gain acceptance by the group. This can lead to trouble in some cases, but it is not always bad. The groups can help people understand their limits and learn to deal with others.

Activities

1. Work with a small group. List and discuss your experiences with cliques and cliquishness. Choose one of the experiences to present as a dramatic scene. Write, rehearse, revise, and present the scene. Afterwards, evaluate the presentation with your group.

2. Choose one of the scenarios described in this article. Rewrite the scenario as a first-person journal entry written by one of the people involved.

3. Work with a small group. Using your own ideas and specific examples from the article, informally debate the statement: “Cliques are valuable in today's society.”
See Saw

(Excerpt)

Dennis Foon

Focus Your Learning
Reading this play excerpt will help you to:
- use a graphic organizer to understand the characters
- create original text to show you understand the play
- work in groups
Characters

JOSH
CHARLA
PAIGE
ADAM

They are all in grade seven.

Puppets

All the other characters are played by animated objects, puppets, masked figures or voices. They include:

TV
MISHA, Paige’s half-brother
MOM, Paige’s mother
DAD, Paige’s stepfather
ANNE, Josh’s mother
BILL, Josh’s father
ELLEN, Charla’s mother

Most of the puppets are described in the text; directors and casts are encouraged to explore creative ways of realizing these characters. The following notes describe some of the approaches taken by the original production.
I describe Josh’s parents in the play as an “attaché case” and a “telephone.” In the original production, we decided not to make these two characters puppets. The actors wore head pieces that allowed a clear view of their faces. BILL had a visor that he snapped down when he went into business mode and carried a cellular phone; ANNE had a spinning wheel that had her appointments clipped to it and carried an attaché case that contained a heart, a Nintendo game and Josh’s lunch money.

MISHA was a two-foot-high doll with a spinning head that had two faces: one angelic, the other demonic, complete with pointed teeth and horns. Paige’s parents only saw his angelic side. Paige, of course, was constantly exposed to the demon.

The actors playing ADAM, CHARLA, PAIGE and JOSH each carried a hand puppet that represented their “secret” or “inner” self. In moments of hurt, loneliness or fear they put on the hand puppet and comforted it.

The play may be performed by as few as four actors. However, the final scene with NYTRO may require an “assist” by the stage manager.

The Set

The play takes place in many different locations but the only stage-requirement is a large “brick” wall masking the upstage area.

Covered in graffiti, the wall is the place where Adam goes to draw his bird, the eagle that eventually emerges from behind the bricks.

This wall also provides Nytro a place to “crash” through and a position (at the top of the wall) for the operators to control the human Ellen in her last scene with Charla.

In the original production, four cubes were used to create all the different environments. For example, the
top of an overstuffed chair sat on one of the cubes to represent Adam’s house. The back of the chair had the house’s exterior painted on it and when this side faced the audience it represented the front porch of Adam’s house. When the chair was turned around to face the audience, it represented the inside of Adam’s house. Adam sat in the chair and the dog and cat fought on the overstuffed arms.

Adam: Where’re you goin’, Josh?

Josh: In … inta school.

Adam: You didn’t even say hi to me. Don’t you say hello?

Josh: Hello.

Adam: (Poking him.) Hello, what?

Josh: Hello, Adam.

Adam: (Shoving him.) What did you call me?

Josh: Adam.

Adam: Did I say you could call me that?

Josh: No.

Adam: Then why’d you say it?

Josh: I don’t know.

Adam: What?

Josh: I don’t know.

Adam: What?

Josh: I don’t know.

Adam: What?

Josh: I don’t know.
(ADAM shoves JOSH several times, pushing him out of earshot of the girls.)

Adam: You wanna live?

Josh: Yes.

Adam: Then whattaya got for me today?

(JOSH reaches into his pocket, gives ADAM the two dollar bill.)

Is that all?

Josh: Uh-huh.

Adam: Are you holding out on me?

Josh: No.

(ADAM squeezes JOSH’s face.)

Adam: You better not be, Wimpsucker.

(ADAM throws JOSH on the ground and struts away, smiling at the girls. PAIGE is not impressed. CHARLA runs over to JOSH.)

Charla: Are you okay?

(JOSH gets up. CHARLA hands him his school pack. JOSH takes it and runs off.)

Paige: I’m Paige. Are you new here?

Charla: First day. I’m Charla. What’s with that Adam?

Paige: Oh, he does that to everybody but especially Josh. He steals too—did you see him try to kiss me?

Charla: Yeah.

Paige: He’s not the only one. Kim tried to kiss me yesterday. He said he wants to be my boyfriend—I told him to
stick his head in the toilet. Roy was my boyfriend from February to May but I broke up with him ’cause he ate too much pizza.

Charla: Too much pizza?

Paige: The tomato sauce gave him a red moustache, it was gross—do you have a boyfriend?

Charla: No.

Paige: My boyfriend is Micky.

(MICKY enters. He is a trendily dressed, boy mannequin on wheels. An operator works his arms.)

He’s the cutest boy in the whole school. He even did a TV commercial he’s so cute. And met [Kirsty Alley] and gave me her autograph.

(MICKY goes to PAIGE and holds her hand.)

I love the presents he gives me.

(MICKY hands PAIGE some pencils and puts a ring on her finger.)

And he gave me his ring to wear. Don’t you love it? I know some people who would kill for it. But he gave it to me … I don’t mind kissing Micky ’cause we’re in love.

(PAIGE kisses MICKY. CHARLA is embarrassed. MICKY exits.)

Everybody says he’s the most popular boy in school and I’m the most popular girl. Do you think that’s true? Of course, you wouldn’t know, you just got here.

Charla: I haven’t even been to class yet.

Paige: We have a group, you know. Of really special people.
We go skating together and to the mall. Wanna be in it?

Charla: Sure.

Paige: Okay. I’ll talk to everybody. I mean it’s really my decision and everything but I have to keep it fair, you know what I mean?

Charla: Yeah.

Paige: So I’ll let you know, okay?

Charla: Okay.

(As Paige exits, she waves to a friend.)

Paige: Hi!

(Charla watches her go.

The school bell rings. All four kids take their places for class. Adam comes in last. Before he sits, he goes to Josh and smacks him on the head.)

Adam: Get outta my seat.

Josh: The teacher put me here.

Adam: Well who’s in charge, me or him?

Josh: … He’s the teacher.

(Adam smacks Josh again.)

Adam: Who’s your boss?

(Josh moves to the next seat.)

Good very good. You get a star.

(Adam snaps his finger at Josh’s face.

Adam sits in a different seat, leaving Josh’s original place empty. Adam takes out his piece of paper and draws on it.)
MR. ZEDNIK, unseen by the audience, enters the classroom. All four kids sit up straight.

They perform ZEDNIK’s voice in unison. When speaking his voice, they look down at their desks; when speaking directly to ZEDNIK, they look up.)

Zednik: Good morning class.

All: Good morning Mr. Zednik.

Zednik: We have a new student in our class. I’d like you all to welcome Charla Williams. Josh?

Josh: Yes, sir?

Zednik: Why aren’t you sitting in your correct seat?

Josh: I …

Zednik: Well, move.

(JOSH quickly moves back into his original place.)

Now. Your book presentations. Who would like to go first?

(PAIGE eagerly holds up her hand.)

Alright, Paige.

Paige: My report is on the autobiography of [Claudia Schiffer]. From the moment she was born, everybody knew she was going to be a superstar because she was such a perfect baby and didn’t cry at all.

(ADAM pokes JOSH with his pencil. JOSH moves over in his seat to get away.)

Did you know that [Claudia Schiffer’s] hair grows faster than normal people’s? Her hair was rated the most perfect by the Hairdressers Association of North America.
(ADAM pokes JOSH again with his pencil. JOSH moves away but this time falls off his chair.)

Zednik: Josh, are you okay?

Josh: Yes, sir.

Zednik: What happened?

Josh: I … I slipped.

Zednik: Adam?

Adam: Yes, sir?

Zednik: Did you push Josh?

Adam: No, sir.

Zednik: Did you poke him?

Adam: With what, sir?

Zednik: You tell me.

Adam: No way I could reach him from my seat, sir. Besides, all I got is my eraser in my hand and that wouldn’t poke him very well, do you think, sir?

Zednik: Alright then, get your notebooks out for a dictation exercise.

(As they pull out their notebooks, ADAM folds up the piece of paper he’s been working on and passes it to CHARLA, indicating that she should give it to PAIGE. CHARLA does.)

What are you doing, Charla?

Charla: Getting out a notebook, sir.

Zednik: Very good, Charla. Pencils ready? The first sentence is: Blah blah blah blah blah blah.

(The bell rings. The kids run out.)
JOSH sits by himself. CHARLA starts to go to him but is stopped by PAIGE.)

Paige: How’d you like my book report?
Charla: It was interesting.
Paige: I should hope so, I made it all up.
Charla: You did?
Paige: Yeah! I didn’t have to read a book. I heard something about her hair on TV. And that stuff about the baby? That’s what they said about me, when I was born. Perfect baby. Didn’t cry. Superstar. What’d they say about you?
Charla: I don’t remember.

(PAIGE reaches into her pocket.)

Paige: Oh, right, Adam’s note.

(She opens it.)

What is this?
Charla: It’s a drawing.
Paige: It’s weird.
Charla: It’s nice.
Paige: You’re weird. What does it say?
Charla: It’s crossed out. It says—I … love you.
Paige: Lemmee see that. (She giggles.) What a goof.

(She throws it on the ground.)

Charla: Don’t you want it?
Paige: Are you kidding? It’s got germs. Did you see the new [Vogue]?
Charla: No.

(PAIGE pulls it out, points at the cover.)

Paige: I love that colour on her.

Charla: It would look good on you too.

Paige: You think so?

Charla: That shade of blue’s perfect for you.

Paige: Maybe if I grew my hair.

Charla: I was thinking about growing mine too.

Paige: I’m gonna perm mine like hers.

Charla: That’d look great.

Paige: You should perm yours too.

(MICKY enters.)

Micky!

(MICKY holds up his wrist. He is wearing a watch.)

What’s that? A Rolex! (To CHARLA.) His uncle gave him a real Rolex for his birthday! (To MICKY.) Is that your uncle who lives in Hollywood? The one who helped produce [Terminator Two]?

(MICKY pulls out his date book.)


(She starts making a list.)

Who should we invite? Boys: Sean, Jason, Justin, Ben, Chris, Alex …

(She looks at JOSH, who’s immersed in a Gameboy. She
1. Create a character web for each of the four main characters — Josh, Adam, Charla, and Paige. Show physical characteristics, key personality traits, and other background information about the characters.

2. Work with a partner. For a production of this play excerpt, decide on appropriate costumes and props for Micky and each of the four main characters. Write descriptions of these costumes and props.

3. Work with a group of six actors and a director. Rehearse and present this play excerpt to the class.

Facetiously motions to MICKY, as if to say, “Should we invite him?” She giggles, then back to her list.)

Brent, Chad, Jake. Girls: Catherine, Julia, Tuesday …

(Charla watches Paige hopefully.)

Michelle, Melissa, Emily, Sara, Rebecca …

(Micky makes a point.)

No, Micky, not Allison M, she’s boring. Stephanie, Kristen, Kimberly …

(Paige looks at Charla as she tries to think of the last name. Charla is on the edge of her seat hoping.)

Monica! I think that’s everybody. Okay, let’s go … see you later, Charla.

Charla: Bye.

(Charla sadly watches Paige and Micky go. Paige turns, calling back to Charla.)

Paige: Call me!

Charla: What’s your number?
Advertising jingles, slogans, scripts, and descriptions—called advertising copy in the ad world—have power, sometimes more power than you might like. They enter your head uninvited and make themselves at home, while you struggle to remember the names of the world’s longest rivers or a friend’s telephone number. If you watch ten minutes of TV commercials and spend an hour studying French, why is it easier to remember the advertising jingles than the French vocabulary?

Ad copy writers grab our attention with the same tricks that poets have always relied upon. Rhyme. Rhythm. Repetition. Surprises. Puns. Humour. They break grammatical rules, they make up words. And they make us believe they’re having fun doing it.


Ad copy writers use words that are juicy and slurpy. Words you can taste and hear. Some words, when spoken, sound like their meanings. They are called onomatopoetic words. Try this list on your ear: Boom, burst, buzz, chortle, click, crash, fizz, grizzle, growl, hiss, luminous, muck, poof, pop, rock, scratch, shriek, smack, spurt, zip.

Advertisers rely on repetition. Not only do commercials appear over and over on the radio and TV and in print media, but there is also repetition within ads. Like poets, advertisers repeat particular sounds, groups of sounds, and rhythmic patterns of sound to attract attention and make a lasting impression. One common “trick of the trade” is rhyme. Rhyming sounds usually appear at the ends of words or groups of words: Swiss Miss, Ace is the place, Big Mac Attack. However, both poets and advertisers also use alliteration, as in Peter Pan Peanut Butter, Relaxed Riders, and even throughout words like Coca-Cola, making the brand names easy to remember.

Another classic device of both ad writers and poets is the simile, a comparison using the words like or as. “It’s like opening a present,” promises a Polaroid Colour Pack Camera ad, showing a picture of a boy with a half-eaten stick of ice cream. Similes make you see things in a new way.

Ad copy writers know that some words sell products and others don’t. They know that half-full sounds better than half-empty, and that an engine sounds more complicated and expensive than a motor. Thin is a nicer word than skinny, and artificial sounds bad for us, but man-made sounds good. They know their way around the mysterious world of word-choice, or word-feel, where for no very logical reason certain words make us feel stingy or cheap, while other words make us feel flush and fine and ready to part with our hard-earned money. Ad copy writers say that even particular syllables convey feelings. For example, they suggest that words containing the syllable “eep” convey low or mean feelings, words containing “eal” are weak and unhealthy, and words with “urk” are evil, grotesque, or abnormal.

But are ad writers really poets? Aren’t they just selling a product or a company? Laundry detergent, jeans, hair spray, or sneakers—it’s all the same to them. True poets have something more serious to say. Right?

Well, that’s partly right. But the best ad writers know that they are selling more than a product. They’re aware that aside from variations in packaging, most products
are surprisingly similar. There’s not much difference among fluoride toothpastes, or between one dog biscuit and another. If you took the labels off all the jeans in a clothing store, could you tell the brands apart? Ad writers must distinguish their product in some way to set it off from the pack. So, like poets, they try to sell us a mood or a sunset, a feeling or a point of view. They must wake us up, surprise us, shock us, or give us a happy ending.

An ad must persuade you that it’s not just dog biscuits in that box. It’s your dog’s love and affection. It’s not just a pair of jeans attached to that label. It’s romance, glamour, popularity. The right toothpaste will brighten not just teeth but your whole morning, help solve family arguments, and give you the courage to invite some special person to the high school dance.

Advertising is a big, expensive business. Because the success of a product often rides on the words an advertising copy writer strings together, every word must sell. In 1992, Canada spent more than ten billion dollars on advertising, almost all of it to pay for media space. With that much money on the line, no advertising copy can afford to laze around. Every word must literally be worth its weight in gold.

**Activities**

1. Prepare a mini-lesson for the class on one of the following literary techniques or elements: rhyme, rhythm, repetition, onomatopoeia, simile, euphemism, metaphor. Present your mini-lesson to the class, using an overhead that includes the term, a definition of it in your own words, and examples of it from the article. Take notes on each other’s presentations, evaluating them for clarity of speech and visuals and for accuracy of information.

2. Find specific advertisements that include examples of the techniques and elements described in the article. For class display, create a collage of the examples you’ve found.

3. Work with a partner. Consider the statement in the article that “every word must be worth its weight in gold” in advertising. What exactly does this mean? Would you make the same statement about poetry? Develop another metaphor to describe poems and explain your metaphor to the class.
Focus Your Learning
Reading and viewing this advertisement will help you to:

- identify the audience and appeal of an advertisement
- express personal points of view

The child in you will dream of bright summer days in the park. Of elegant ladies in stylish turn-of-the-century walking suits. Of parasols and feathered hats. The adult in you will admire her authenticity, craftsmanship and timeless quality. Promenade In The Park Barbie® doll is made specially for the collector and filled with charming details. From her extravagant earrings to her elegant...
1. Who is the target audience for this advertisement? What needs are the manufacturers appealing to? List evidence to support your view.

2. Work with a small group. For each of the following people, brainstorm a list of the thoughts and feelings you think that person might have about the advertisement: a doll collector, a feminist writer, a seven-year-old girl, a career woman, a mother, a father. Present the different points of view to the class.
The language of advertising is important. How does “Not Tested on Animals” differ from “Against Animal Testing”? Does this T-shirt make fun of the real issue?

Where an ad is placed can be as important as what it contains. Who would choose to advertise on a school bus? Should schools allow advertisers to promote products on school property?
Why do so many personal-care products have the phrase “Not tested on animals” featured prominently on their labels? And why would a hair-products company donate money for breast cancer research?

One way we learn about cultures different from ours is through their food. How do you feel about trying a food you’ve never eaten before? In your community, how much food from other cultures is available?

What are these stickers conveying? How might they be used, and what effect might their use have?
Handling **ANGER** and Resolving **CONFLICT**

It’s clear that different things provoke, or stir up, anger in different people. For example, last Friday night Erica, Aaron, Daryl, and Tamika went to their favourite pizza place. They had to wait a long time to be seated. Aaron, Daryl, and Tamika were so busy talking that they didn’t notice the wait. Erica, however, got angrier and angrier. “They always serve adults first,” she muttered. She folded her arms across her chest and glared at the waiters.

After the group was finally seated, Erica slowly relaxed and joined in on the conversation. Then a baby at the next table began crying. Erica, Aaron, and Tamika didn’t seem to hear him, but Daryl rolled his eyes with each screech. “If that kid screams one more time . . .,” he said through clenched teeth.

Daryl had spent too many hours listening to his baby sister cry at home. He surely didn’t need to hear a baby screaming when he was out with his friends. He was angry because he thought the whole thing was unfair. Erica was angry because she thought the waiters didn’t respect young people. Aaron and Tamika, on the other hand, were having fun—until it was time to go home.

On the way out of the crowded restaurant, Aaron bumped into a teenager.

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**Focus Your Learning**

Reading this article will help you to:

- summarize information
- make appropriate use of different formats to suit content, audience, and purpose
- plan and facilitate a group role-playing activity
- evaluate your own and your group’s work and set goals for improvement
he didn’t know. The other boy called Aaron a name based on a group he thought Aaron belonged to. Aaron scowled all the way home, even though Daryl told him to forget about it. “He probably can’t even spell that word,” Daryl joked.

Just as we have different skin colours and different goals, we feel angry over different things. Whether we become angry in a certain situation depends on many things. These things include our past experiences, our values, our self-confidence, and what we tell ourselves about the situation.

For example, if you tease me about my new haircut, I will smile. I know you are teasing me because you like me. If a stranger says the same thing, however, I may think he or she is putting me down. My reaction will be different, probably anger.

Anger is a normal emotion that occurs often during conflicts. What we do with our anger can either solve the conflict or turn it into a lasting problem.

**Understanding the Causes of Anger**

Stress is one major cause of anger. Stress is the pressure we feel in certain situations. Adrian is feeling stressed because she has an important report to finish tonight and a job to go to after school. As she hurries toward her locker after school, her friend Kelly stops her.

“That’s bad at home,” Kelly says. “Do you have time to talk tonight?” What happens next surprises even Adrian. She snaps, “Can’t you handle it yourself this time?” Adrian’s stress has resulted in a kind of free-floating anger.

*Frustration* is similar to stress. We feel frustration when we can’t reach goals that are important to us. Juan, for example, is determined to make the varsity football team this year. He’s been eating right, working out with weights, and going to every practice. Now Coach Reynolds is posting the varsity team list on the bulletin board. The coach avoids looking at Juan. Juan knows then that his name isn’t on the list.

Juan mutters, “Maybe the team wouldn’t have such a lousy record if you picked some good players for a change!” The coach hears him and frowns. Juan’s frustration has become anger. He has made a disappointing situation even worse.

Feeling threatened can also lead to anger, especially when the threat is to our self-esteem. Almost anything can be seen as a threat: a look, a shove, a putdown, a turned back, a phone call that isn’t returned, not being waited on in a store. Any of these can communicate disrespect (or we may think they do). If we think others do not respect us, we often have angry feelings.

Being treated like a stereotype is another form of disrespect. Do you ever hear comments like the following ones? Whether
the disrespect is intended or not, our anger level rises.

- “The music you kids listen to is disgusting.”
- “Students with your background don’t do well in college.”
- “Girls aren’t good at math.”

Still, no one has to be at the mercy of anger. We can learn ways to control anger and make it work for us, not against us.

Personal Peeves

Jarod is walking past a group of students. Some of them are his friends. As he walks past the group, they start laughing.

*Are they laughing at me? They better not be, but why would they? Chip over there is on the soccer team with me. He’s my friend. Wait—maybe he told them what happened at practice yesterday. No, he wouldn’t do that. At least, I don’t think he would.*

*But why are they laughing? Angelo is in my English class, and I had to give my report this morning. So I dropped all my note cards, but it wasn’t that funny.*

*Maybe it’s some kind of practical joke these kids pull on people who walk past them, just to see how they take it. I’m tough, but I don’t like this at all.*

Jarod is feeling pretty uncomfortable right now. He has a lot of mixed messages running through his head, most of them making him angry. He might be surprised to know that these young people are laughing at a joke one of the girls just told. No one in the group probably even noticed him.

How Not to Handle Conflict

No matter what kind of conflict we face, certain approaches work better than others. Just as each person develops a way of communicating, each person also develops a way of handling conflict. Our way of communicating greatly influences how we handle conflict.

During a conflict, Passive Paul keeps his eyes on the floor. He doesn’t try to explain his point of view or his feelings. Instead, he may apologize for whatever happened, even if he did nothing wrong. He is so uncomfortable that he doesn’t use his listening skills to try to find out how the other person feels. He just stands there with his head down, ready to escape as soon as he can.

Aggressive Andy doesn’t listen either. He doesn’t care what anyone else thinks. Andy matches his loud demands with angry gestures. His gestures are designed to discourage others from voicing their opinions. Andy interrupts others whenever he feels like it.
Positive Problem-Solving

KC has lost Ashley’s sunglasses and can’t afford to replace them. Assertive Ashley uses straightforward, learnable skills to resolve this conflict and save her friendship with KC. Here are the steps that she takes:

1. Get Ready
First, Ashley does her best to forget any past disagreements with KC and to focus on today’s problem. She takes a few deep breaths to clear away any angry feelings. Then she asks herself if she is ready to handle this. If she were still too angry, she would tell KC that she wants to talk about the sunglasses later, when she is calmer.

2. Listen
Ashley listens carefully to KC’s side of the conflict and asks questions. She repeats what she thinks KC said in order to see if she really understands KC’s point of view.

3. Explain
Then Ashley uses an “I message” to explain her needs: “I feel angry that you lost my sunglasses because I need them for the baseball game tomorrow.” As she speaks, Ashley stands tall and confident, looking KC in the eye. She doesn’t blame KC for being careless, and she doesn’t act disgusted.

Activities

1. Work with a small group. Brainstorm situations where you might use the skills identified in the article. Develop a role play around one or two of these situations, using criteria for effective role plays developed by the class. Present your role play to the class. Complete a self-evaluation of your participation in the group project and set goals for improvement.

2. Imagine that you are an Anger Management Counsellor who must present the information in this article to a class of younger students. Summarize and restructure the information into visual formats such as cause-and-effect and other charts so that the students will clearly understand the causes of anger. Present your work to a local elementary school class for feedback on its clarity and effectiveness.

3. Rework your presentation so that it is appropriate for an audience of teachers.
My next-door neighbour tells me her child runs into things. Cupboard corners and doorknobs have pounded their shapes into his face. She says he is bothered by dreams, rises in sleep from his bed to steal through the halls and plummet like a wounded bird down the flight of stairs.
This child who climbed my maple
with the sureness of a cat,
trips in his room, cracks
his skull on the bedpost,
smacks his cheeks on the floor.
When I ask about the burns
on the back of his knee,
his mother tells me
he walks backwards
into fireplace grates
or sits and stares at flames
while sparks burn stars in his skin.

Other children write their names
on the casts that hold
his small bones.
His mother tells me
he runs into things,
walks backwards,
breaks his leg
while she lies
sleeping.

Activities

1. Work in a small group. List the injuries the boy in the poem experiences, and beside each injury list the excuse the mother gives. What evidence does the author provide to imply that she does not believe the mother's excuses? Outline the options available to the author as she tries to deal with this problem. What would be the consequences of each option? Create a step-by-step action plan to help the author deal with this issue. Prepare a summary statement of your advice, with reasons, and present it to the class.

2. Invite a local social worker to visit the class. Have him or her explain the procedure that you should follow if you suspect child abuse. Evaluate your own group's action plan according to the procedure explained by the social worker. Revisit your plan and add any areas that you might have missed.
Life Sentence

NICOLE AXWORTHY

Focus Your Learning

Reading this article will help you to:
■ experiment with language
■ express and explain a personal point of view

■ identify and evaluate a variety of sources for an inquiry
■ evaluate information
■ create an informative brochure

Detail from The Sick Girl, Edvard Munch
She exists in my mind and she nags me, “Why are you eating this? You’ll get fat. You’re just ugly and fat and you can’t do anything right!” I don’t know why she makes me cry. She’s like the bully that takes your money at lunch, but she never goes away. She sleeps with me at night. She greets me in the shower every morning. She scorns me at every meal. I call her the Beast. I never get a moment’s peace. I want to grab her and throw her down but I can’t. She controls me. She goes deep into my mind and body where all is cold and dark and empty.

I never planned to disappear, at least not totally. My goal was a modest one: to be perfect. Unfortunately, something went wrong. I even remember the moment I became conscious of this, this mission you could call it, this extreme change in my life. Spring, Grade Eight: I was walking home from volleyball practice one depressingly rainy day. I was overwhelmed by raindrops, and the thick fog that clouded my view. The lightness of the air expanded like helium in my head. My brain became a radiant blur, my limbs very long and light, and I tried with slow motion steps to negotiate the oddly slanting sidewalk. I tried to focus. I only remembered what was to come when I got home: dinner. Another meal, another lie, another fight with my parents.

But that day I found a way to keep myself going. Concentrate. Focus on this rule: the worse you feel, the better you are, the emptier, the freer, the purer. Know how it feels to be human, when all insulation has been stripped away. Think of all the people on this planet who have no choice.

“The worse you feel, the better you are,” I repeated, chanting it inside my head, timing my steps to its insistent beat. That kept me going for quite a while. It gave me the courage to fight against all others in order to keep control. I had control of my life. Eventually, I didn’t need those encouraging words any longer. I had reached such a pitch of discipline that my every thought was beyond my control.

I couldn’t imagine forcing once-favourite foods down my esophagus. It fascinated yet disgusted me to catch someone in the act. In the food court of the mall, I found myself staring, appalled at a fat woman cramming a hamburger into her mouth. And then chewing. She glanced at me with a look of guilt, and I nervously looked down to measure the smallness of my wrist with my thumb and forefinger. Watching her was the lewdest sight I could imagine. How could anyone do something so indecent in public, especially someone who shouldn’t be eating at all? I stared and stared, deafened by the Beast inside my head. Later I realized I was still staring, forgetting to blink, though she had long since left. Such things happened many times: missing a reel of the movie, or
when they won’t even let me walk farther than the bathroom? I could run in place for 45 minutes, but what about this stupid heart monitor? I would have to turn it off for now. It’s a good thing I was watching when the nurse did it yesterday. So, by my calculations, I have an hour and a half before Nursey bursts in.

Sure enough, at precisely 6:30 there’s a knock at the door, which opens almost immediately, giving me just enough time to leap back on the bed and stick the monitor leads on my chest. I try to look as if I’m lying there contemplating the ceiling, but I feel flushed and a little out of breath from running. At least I never sweat any more.

“Good morning,” she chirps, glancing at the heart monitor and then eyeing me suspiciously. “How did you sleep?”

“Fine,” I lie.

“Have you been awake for long?” she asks. “If you wake up early, or you can’t sleep, you can always ring for the night nurse.”

“No, I’m fine, thanks.”

“Well, here’s your breakfast,” she says, as if I haven’t already figured out what is on the huge tray. “We’re going to weigh you afterward and decide what needs to be done, so see how much of it you can eat, okay?”

What needs to be done is for everybody to just leave me alone, to let me eat my own food in my own way. Here, every meal
is going to be a struggle, I can see, looking over the enormous load.

I’m confronted with a huge mound of corn flakes heaping over the rim of the bowl (about 200 calories); a large container of 2% milk (256 calories); half a grapefruit (35 calories); two pieces of whole wheat toast (180 calories), dry I’m glad to see, though there are four pats of butter (110 calories); a boiled egg (79 calories), and a cup of tea.

I decide I will eat the grapefruit half and one piece of toast. That ought to make them happy. For a moment I think of throwing the cereal away to make it look as if I’ve eaten that too but I can’t think of a place to hide it.

Slowly, delicately, precisely, I cut the piece of toast into halves, then quarters, then eighths, and daintily convey each piece to my mouth, allowing three minutes between bites. Then, in the same way, I eat the grapefruit, panicking for a moment. How can anything so heart-rendingly sweet have so few calories? What if they’ve sprinkled sugar all over it, so I can’t see it? What if this is some special high-calorie grapefruit, grown especially for hospitals? Something is definitely wrong because this vivid sweetness is lingering on my taste buds, tempting me to eat more.

But I don’t. When I’ve finished the grapefruit, my heart is hammering: I put the tray on the other bed, as far away from me as possible. The tray still looks loaded, despite everything I’ve consumed.

Time for the big weigh-in and I’m afraid: afraid that I have gained weight under this regime of force-feeding; afraid that I won’t have gained and will have to stay here forever having huge trays of food pushed at me, maybe even having tubes rammed in me. The nurse is chattering away mindlessly as she wheels me to the examining room: “It’s a beautiful day outside,” she says. “Take off your socks and step on the scale.”

The beam doesn’t move at first, and then she slides the weight along and it lifts, quivering gently. With a shock I see that the metal tooth has snagged just about 69. Sixty-nine and one-half pounds! I’ve gained a whole pound in three days and only half of that is the five glasses of water I drank before being wheeled here. My stomach feels close to bursting and suddenly looks obscenely round. As panic surges, I try to remind myself why I am here. I’m here to become healthy again. Oh, how I loathe that word. I’m here because my father couldn’t take it any more and told my doctor, “She needs to go in the hospital. I’m afraid she’s going to die.”

Hospital, school, prison: it’s becoming increasingly difficult to tell the difference. And here at least I’m no bother to my family. I know now that I was the whole time I was home. The fights, the screaming
matches, the throwing of food across the room was just too much.

Some kind of sadness comes over me, so I turn off the TV and go back to my room. I lie down on my bed, where I’ve spent so much time, where so much of my life has been eaten away, and I close my eyes, covering my face with my arms. The usual thoughts start to arrive—ugly, mushy, fatty flesh. I try to think about something else. I think about something happy, something sun-kissed. Then, I can’t help it, I think of the guilt, the fear, the hatred. I am a wasted body, a wasted life.

This is the body I must learn to inhabit; or to coinhabit, rather. It feels like an alien has fastened to my body, reprogramming my DNA to produce itself instead of me. I don’t know if I can. That spare, vacant frame gave me so much space to hide in. Can I learn to be so present? Can I learn to be so full?

**Activities**

1. As you read this article, jot down phrases or images that appeal to your emotions. Summarize Nicole’s struggle by creating a poem with these phrases and images.

2. Imagine that you are Nicole's parents. Write a letter to her explaining why you put her in hospital. Trade letters with a classmate and respond to his or her letter as if you were Nicole.

3. Work with a partner. Research facts and statistics about eating disorders. Use this information to create a pamphlet for distribution to a teenage audience. If possible, use a word-processing program to help you design and lay out your pamphlet.
Making Canadian Hockey History

Locker-Room Talk with Today’s Famous Five

ROBIN WHEELER

Focus Your Learning
Reading this article will help you to:
- plan and facilitate a small-group activity involving role play
- rethink in the light of new information
- develop and evaluate a poster
I met five of the members of Team Canada in the “cool-down” room at Canadian Hockey, fresh out of cardio training. Here they train for the 1998 Winter Olympics in Nagano, Japan. Here, for this year, these women make playing hockey a career for the first time ever.

The women sip Gatorade and munch granola bars as the interview begins. Time is short. The next bout of training will begin for most of them as soon as our conversation ends.

In Nagano, women’s hockey will have its first official Olympic showing. The pressure to perform is intense for Team Canada. They beat the pressure with banter. The jokes fly between them as quickly as the puck.

The jokes suggest a level of comfort, of easygoing friendship, which is one of the team’s strengths, and which comes from working hard together toward a common goal: Gold. They can lean on one another. If no one else is handy, they joke, there is always Princess, a plastic toy who has been everywhere they have.

These are women. Not men. Playing Canada’s sport. A sport we’ve come to associate with men, with hard-hitting play, with spit and grit and physical strength. These are women. But make no mistake: they’ve come this far because they’re strong. They’ve passed the lactate test. They grew up beating the boys at hockey, and they don’t expect to be challenged at this stage for something as stupid as gender. It doesn’t matter if it’s the men’s team or the women’s. They’re Team Canada, and they’re tough: tough physically, tough mentally, and—yes—as a team, tough to beat.

That said, the tape rolls, the women finish their drinks, and for the rest of this conversation, they speak for themselves.

The Game

Is women’s hockey as hard-hitting as men’s?
Diduck jokes: We hit more!
Stacy: There’s no intentional bodychecking, but it’s a very physical game.

What differences exist between the women’s game and the men’s technically?
Wick: There are a lot of differences, but mainly it’s the size and speed. In the women’s game you get a lot of shots from closer into the net whereas with the men’s game the shot tends to come from the outside because they’re bigger and stronger and the play develops earlier.

What’s the reality of being a woman playing a “man’s” game?
Stacy: I think all sports started with mostly males playing or mostly females playing. But they evolve and both genders are now involved with most sports … It’s a game and both genders can play it. There might
be some differences between us, whether it’s the moves or just the fact that size and strength are different, but all this gender stuff, I don’t think it has a place in sport. 

Diduck: And I think it’s the tradition too. Hockey is traditionally a men’s game and you can’t overlook that. People see women’s hockey and it’s new and they’re skeptical at first and that’s only natural.

Have you received criticism from men or other women for playing hockey?

Becca: I haven’t really had any bad experiences. Wick on the other hand …

Wick: I’ve seen a lot of things, but now it’s come to the point where you’re not criticized as much. When you’re younger it’s mostly the parents who tend to say things … Parents just don’t get it. They want their kids going to the NHL and that’s just a fact. It’s pressure. There’s a lot of pressure on younger boys I think.

Can you give an example?

Wick: I could give you lots but … A mad parent actually came to the dressing room when I was changing and went on and on … “Don’t hit my son,” that was basically the point. But it was just basically negative comments.

Diduck: I don’t think it happens much any more. Once you show them that you can pass and shoot and skate it tends to go away.

Jen: It’s like everything in life. You get two different perspectives on things. A lot of people are just really impressed with the calibre of your playing, and I guess there’s always the other side of things where people can be pessimists and look down on things.

As kids, did girls stand out playing a “boy’s” game?

Diduck: They stood out, but I think the guys wouldn’t really accept you unless you were adequate at athletics. Most of the time the girls were better than the guys. So there was a natural acceptance. They had to accept you because you were better than them.

Jen: They wouldn’t let you play if you weren’t good.

Becca: And you wouldn’t want to be there … you had to fit in or you wouldn’t be having fun anyway.

How has hockey changed for women since you started?

Jen: It’s changing so fast. There are more leagues for girls at a younger age. When we were that age, it hadn’t grown that much. There weren’t leagues for us to play in.
Now it’s changing every day. I think there will be more girls playing than ever before.

But when you guys were kids were you more often playing with the boys?
Wick: Always.

Who is Princess?
Diduck: Princess is a plastic McDonald’s toy. She’s been everywhere. She’s ridden in planes, done the lactate test.
Stacy: She’s pretty much an honorary member of Team Canada.
Diduck: Honorary—she’s worked hard.

Tell me about the lactate test.
Diduck: You skate down and back and down and back …
Becca: … four-and-a-half lengths and then you stop for two minutes and then you do five reps. On your fifth you go and get your finger pricked. They draw blood and run tests to determine how high your lactate level is …
Wick: The more lactate you have the harder you can work.
Stacy: At the end of it though, your legs won’t move and you pretty much can’t feel them.
Becca: You get past the point of pain.

The Gap
I’m interested in that gap. (The team laughs.)
Becca: “Control the gap”—it’s a term in hockey.
hockey. So it’s just different opportunities, but I think they now have something to shoot for at a much younger age.

*Do you younger players look up to the veterans?*

**Wick:** You look up to them and they’re role models for you because they brought the sport to where it is today. I think it makes for a good mix on the team too because we have people from all different walks of life and there’s always somebody that can help with whatever situation you might be in.

*How are relationships affected by hockey? Do you think about having families of your own?*

**Jen:** I would like to, probably, but not for a long time.

**Diduck:** You can’t. I shouldn’t say you can’t, but because hockey’s always a priority it’s pretty unlikely that you’d have a family …

**Stacy:** … We work all day, we train at night, and on the weekends we play hockey. That doesn’t leave much time for anything else.

**Diduck:** … When you’re little you have your plan, you know: I’d be married at twenty-one, at twenty-five I’d start having kids … However, it’s now many years later. But I don’t think it’s unusual in these times that you’re married later, having kids later. People are just enjoying their youth and doing everything they possibly can.

**Diduck:** … You know guys, it’s an interesting question: I wonder if, because we play sports, it’s something we just don’t feel we need? *Like you’re already working outside the mould?*

**Diduck:** Yes. I think some women get caught in that trap. I like men and I want them in my life, but if they’re not there on a given week it’s not like you can’t survive without them.

**Stacy:** There are so many things out there to do, so many opportunities. Relationships?

When they come along it’s great but if they don’t it’s not a big deal.

**Diduck:** But I think with training for sport, it gives you a greater level of independence, self-confidence …

**Stacy:** In all sports, over the years you gain a sense of yourself and a sense that you’re okay.

**The Olympics**

*What pressures are associated with this experienced Team Canada, on the eve of its first official Olympic appearance?*

**Wick:** I think there’s the expectation that you should win a gold medal. You hear it from everybody.

**You guys are the team to beat, right?**

**Diduck:** Because we’re from Canada. Hockey and Canada go together.

**Stacy:** I think you can put as much pressure on yourself as you want to. At the World Championships there were expectations—like the word Hayley used—there were expectations on us to be good. Whether to
take it as pressure is up to us. But the expectations are certainly there.

*Is it easier being in a team sport?*

*Jen:* It’s easier.

*Wick:* Because you have support around you all the time. We support each other.

*Diduck:* And Princess listens really well too.

*Stacy:* This team has always been a close group. I think that’s one of the best strengths it has …

*Becca:* Everybody’s going through the same things. We all help each other. We go through different things at different times but I think everybody can relate.

*Which team will be your greatest competition at Nagano?*

*Becca:* The Americans and the Finns.

*Stacy:* China and Sweden are tough teams to play against too, very disciplined and demanding. It’s a much more physical game.

*How?*

*Becca:* There’s more stick work …

*Diduck:* It’s hack and whack.

*Becca:* Over the years the gap between the higher-level countries and the lower-level countries has certainly tightened. You can’t take anybody for granted.

*Are you going to win?*

*Becca:* Yes.

*Stacy:* That’s the goal.

*Jen:* We want it. We all want to win at the Olympics. It helps us work hard.

*Diduck:* That’s why we’re here.

## Activities

1. Work with a group of six. Brainstorm a list of common perceptions about hockey players. Assign each group member one of the roles in the article — the interviewer, Diduck, Stacy, Becca, Wick, Jen — and read the article aloud in role, videotaping the reading if possible for playback. As a group, discuss how your preconceived ideas about hockey players might have been challenged as you read the article. Still in role, write a list of advice that you would give a young woman who wanted to play higher-level hockey.

2. Work with a partner. Create a poster to encourage young girls to join hockey at an early age. Use criteria for effective advertisements developed by the class to create your poster and to evaluate it when it is completed.
Focus Your Learning
Reading this poem will help you to:
- identify techniques used for persuasive effect
- summarize main ideas
- create an original poem

Author Tony Wong, a Jamaican, became paraplegic following an accident in 1978. He has been active ever since internationally on behalf of disabled people.
If you fail to see
the person
but only the disability,
thcn, who is blind?

If you cannot hear
your brother's
cry for justice,
who is deaf?

If you do not communicate with
your sister
but separate her from you,
who is disabled?

If your heart and your mind
do not reach out to
your neighbour,
who has the mental handicap?

If you do not stand up
for the rights of all
persons,
who is the cripple?

Your attitude towards
persons
with disabilities
may be our biggest handicap,
And yours too.

**Activities**

1. In your own words, write a paragraph explaining how the author builds the argument that the senses can fail to help us see past disabilities. Also summarize the advice the author gives to help us overcome our pre-judgements.

2. Write a poem which outlines how people might see you in a first impression, failing to see the “real” you. Consider using the senses to tie the poem together.
Day of the Butterfly

A L I C E  M U N R O

I do not remember when Myra Sayla came to town, though she must have been in our class at school for two or three years. I start remembering her in the last year, when her little brother Jimmy Sayla was in Grade One. Jimmy Sayla was not used to going to the bathroom by himself and he would have to come to the Grade Six door and ask for Myra and she would take him downstairs. Quite often he would not get to Myra in
time and there would be a big dark stain on his little button-on cotton pants. Then Myra had to come and ask the teacher: “Please may I take my brother home, he has wet himself?”

That was what she said the first time and everybody in the front seats heard her—though Myra’s voice was the lightest singsong—and there was a muted giggling which alerted the rest of the class. Our teacher, a cold, gentle girl who wore glasses with thin gold rims and in the stiff solicitude of certain poses resembled a giraffe, wrote something on a piece of paper and showed it to Myra. And Myra recited uncertainly, “My brother has had an accident, please, teacher.”

Everybody knew of Jimmy Sayla’s shame and at recess (if he was not being kept in, as he often was, for doing something he shouldn’t in school) he did not dare go out on the school grounds, where the other little boys, and some bigger ones, were waiting to chase him and corner him against the back fence and thrash him with tree branches. He had to stay with Myra. But at our school there were the two sides, the Boys’ Side and the Girls’ Side, and it was believed that if you so much as stepped on the side that was not your own you might easily get the strap. Jimmy could not go out on the Girls’ Side and Myra could not go out on the Boy’s Side, and no one was allowed to stay in the school unless it was raining or snowing. So Myra and Jimmy spent every recess standing in the little back porch between the two sides. Perhaps they watched the baseball games, the tag and skipping and building of leaf houses in the fall and snow forts in the winter; perhaps they did not watch at all. Whenever you happened to look at them their heads were slightly bent, their narrow bodies hunched in, quite still. They had long smooth oval faces, melancholy and discreet—dark, oily, shining hair. The little boy’s was long, clipped at home, and Myra’s was worn in heavy braids coiled on top of her head so that she looked, from a distance, as if she was wearing a turban too big for her. Over their dark eyes the lids were never fully raised; they had a weary look. But it was more than that. They were like children
in a medieval painting, they were like small figures carved of wood, for worship or magic, with faces smooth and aged, and meekly, cryptically uncommunicative.

Most of the teachers at our school had been teaching for a long time and at recess they would disappear into the teachers’ room and not bother us. But our own teacher, the young woman of the fragile gold-rimmed glasses, was apt to watch us from a window and sometimes come out, looking brisk and uncomfortable, to stop a fight among the little girls or start a running game among the big ones, who had been huddled together playing Truth or Secrets. One day she came out and called, “Girls in Grade Six, I want to talk to you!” She smiled persuasively, earnestly, and with dreadful unease, showing fine gold rims around her teeth. She said, “There is a girl in Grade Six called Myra Sayla. She is in your grade, isn’t she?”

We mumbled. But there was a coo from Gladys Healey. “Yes, Miss Darling!”

“Well, why is she never playing with the rest of you? Every day I see her standing in the back porch, never playing. Do you think she looks very happy standing back there? Do you think you would be very happy, if you were left back there?”

Nobody answered; we faced Miss Darling, all respectful, self-possessed, and bored with the unreality of her question. Then Gladys said, “Myra can’t come out with us, Miss Darling. Myra has to look after her little brother!”

“Oh,” said Miss Darling dubiously. “Well you ought to try to be nicer to her anyway. Don’t you think so? Don’t you? You will try to be nicer, won’t you? I know you will.” Poor Miss Darling! Her campaigns were soon confused, her persuasions turned to bleating and uncertain pleas.

When she had gone Gladys Healey said softly, “You will try to be nicer, won’t you? I know you will!” and then drawing her lip back over her big teeth she yelled exuberantly, “I don’t care if it rains or freezes.”
She went through the whole verse and ended it with a spectacular twirl of her Royal Stuart tartan skirt. Mr. Healey ran a Dry Goods and Ladies’ Wear, and his daughter’s leadership in our class was partly due to her flashing plaid skirts and organdy blouses and velvet jackets with brass buttons, but also to her early-maturing bust and the fine brutal force of her personality. Now we all began to imitate Miss Darling.

We had not paid much attention to Myra before this. But now a game was developed; it started with saying, “Let’s be nice to Myra!” Then we would walk up to her in formal groups of three or four and at a signal, say together, “Hel-lo My-ra, Hello My-ra!” and follow up with something like, “What do you wash your hair in, My-ra, it’s so nice and shiny, My-ra.” “Oh she washes it in cod-liver oil, don’t you, My-ra, she washes it in cod-liver oil, can’t you smell it?”

And to tell the truth there was a smell about Myra, but it was a rotten-sweetish smell as of bad fruit. That was what the Saylas did, kept a little fruit store. Her father sat all day on a stool by the window, with his shirt open over his swelling stomach and tufts of black hair showing around his belly button; he chewed garlic. But if you went into the store it was Mrs. Sayla who came to wait on you, appearing silently between the limp print curtains hung across the back of the store. Her hair was crimped in black waves and she smiled with her full lips held together, stretched as far as they would go; she told you the price in a little rapping voice, daring you to challenge her and, when you did not, handed you the bag of fruit with open mockery in her eyes.

One morning in the winter I was walking up the school hill very early; a neighbour had given me a ride into town. I lived about a kilometre out of town, on a farm, and I should not have been going to the town school at all, but to a country school nearby where there were half a dozen pupils and a teacher a little demented since her change of life. But my mother, who was an ambitious woman, had prevailed on the town trustees to accept me and my father to pay the extra tuition, and
I went to school in town. I was the only one in the class who carried a lunch pail and ate peanut-butter sandwiches in the high, bare, mustard-coloured cloakroom, the only one who had to wear rubber boots in the spring, when the roads were heavy with mud. I felt a little danger, on account of this; but I could not tell exactly what it was.

I saw Myra and Jimmy ahead of me on the hill; they always went to school very early—sometimes so early that they had to stand outside waiting for the janitor to open the door. They were walking slowly, and now and then Myra half turned around. I had often loitered in that way, wanting to walk with some important girl who was behind me, and not quite daring to stop and wait. Now it occurred to me that Myra might be doing this with me. I did not know what to do. I could not afford to be seen walking with her, and I did not even want to—but, on the other hand, the flattery of those humble, hopeful turnings was not lost on me. A role was shaping for me that I could not resist playing. I felt a great pleasurable rush of self-conscious benevolence; before I thought what I was doing I called, "Myra! Hey, Myra, wait up, I got some Cracker Jack!" and I quickened my pace as she stopped.

Myra waited, but she did not look at me; she waited in the withdrawn and rigid attitude with which she always met us. Perhaps she thought I was playing a trick on her, perhaps she expected me to run past and throw an empty Cracker Jack box in her face. And I opened the box and held it out to her. She took a little. Jimmy ducked behind her coat and would not take any when I offered the box to him.

"He’s shy," I said reassuringly. "A lot of little kids are shy like that. He’ll probably grow out of it."

"Yes," said Myra.

"I have a brother four," I said. "He’s awfully shy." He wasn’t. "Have some more Cracker Jack," I said. "I used to eat Cracker Jack all the time but I don’t any more. I think it’s bad for your complexion."

There was a silence.
“Do you like Art?” said Myra faintly.
“No. I like Social Studies and Spelling and Health.”
“I like Art and Arithmetic.” Myra could add and multiply in her head faster than anyone else in the class.
“I wish I was as good as you. In Arithmetic,” I said, and felt magnanimous.
“But I am no good at Spelling,” said Myra. “I make the most mistakes, I’ll fail maybe.” She did not sound unhappy about this, but pleased to have such a thing to say. She kept her head turned away from me staring at the dirty snowbanks along Victoria Street, and as she talked she made a sound as if she was wetting her lips with her tongue.
“You won’t fail,” I said. “You are too good in Arithmetic. What are you going to be when you grow up?”
She looked bewildered. “I will help my mother,” she said. “And work in the store.”
“Well I am going to be an airplane hostess,” I said. “But don’t mention it to anybody. I haven’t told many people.”
“No, I won’t,” said Myra. “Do you read Steve Canyon in the paper?”
“Yes.” It was queer to think that Myra, too, read the comics, or that she did anything at all, apart from her role at the school. “Do you read Rip Kirby?”
“Do you read Orphan Annie?”
“Do you read Betsy and the Boys?”
“You haven’t had hardly any Cracker Jack,” I said. “Have some. Take a whole handful.”
Myra looked into the box. “There’s a prize in here,” she said. She pulled it out. It was a brooch, a little tin butterfly, painted gold with bits of coloured glass stuck onto it to look like jewels. She held it in her brown hand, smiling slightly.
I said, “Do you like that?”
Myra said, “I like them blue stones. Blue stones are sapphires.”
“I know. My birthstone is sapphire. What is your birthstone?”
“I don’t know.”
“When is your birthday?”
“July.”
“Then yours is ruby.”
“I like sapphire better,” said Myra. “I like yours.” She handed me the brooch.
“You keep it,” I said. “Finders keepers.”
Myra kept holding it out, as if she did not know what I meant.
“Finders keepers,” I said.
“It was your Cracker Jack,” said Myra, scared and solemn. “You bought it.”
“Well you found it.”
“No—” said Myra.
“Go on!” I said. “Here, I’ll give it to you.” I took the brooch from her and pushed it back into her hand.
We were both surprised. We looked at each other; I flushed but Myra did not. I realized the pledge as our fingers touched; I was panicky, but all right. I thought, I can come early and walk with her other mornings, I can go and talk to her at recess. Why not? Why not?
Myra put the brooch in her pocket. She said, “I can wear it on my good dress. My good dress is blue.”
I knew it would be. Myra wore out her good dresses at school. Even in midwinter among the plaid wool skirts and serge tunics, she glimmered sadly in sky-blue taffeta, in dusty turquoise crepe, a grown woman’s dress made over, weighted by a big empty bow at the V of the neck and folding empty over Myra’s narrow chest.
And I was glad she had not put it on. If someone asked her where she got it, and she told them, what would I say?
It was the day after this, or the week after, that Myra did not come to school. Often she was kept at home to help. But this time she
did not come back. For a week, then two weeks, her desk was empty. Then we had a moving day at school and Myra’s books were taken out of her desk and put on a shelf in the closet. Miss Darling said, “We’ll find a seat when she comes back.” And she stopped calling Myra’s name when she took attendance.

Jimmy Sayla did not come to school either, having no one to take him to the bathroom.

In the fourth week or the fifth, that Myra had been away, Gladys Healey came to school and said, “Do you know what—Myra Sayla is sick in the hospital.”

It was true. Gladys Healey had an aunt who was a nurse. Gladys put up her hand in the middle of Spelling and told Miss Darling. “I thought you might like to know,” she said.

“Oh yes,” said Miss Darling. “I do know.”

“What has she got?” we said to Gladys.

And Gladys said, “Akemia, or something. And she has blood transfusions.” She said to Miss Darling, “My aunt is a nurse.”

So Miss Darling had the whole class write Myra a letter, in which everybody said, “Dear Myra, We are all writing you a letter. We hope you will soon be better and be back to school, Yours truly …” And Miss Darling said, “I’ve thought of something. Who would like to go up to the hospital and visit Myra on the twentieth of March, for a birthday party?”

I said, “Her birthday’s in July.”

“I know,” said Miss Darling. “It’s the twentieth of July. So this year she could have it on the twentieth of March, because she’s sick.”

“But her birthday is in July.”

“Because she’s sick,” said Miss Darling, with a warning shrillness. “The cook at the hospital would make a cake and you could all give a little present, twenty-five cents or so. It would have to be between two and four, because that’s visiting hours. And we couldn’t
all go, it’d be too many. So who wants to go and who wants to stay here and do supplementary reading?”

We all put up our hands. Miss Darling got out the spelling records and picked out the first fifteen, twelve girls and three boys. Then the three boys did not want to go so she picked out the next three girls. And I do not know when it was, but I think it was probably at this moment that the birthday party of Myra Sayla became fashionable.

Perhaps it was because Gladys Healey had an aunt who was a nurse, perhaps it was the excitement of sickness and hospitals, or simply the fact that Myra was so entirely, impressively set free of all the rules and conditions of our lives. We began to talk of her as if she were something we owned, and her party became a cause; with womanly heaviness we discussed it at recess, and decided that twenty-five cents was too low.

We all went up to the hospital on a sunny afternoon when the snow was melting, carrying our presents, and a nurse led us upstairs, single file, and down a hall past half-closed doors and dim conversations. She and Miss Darling kept saying, “Sh-sh,” but we were going on tiptoe anyway; our hospital demeanour was perfect.

At this small country hospital there was no children’s ward, and Myra was not really a child; they had put her in with two grey old women. A nurse was putting screens around them as we came in.

Myra was sitting up in bed, in a bulky stiff hospital gown. Her hair was down, the long braids falling over her shoulders and down the coverlet. But her face was the same, always the same.

She had been told something about the party, Miss Darling said, so the surprise would not upset her; but it seemed she had not believed, or had not understood what it was. She watched us as she used to watch in the school grounds when we played.

“Well, here we are!” said Miss Darling. “Here we are!”
And we said, “Happy birthday, Myra! Hello, Myra, happy birthday!” Myra said, “My birthday is in July.” Her voice was lighter than ever, drifting, expressionless.

“Never mind when it is, really,” said Miss Darling. “Pretend it’s now! How old are you, Myra?”

“Eleven,” Myra said. “In July.”

Then we all took off our coats and emerged in our party dresses, and laid our presents, in their pale flowery wrappings on Myra’s bed. Some of our mothers had made immense, complicated bows of fine satin ribbon, some of them had even taped on little bouquets of imitation roses and lilies of the valley. “Here Myra,” we said, “Here Myra, happy birthday.” Myra did not look at us, but at the ribbons, pink and blue and speckled with silver, and the miniature bouquets; they pleased her, as the butterfly had done. An innocent look came into her face, a partial, private smile.

“Open them, Myra,” said Miss Darling. “They’re for you!”

Myra gathered the presents around her, fingering them, with this smile, and a cautious realization, an unexpected pride. She said, “Saturday I’m going to London to St. Joseph’s Hospital.”

“That’s where my mother was at,” somebody said. “We went and saw her. They’ve got all nuns there.”

“My father’s sister is a nun,” said Myra calmly.

She began to unwrap the presents, with an air that not even Gladys could have bettered, folding the tissue paper and the ribbons, and drawing out books and puzzles and cutouts as if they were all prizes she had won. Miss Darling said that maybe she should say thank you, and the person’s name with every gift she opened, to make sure she knew whom it was from, and so Myra said, “Thank you, Mary Louise, thank you, Carol,” and when she came to mine she said, “Thank you, Helen.” Everyone explained their presents to her and there was talking and excitement and a little gaiety, which Myra presided over, though she was not gay. A cake was brought in with
Happy Birthday Myra written on it, pink on white, and eleven candles. Miss Darling lit the candles and we all sang Happy Birthday to You, and cried, “Make a wish, Myra, make a wish—” and Myra blew them out. Then we all had cake and strawberry ice cream.

At four o’clock a buzzer sounded and the nurse took out what was left of the cake, and the dirty dishes, and we put on our coats to go home. Everybody said, “Goodbye, Myra,” and Myra sat in the bed watching us go, her back straight, not supported by any pillow, her hands resting on the gifts. But at the door I heard her call; she called, “Helen!” Only a couple of the others heard; Miss Darling did not hear, she had gone out ahead. I went back to the bed.

Myra said, “I got too many things. You take something.”

“What?” I said. “It’s for your birthday. You always get a lot at a birthday.”

“Well you take something,” Myra said. She picked up a leatherette case with a mirror in it, a comb and a nail file and a natural lipstick and a small handkerchief edged with gold thread. I had noticed it before. “You take that,” she said.

“Don’t you want it?”

“You take it.” She put it into my hand. Our fingers touched again.

“When I come back from London,” Myra said, “you can come and play at my place after school.”

“Okay,” I said. Outside the hospital window there was a clear carrying sound of somebody playing in the street, maybe chasing with the last snowballs of the year. This sound made Myra, her triumph and her bounty, and most of all her future in which she had found this place for me, turn shadowy, turn dark. All the presents on the bed, the folded paper and ribbons, those guilt-tinged offerings, had passed into this shadow, they were no longer innocent objects to be touched, exchanged, accepted without danger. I didn’t want to take the case now but I could not think how to get out of it, what lie to tell. I’ll give
it away, I thought, I won’t ever play with it. I would let my little brother pull it apart.

The nurse came back, carrying a glass of chocolate milk.

“What’s the matter, didn’t you hear the buzzer?”

So I was released, set free by the barriers which now closed about Myra, her unknown, exalted, ether-smelling hospital world, and by the treachery of my own heart. “Well thank you,” I said. “Thank you for the thing. Goodbye.”

Did Myra ever say goodbye? Not likely. She sat in her high bed, her delicate brown neck rising out of a hospital gown too big for her, her brown carved face immune to treachery, her offering perhaps already forgotten, prepared to be set apart for legendary uses, as she was even in the back porch at school.

### Activities

1. Create a visual to represent major plot elements of the short story form, such as initial incident and rising action. After reading this story, add specific details of its plot to your visual, including positive and negative interactions that take place. Revise the visual if necessary.

2. Work with a small group. Do you agree or disagree that the narrator can be described as a dynamic character? Use information from the story to support your point of view.

3. Work with a partner. Pretend that one of you is Myra and the other is the narrator. As Myra, explain how your actions set you apart from the other students. As the narrator, summarize the lessons you learn from Myra.

4. Work with a small group. Prepare a conversation that might have taken place between one of the following: the sick girl and her parents when they come to visit, the girls after the pretend birthday party, the teacher discussing the day with a friend. Present the dialogue to the class.
When I was a child I walked two miles to school accompanied by a neighbour boy two years younger. Freddie was fat and freckle faced with wheat-straw hair and a mean stepmother. It was late fall and one day his father bought him a new winter cap. It was made of heavy brown tweed with ear flaps. It cost one dollar and twenty cents.
The next morning when he joined me
on the way to school, he showed me his new cap.
Almost bursting with pride, he took it off
so I could see the rabbit fur lining the ear flaps.
Whether out of downright meanness, or jealousy
because I didn’t have a new cap,
just last year’s old red knitted toque,
I snatched it out of his hand
tossing it in the air and catching it again.
This went on for about half a mile.

Screaming and pleading, he ran after me.
But his legs were shorter than mine,
he couldn’t catch me.
Winded, I stopped and thrust the cup down a badger hole.
He ran up sobbing and reached down into the earth.
But the hole was deep, his arm not long enough.
He sat back on his heels and cried bitterly.
Guiltily, I stretched my arm down,
But there was no bottom, or so it appeared.
“Come on,” I said, “We’ll be late for school,
we’ll get it on our way home tonight.”
All day I felt his troubled gaze upon me and I had trouble focussing on the printed page. When we trudged homeward after school, we tried again to rescue the cap, with no success. And since Freddie was not allowed to loiter, nor was I, we gave up. Freddie dragged his feet, dreading to face his stepmother and I too cowardly to confess my guilt.

Later that evening his father took a shovel and dug, but the hole was deep, slanting off in different directions underground. He gave up too and Freddie cried himself to sleep. After that he came to school bareheaded. My heart was like a stone in my breast when I looked at his ears red with cold. But I had no money to buy him another cap even had I wanted to, which I suppose I didn’t.

They moved away after that, not because of the cap, but drought, poverty and all that goes with it drove them to another part of the country. Through the many years since, Freddie’s sad face haunts me accusingly and rightly so, for the callous thing I had done, when I was twelve and he was ten.

1. Work with a small group. Prepare a talk show involving the narrator and Freddie, who are now older (in their late 20's), and other characters such as the mother, the father, and the teacher. Develop questions to find out about the motives for each character’s actions and about the impact of the events on their lives. Present the talk show to the class. Afterwards, share ideas about what worked well in preparing and presenting the talk show, and what could be done better in the future.
Out of My Skin

TESSA MCWATT

October 4, 1959

Each day that lizard walks the same path across the wall at about the same time. The sun divides the room into then and now and in the blackness of now I rest in the shade. This room is at the back of the house, behind the kitchen where people chatter and gossip. The floorboards creak when I walk to the window, so I don’t go to the window any more. Just as well. The squalor. The dogs destroy the yard and their scraping paws pelt our garbage...
at the house. Chickens run, squawking, and rough brown mud in mad chicken scratches splatters the whitewash in the rain.

If I lie still enough I can feel a breeze from the sea and smell salt mixed with cardamom from Mrs. DaSilva’s spice shop. Me, as a boy, walking past her shop plugging my nose and mouth tight for fear I’d vomit right there on the road from the choking, chalky smell of powdered flavour. It was she who was responsible for my finally working at Atkinson’s. She would see me with my nose plugged as I walked by and cry out: “Hey boy, don’ plug up yu face like dat. Y’ain goin’ no fuder dan dis block, mista you damn cheeky, too-good-for-the-rest-of-us boy.” Even when I was older, she taunted me and teased me, calling me “Spice Fear Boy” every time I passed the shop. She called it out one day as Mr. Atkinson was leaving the shop and he stopped to ask me what she meant and I told him. We talked and I impressed him with my civilized behaviour and I said the right words and he knew I was going somewhere and he gave me my job.
Focus Your Learning

Reading this poem will help you to:
- identify and explain how similes work effectively
- identify how word choice creates particular effects
- create illustrations

Around the corners fast swirled dust whirled past the mourners; slowing, just brushing the raw torn ground; growing in might and rushing a sound through the eaves, like a foghorn blowing its way through the night; lifting leaves then quietly sifting down, a fine grey cloud, shrouding the hushed crowd and the town.

1. What is a dust devil? What simile does the author use to describe the sound of it? Is it effective? Can you think of another simile that might work effectively to describe the sound of the dust devil?

2. Work with a small group. Read the poem aloud and notice all the words that end in “-ing.” As a group, discuss why you think the author uses so many of these words.

3. Create an illustration for this poem, using thought bubbles to record some thoughts that the mourners might be having about the deceased and the reasons for the appearance of the dust devil.
The way we stand, my mother and I, side by side at the kitchen counter, reminds me of the experiments we carried out in high school science class. We are conducting an experiment of a different kind. Ours spans generations—the ones long dead and those yet to be born.

Lesson #1: “We call it pepper pot. Not because it full up o’ pepper, mekking it too hot for our mout. Maybe we just do it to be extra, what you call showin’ off. The other
islands call it callaloo. But I always prefer pepper pot. Me no know why.” Mama says all this, as if trying to explain why she likes the color red better than blue.

“I can’t mama. I can’t eat anymore. Please don’t make me.”

“Eh, eh. But what is dis? Ain’t got no room for me food, dis food me slave over, but you never tired o’ eatin’ dem hot dogs, hamburgers, french fries, dem people’s food. Wha’ happen? You forget where you born? You gon’ eat it even if it kill you.”

But what’s wrong with their food? Why do we have to do everything differently? You can buy a hot dog anywhere, but where can you find plantain and codfish?

Mama pats her stomach and smiles. “We love our food back home. Not because we greedy guts, ’cause is only time we all be together. We laugh, talk, sing, shout, most of all eat.”

The history of food weights heavily upon my mother—in the fifty pounds she’s been struggling to lose for as long as I can remember. “Me try and try, but me no can.” Thanks to her greedy cancer, she’s having no trouble these days.

*Lesson #2:* “Best way to describe dis is a mess o’ greens. A bit o’ dis, a bit o’ dat. We take anyting we can find … edo top, dasheen leaves, spinach, eggplant, broccoli, green peas, cabbage. All dat give it body. But you got to dress dat body up wid someting. Start wid salted meat to give it dat just-so taste and end up wid dumplings and okra for dat final someting-in-your-mout taste.”

“But how much of each do you add?” I ask.

“Me no have no recipe. Me just know. It all heh in me head and hands. Nobody know nothin’ for sure in dese countries.”

I can still remember myself as an innocent twelve-year-old, sharing secrets with my first boyfriend behind the school, only a block from home.

“My name isn’t really Julie.”

“What is it?” A gaze filled with sudden interest.

“Jewel.” Another pause. Longer than the first.
“Good thing you picked Julie. Jewel sounds like one of those names on the soap operas my mom loves watching. My dad says they’re garbage.” Stated matter-of-factly, proudly in fact. Too stupid to know he’d hurt my feelings.

“You’re right. Besides, no one calls me that except for my mom,” I said, trying to keep the tremor in my voice from showing. “I … better go before my mama wonders where I am.” A hasty good-bye and then a mad dash.

“Hey Julie, do you want to meet tomorrow?” His eager voice bridging the distance, but I pretended not to hear.

Quiet at dinner, until mama said, “Jewel, what got your mout shut so tight tonight?” Throwing my name in my face one too many times.

“Mama, you know that’s not my name. It’s Julie. A jewel is something you buy in a gem shop.”

“And here me did tink you was de only jewel I was gon’ have. What a way I is a fool. Since when your name change, young lady?”

“Since now. When I’m older, I’m going to change it for real.”

Measure. Measure up. Is that what I’ve been taught to do my whole life? Measure myself against everyone, everything else. Is that what living in this country has taught me? Although this new world is not the first I discovered, I realize how firmly rooted I am in this soil. But surely I was someone there, someone other than the person I became here. Who has taught me to measure myself against my mother’s wishes?

Suddenly, I feel an expectant gaze burning into my back. I turn to meet my mother’s eyes.

“Julie, you listenin’ to a word me sayin’?”

Lesson #3: If you no soak de beef or pig’s tail overnight, you not gon’ get enough flavor, and no matter wha’ you do, your pepper pot not gon’ turn out right. You boil all de greens till dey just pieces and den mash dem until dey fine-fine.”

She stands there, hand on hip, all knowing. For a second,
appearing the way she always seemed to me as a child. When I was eight or nine, coming home from school annoyed. Annoyed that Mrs. DeGroot had asked me to do my geography project on another country, not Canada.

“Julie, your mother tells me you’re from Antigua. I’m sure the class would like to learn more about this place. I know I would.” But I didn’t. A place I could hardly remember. A place I sometimes wanted to forget.

Mama’s cure for what ailed me? A secret I didn’t understand.

“Some tings lie so deep in you, no way can ignore dem. Sooner or later, dey find you wedder you ready or not.”

Then, when she thought she’d consoled me sufficiently, mama said with a grin, “Besides, me carry you in dey,” pointing to her belly, “and me still have de marks for prove it, so no way you ever gon’ lost, no matter wha’ you do.”

I know it would not take much to transform her stubborn brow into an uncertainty; perplexed and uncomprehending at first, later, frightened. But all I want to know is if my mother is happy with her life, feels it’s complete, as we stand here, caught up in a moment that surely we will never have again. But this is not the time or the place.

My mother catches my stare out of the corner of her eye and throws it back to me without saying a word.

Lesson #4: Okra is de important ingredient. We use it in many dishes, even add it when we turnin’ fungi. There’s nothin’ like pepper pot. Slimy when it cook, full up o’ seeds, floatin’ on de sea o’ green, remindin’ me o’ de salt water back home. Always time for pepper pot, all year round. When me feelin’ ache for where me born, specially on dem nasty winterin’ days, seemin’ more everyday I feel dat way, all it take is a bowl o’ pepper pot warmin’ me belly to set me right. Don’t know if many people know okra good for more dan just eatin’. When we skin get inflamed, we wet it and soothe wid okra. If we no have none o’ dat, cactus, what some call prickle pear, is what we use.”

“What’s fungi?” I ask.
“Oh me forget. Me speakin’ another language,” my mother says with a grin. “To you, is cornmeal.”

This sea of green that I once called ‘sh—’ to my mother’s face, thinking I was so cool. Even as the word slid off my tongue into her unsuspecting arms, I knew I wasn’t cool, and it wasn’t ‘sh—’ either. Back then, we used the word to describe anything we thought was ugly or just didn’t like. Jimmy Papanouos, a boy in my class, thought it was a good way to describe my skin … to describe me. The only thing that kept me from crying was his forced humiliation by Mrs. Williams in front of the class after self-appointed snitch Jennifer Best told on him. Mrs. Williams twisted his ear until it burned as brightly as his face, and he was only too quick to apologize. Even after she said, “It’s the differences that make Canada what it is. We can all learn something from one another,” I didn’t feel any better; in fact, I felt worse. It wasn’t long afterward that I dropped Gracie, a coolie girl from Trinidad, as my best friend, and started hanging out with Jen.

My mother would not have understood why I just sat there and took it, letting him call me that, instead of “cussing him out,” had I the courage to tell her. Instead, I decided to drop that bomb of shame on her. The shock and pain of her hand across my cheek split my pride in two and from the fissure came tears, tears I’d been holding back for much too long.

“Mama, I’m sorry.”

“Julie, me don’ want to hear it. Get out of me sight, until you come back to de senses God give you. To tink I workin’ for dis, for you.” As she walked away, her back clenched tight as a fist, it was easy to mistake hurt for anger. Especially since she did not speak to me for two days afterward. We have not spoken about it since.

Lesson #5: “These tings we call dumplings, we also call drops, because we drop dem in de pepper pot for de last. But when we finish and sittin’ down to eat, dem drops is like presents, like de first we fin’ on Christmas morn when I was a girl. Me save dem to de last so I
have one final treat before me finish. Seem to make it taste better somehow. Me always wonder how a bit o’ dis (flour and water) and a bit o’ dat (salt) taste so good. But me mother always say, ‘You only need a little bit o’ nothin’ to make a whole lot o’ somethin’.’”

I watch my mother knead the dough until it is a bloated work of art. As she rolls it, I stand hypnotized by the quick action of her fingers, until my mind is as smooth as the pasty tablet. She tears off a handful and gives it to me. Together we roll the short stubby fingers in silence, our arms making contact every so often. We toss our drops into the sea, before taking our seats at the table. Mama starts to crochet, her concentration cast into every stitch; I stare out the window, at nothing at all, until I am far, far away.

Pride has always been a delicate matter between my mother and I. “Mama, you know what the doctor said, you’re going to have to cut out certain foods. He suggested you even try some of the weight-loss meals. They’ll be better for you than …”

“He no know a who he talkin’. What me want wid dat?” mama said, looking to me for an answer. Finding none, she turned away, claiming my frustration as her own, sucking it in through her teeth and tongue and unleashing a rasp of disapproval. Bending over the open face of a rumbling pot, mama exhaled a beaded mist that coated her with moisture and left her eyes weeping. “Why we want look like dese people? Pale, sickly, skin and bone some o’ dem. Me a cassava and yam woman. Our food make us strong, healthy, ready for anyting. How many able to say dat?”

But are we ever really ready for anything?

“Julie, you no gon’ check on de pepper pot,” mama says suddenly, as if the thought has just occurred to her. But she is much too calm, her eyes fastened on her diligent hands.

“How will I know …” I ask.

“Use your nose. Dat’s what it for.”

I stand, head bowed in silence, my nose poised over the spitting contents, divining with each breath its readiness, leaning further into
that mess, until I am lost in it, part of it, and cannot find my way out. I imagine eating the disease right out of my mother with every mouthful I will take, until I am sick to my stomach. The steam scorches my tears before they even have a chance to lend their salty flavor to the pepper pot. Just when I am about to evaporate, disappear …

“Julie, why you no pay more attention to what you a do for a change? The pepper pot a burn up under your nose.” And then, as if she can read my thoughts, the way she seemed to when I was young, she says, her hand on my shoulder and her mouth at my ear, “Buck up Julie, we can always make another pot.”

**Activities**

1. Work with a partner. Discuss what each “Lesson” teaches about life. Summarize your conclusions for the class.

2. Work with a partner. Write a first draft of a paragraph explaining how the cooking lessons help the mother and daughter communicate. Include short quotes from the story that support your ideas. Share the draft with your partner and help each other edit. Write a final draft of your paragraph.

3. Identify as many metaphors in the story as you can. Choose and illustrate your favourite one to show its meaning visually. Add a caption, briefly explaining why you think the author chose this metaphor.

4. Work with a partner. Look carefully at “Lesson #4,” where Jewel writes that she “decided to drop the bomb of shame” on her mother but does not explain further. Create a role play in which Jewel tells her mother about her shame. Present your role play to the class.
You Have Two Voices

Nancy Prasad

Focus Your Learning
Reading this poem will help you to:
- use a graphic organizer to organize ideas
- draft, appraise, and revise a piece of writing
- identify the use of simile and metaphor
- create an illustration

You have two voices when you speak in English or your mother tongue. When you speak the way your people spoke, the words don’t hesitate but flow like rivers, like rapids, like oceans of sound, and your hands move like birds through the air.

But then you take a stranger’s voice when you speak in your new tongue. Each word is a stone dropped in a pool. I watch the ripples and wait for more. You search in vain for other stones to throw. They are heavy. Your hands hang down.

You have two voices when you speak; I have two ears for hearing. Speak to me again in your mother tongue. What does it matter how little I understand when the words pour out like music and your face glows like a flame.

**Activities**

1. Work with a partner. Use a graphic organizer to compare the two voices in the poem. Use this information to write a first draft of a paragraph that compares the two ways of speaking, including the use of simile and metaphor. Share your draft with your partner and help each other edit. Write a final draft of your paragraph.

2. Create an illustration of the person in the poem to show how he/she speaks in two ways.
All Our Worldly Goods  Peter Ginter
Look Closely

Focus Your Learning
Looking at this photograph will help you to:
- identify and describe elements in a photograph that create mood and meaning
- recombine ideas and information to understand more
- create an original poem
- create original dialogue

Activities

1. Look carefully at the background of the photograph. List as many details as you can find. What sense or feeling do you get from the background? What does it tell you about the lives of the people who live in this area? Why did the photographer choose to have this as his background? How would the overall mood of the photograph change if the background were a wheat field, a snow-capped mountain range, or a fun fair?

2. Create a poem to convey the sense and feeling of the photograph.

3. Work with a partner. With your partner, write a dialogue that the man in the photograph might have later on as he tries to explain to a friend how he spent his evening. Present the dialogue to the class.
In the huge, rectangular room, the ceiling a machinery of pipes and fluorescent lights, ten rows of women hunch over machines, their knees pressing against pedals and hands pushing the shiny fabric thick as tongues through metal and thread.

My mother bends her head to one of these machines. Her hair is coarse and wiry, black as burnt scrub. She wears glasses to shield her intense eyes. A cone of orange thread spins. Around her, talk flutters harshly in Toisan wah.

Chemical stings. She pushes cloth through a pounding needle, under, around, and out, breaks thread with a snap against fingerbone, tooth.

Laureen Mar
Sleeve after sleeve, sleeve.
It is easy. The same piece.
For eight or nine hours, sixteen bundles maybe,
250 sleeves to ski coats, all the same.
It is easy, only once she’s run the needle through her hand. She earns money by each piece, on a good day, thirty dollars. Twenty-four years.
It is frightening how fast she works.
She and the women who were taught sewing terms in English as Second Language.
Dull thunder passes through their fingers.

Activities

1. Work with a group. Discuss how the title is connected to the content of the poem. Also talk about the meaning of irony and how it is present in the title. Summarize and present your responses to the class.

2. Imagine that the poet has just found a journal that her mother wrote as she waited to catch the boat to North America. Write the journal entry that the poet came across. Consider the following questions as you write: What was the mother dreaming about as she was leaving China? What hopes might she have had for her new life?

3. Work with a partner. List images that describe how the mother and the other women might be feeling. Represent these images visually, reflecting the theme of the poem. Present and explain your illustrations to the class.
1. Create a booklet using the information you have recorded from mini-lessons on figurative language. Include all the terms reviewed, definitions noted down, and examples taken from selections in this section. For each term, also include an example that you create yourself. You might want to illustrate your booklet.

2. Work with a partner to create poster advertisements for each other. Begin by listing your own weak points. Then take your partner's list and rework the negatives into positives, as in “Your Hidden Skills.” Create a poster using this revised information to advertise your friend as if he or she were looking for a job. Apply the advertising strategies you learned about in “Tricks of the Trade.” Don't put your friend's name on the poster, however. Create a class display of all the advertisements, and challenge classmates to match names with advertisements.

3. Imagine that you are a school counsellor hired to create a brochure for teenagers on cliques and cliquishness. Work with a partner to determine what teenagers’ needs are in relation to cliques. First, develop a list of interview questions to help you identify these needs. Then, interview classmates to find out about their experiences with cliquish behaviour. Finally, create the brochure, using the information from your interviews and the various selections in this section that deal with this issue. Your brochure is meant to help teenagers deal with cliquishness, both as members of cliques and as victims of them. If possible, use a page-layout program to give your brochure a professional look.

4. Work with a small group. Write a dialogue between “the Beast” and Nicole from the article “Life Sentence.” Your dialogue should include pre-, during-, and post-treatment sections. To show your understanding of what motivates the characters, include thoughts, feelings, and images appropriate to Nicole and the Beast. Use the library or the Internet to research more facts and details about eating disorders, and revise your script to incorporate some of your new information and understandings. If possible, prepare a video presentation of your dialogue. Present the dialogue to the class. Afterwards, discuss with your own group what went well and what you should improve for future presentations. Consult with other groups to confirm your group’s self-assessment. Provide other groups with constructive feedback and suggestions for improvement.
5. Work with a small group. Begin by reading or re-reading the excerpt from the play “See Saw” included in this section, as well as a play included in one of the other sections. Next, write a list of major criteria such as dialogue and stage directions that identify plays. Then, use information from the article “Handling Anger and Resolving Conflict” to develop a script that shows characters using the same techniques for handling anger. Once your script has been developed according to the criteria, practise your play with a small group and perform it for the class.

6. Re-read selections in this section that contain new or difficult words. Create a vocabulary list of these words. First, try to guess the meaning of each word by using the context (the sentence or passage) in which it appears. Then, check the word in a dictionary. Compare your guessed meaning with the dictionary version. Adjust your definition as necessary. Write sentences in which you use each word correctly.

7. Use the story “Day of the Butterfly” to create a picture book for younger children. Start by creating brief summaries of the major parts of the story and identifying the important scenes that you will illustrate. Draft illustrations for these scenes and text to go with them. Have a classmate review your draft and offer constructive suggestions for improvement. Prepare the final copy and present it to younger students in a local elementary school. As a class, prepare an evaluation guide for the elementary class to use for a written or oral response to your book.

8. Pick your favourite piece in this section. Find a visual in a book, magazine, or on the Internet that you think relates to the theme or mood of your chosen piece. Prepare a short oral presentation explaining why you believe that your visual should be included with the piece. Make your presentation to the class or a small group.