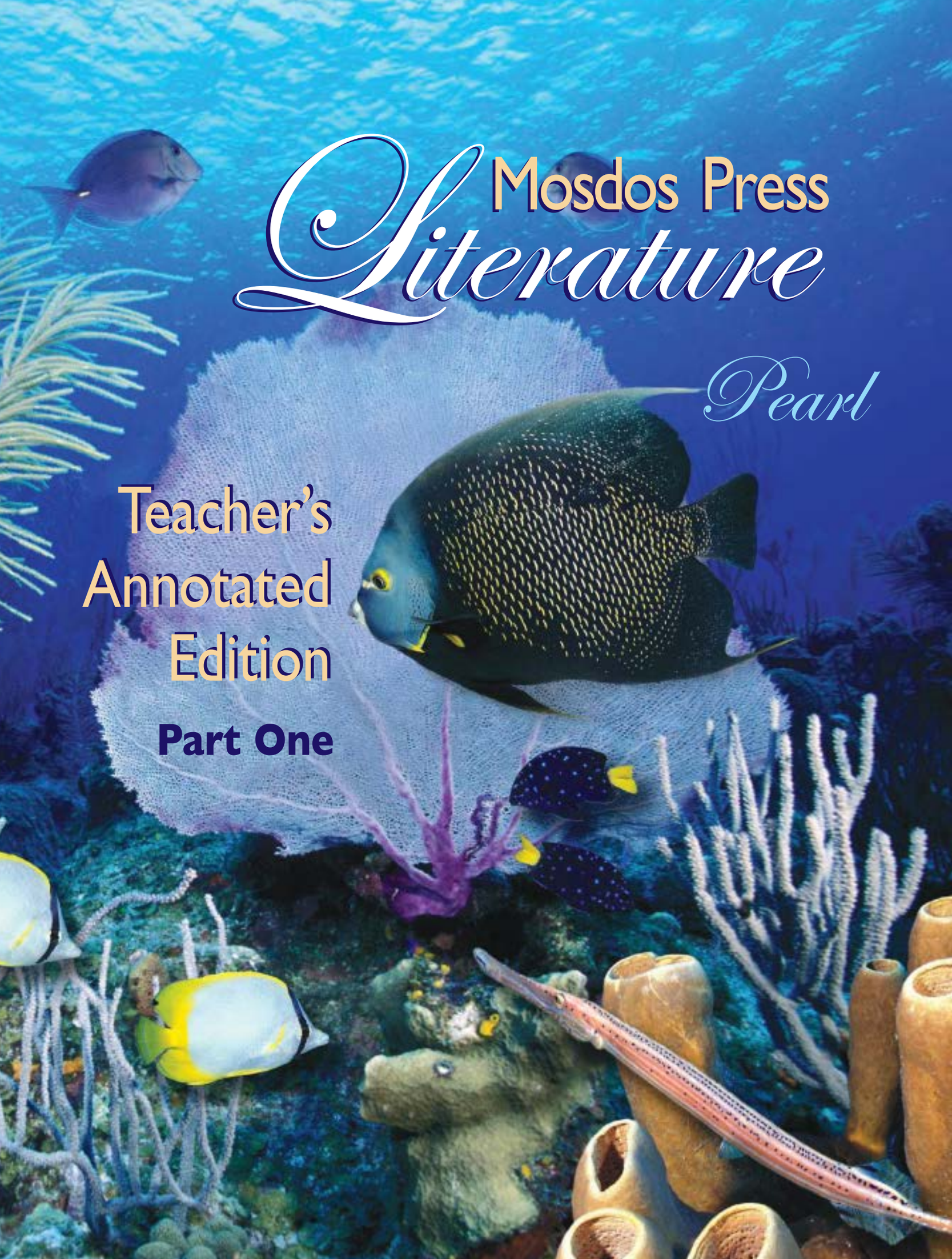
Mosdos Press Literature

Pearl

Teacher's Annotated Edition

Part One



Mosdos Press Literature

PEARL

Part One

Workbook Answer Guide

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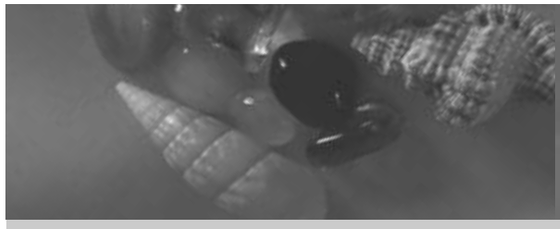

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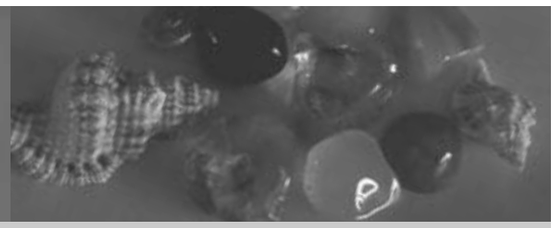

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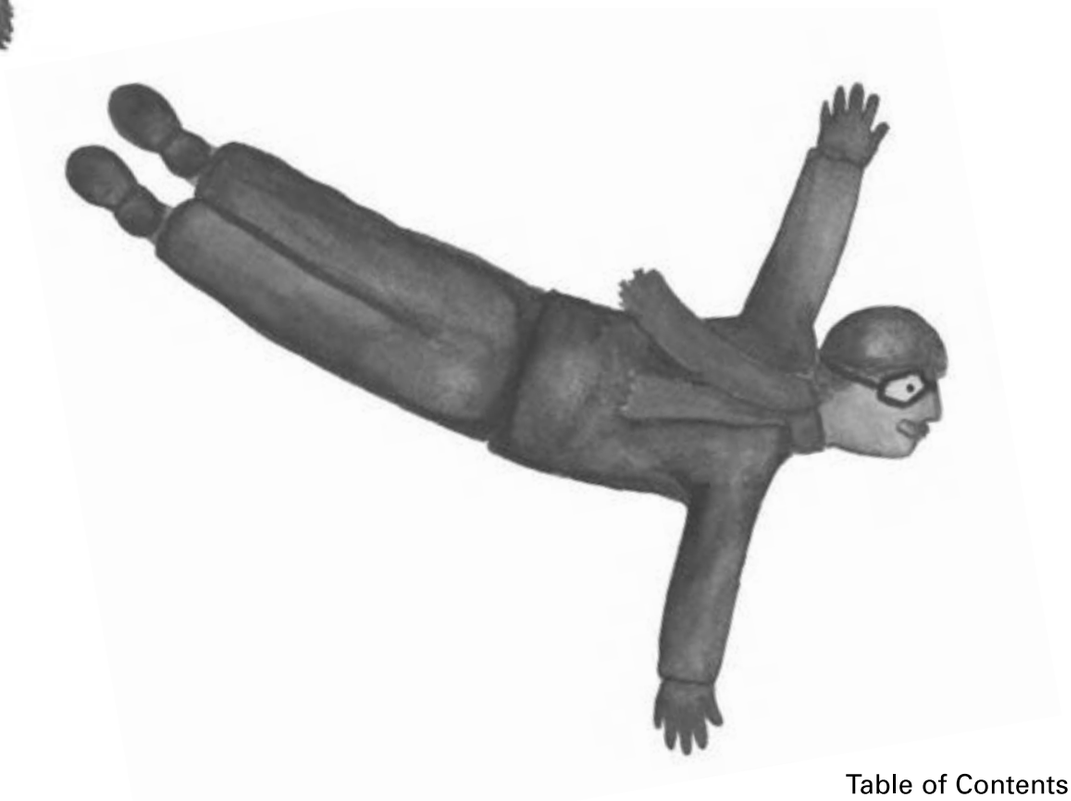

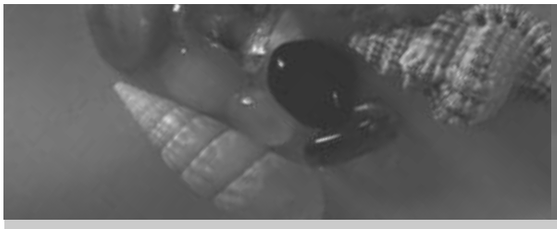

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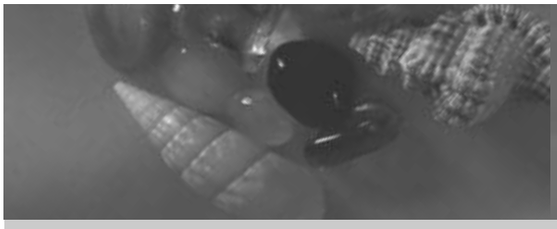

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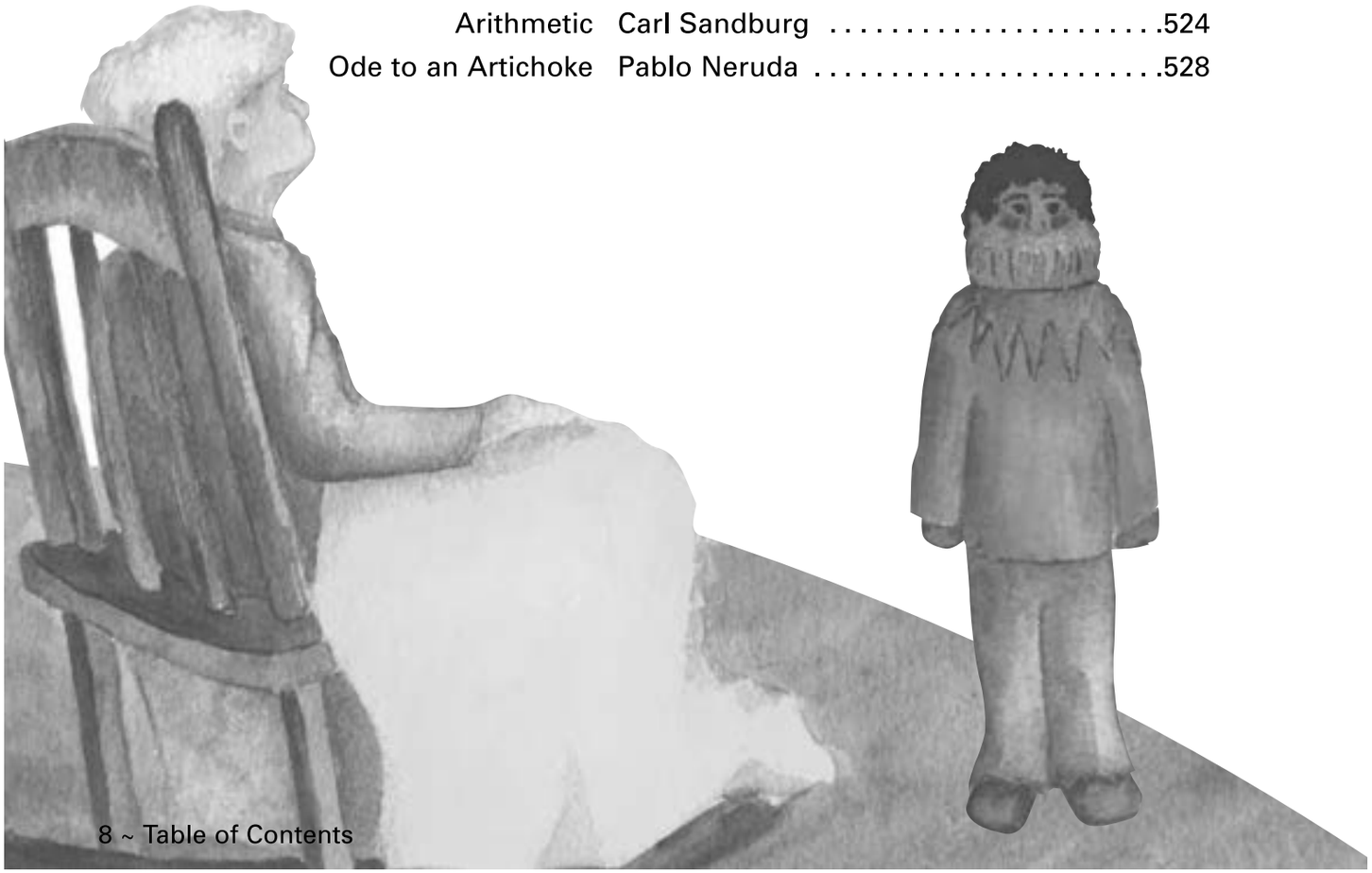

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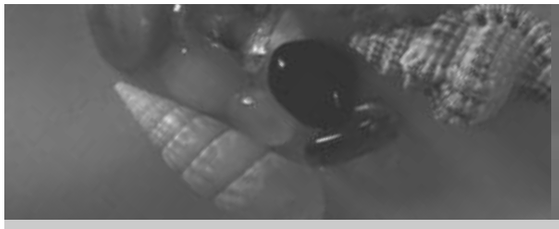

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This content is included with purchase of the book.

MOSDOS PRESS

Blueprint for Reading

BACKGROUND BYTES

For thousands of years, healers have used herbs and other plants to heal the sick and injured. This is the role of the old woman in *The Gold Coin*. In the Amazon rainforest today, there is a native healer with a garden of more than one hundred rainforest plants that have medical value.

Not very long ago, fourteen percent of the earth's land mass was rainforest. As wealthy corporations have hacked away at these regions, the rainforest has been reduced to six percent of the earth's surface. Hundreds of rainforest animals and plants are on the brink of extinction.

The rainforest is still home to half the plant species on earth. Doctors regularly prescribe thousands of medications that were originally extracted from rainforest plants. Some two thousand rainforest plant species have been identified that could help in the fight against cancer. Research and laboratory scientists have only just begun to tap these natural resources.

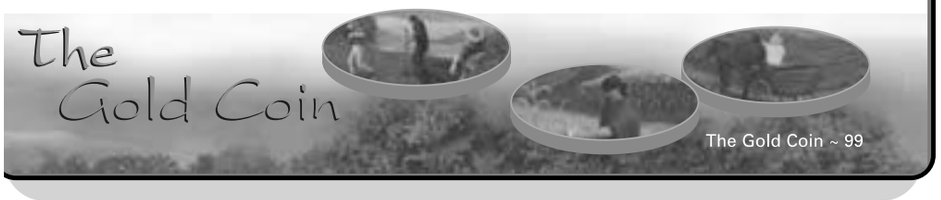
Rainforest plants may hold the cures for countless other diseases, but only a tiny percentage of them have been examined. The rainforest is being destroyed in the Amazon and in Malaysia at an alarming rate. Plants that have medicinal value may be lost forever.

INTO . . . The Gold Coin

Throughout the story, Juan focuses on getting the gold coin. To him, material riches are the door to happiness and freedom. In fact, he has never known either.

Does having money make us happy? Does it change our lives for the good? Stories are told of lottery winners who are thrilled at their sudden good fortune. They later realize that they are no happier than they were before they won the money. What does it mean to be happy? Why is Juan an unhappy person?

As you read *The Gold Coin*, look for the author's clues that point towards the conclusion that money is not what makes a person rich. What kind of richness is Doña Josefa talking about, when she says, "I must be the richest person in the world"?



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GETTING STARTED

Read the first three paragraphs of *The Gold Coin* aloud to your students. Remind them that this is not a graded exercise, but is meant to give them practice in listening and understanding. Read the passage aloud once more. Ask your students the ten multiple-choice questions below. The correct answers appear in boldface type.

Questions

1. For many years, Juan has been
   a. the foreman of a construction site in Mexico City.
   b. someone who takes other people's property.
   c. a short-order cook in an all-night diner.
   d. a prospector for gold.
2. Juan's skin is pale and sickly, because
   a. he has used too much tanning lotion.
   b. he has been sick with the flu.
   c. he is a vampire and sleeps by day.
   d. he works at criminal activities at night.
3. Why is Juan's body shriveled and bent?
   a. He spends most of his time sneaking around and hiding.
   b. He has a bad back.
   c. He always carries a backpack full of heavy books.
   d. He is 101 years old.
4. Juan is always frowning, because
   a. he hasn't won the Olympic gold medal.
   b. he lost his job as ambassador to the U.N.
   c. he hates his job at the restaurant.
   d. no one has ever made him smile.
5. Juan is drawn to the hut, because
   a. a light is shining through the trees.
   b. upbeat Latino music is playing within.
   c. he is delivering a pizza.
   d. he has mistaken it for an all-night diner.
6. What does Juan do when comes upon the hut?
   a. He knocks on the door and says, "Pizza, senora!"
   b. He creeps up to the door and peers through a crack.
   c. He stumbles and falls into the vegetable garden.
   d. He sings a song.
7. What does the table in the hut tell you about the old woman?
   a. She is probably a rich queen.
   b. She is probably a doctor.
   c. She doesn't have much money.
   d. She loves pizza.
8. What is the old woman holding in her hand?
   a. a gold coin
   b. a slice of pizza
   c. a tiny kitten
   d. sheet music for "O solo mio"
9. What does Juan hear the woman say?
   a. "Humpty Dumpty sat on the wall…
   b. "Time for bed."
   c. "I am too poor to eat, but at least I have my coin."
   d. "I must be the richest person in the world."
10. Based on what you know about Juan, what will he do next?
   a. He will call home on his cell phone.
   b. He will try to steal the coin.
   c. He will deliver the pizza and call it a night.
   d. He will answer, "Humpty Dumpty had a great fall."

BACKGROUND BYTES

Until recent centuries, folk healers and shamans were the only medical personnel in cultures the world over. Often, skills in healing were handed down, from one generation to the next, within one family, for hundreds of years. However, many skilled practitioners and midwives ceased to pass on their learning after the 14th century. Healers were among the 75,000 women accused of witchcraft and burned at the stake in Western Europe between the 1400s and 1600s.

The development of precise scientific instruments—such as the microscope—and the careful application of the scientific method laid the foundation for modern medicine. The scientific method is a

method of research in which a problem is identified, relevant data are gathered, a hypothesis is formulated, and the hypothesis is empirically tested. Presumably, science is not grounded in a belief system but in proof that procedures work.

The practice of modern medicine was transformed by the discovery of microorganisms, and the realization that sterile environments and sterile instruments were essential to healing. The use of careful research methodology and laboratory procedures brought new knowledge that was taught at reputable medical schools. The use of anesthesia revolutionized surgery. State licensing exams also ensured that, for the most part, only highly trained and thoroughly educated medical students could practice as doctors.

However, healers continue to fill the role of local doctor in parts of the world where doctors are scarce. Approximately 80 percent of the people who grow up in developing countries rely on shamans or healers for the majority of their health care needs. Shamans have knowledge of the medicinal value of herbs and plants. They have expertise dealing with the problems that are common to their regions, for example, snakebites. Healers may be quite skilled, and the people they serve trust them.

Each second more than an acre of rainforest disappears: That's 11 million acres a year, or 30,000 acres a day. According to The Nature Conservancy, a typical four square mile patch of rainforest contains up to 1,500 flowering plants, 750 species of trees, 125 mammal species, 400 species of birds, 100 reptile species, 60 species of amphibians, and 150 species of butterflies. Until recently, 8 million square miles of tropical rainforest encircled the planet. More than half has been bulldozed, burned, and obliterated. Today, only 3.4 million square miles of the rainforest remains. Scientists estimate that if the current rate of deforestation continues nearly all tropical rainforest ecosystems will be destroyed by the year 2030.

Why are rainforests so important? Although rainforests cover only 6% of the Earth's surface, they are home to more than 50% of all plant and animal species.

Rainforests are crucial to maintaining the Earth's weather patterns and the global supply of fresh water. Rainforests receive 50% of all rainfall—water that is slowly released to rivers and streams. The natural elements and species of the rainforest supply countless consumer, agricultural, medical, and industrial products. The rainforests are also the home of 50 million indigenous peoples who are fighting for their homelands and their way of life against massive government and corporate projects.

There is hope, however, and students can play a positive role by learning about organizations that work to protect the rainforest. One such group, the Friends of Calakmul, is working to protect the biological heritage of the Calakmul Biosphere Reserve. These 1,700,000 acres are the second largest 'protected' area in Mexico. Four hundred jaguars are maintained in the Reserve. This is one of the largest jaguar populations on Earth now, because jaguars are on the edge of extinction. The Friends of Calakmul was formed by a small group of scientists and concerned citizens who anticipated the loss of the Calakmul sanctuary to logging interests and other human pressures. The group is committed to the long-term preservation of jaguars and their fragile ecosystem for generations to come. FOC has brought together other organizations to pool their knowledge, research, and skills. FOC works with local people to find alternative commercial activities to promote *both* development and conversation. Handcrafts, ecotourism, organic crops, native plant cultivation are projects being evaluated.

FOC welcomes student inquiries at 20 Melrose Ct., San Mateo, CA 94402.

FOCUS

- **Fable**

  The Gold Coin is a fable. A **fable** is a short story that teaches a lesson. *The Gold Coin* is longer than the ordinary fable, and the writer describes all of the characters very sympathetically. This means that we care about all of the characters, including Juan. Most fables do not encourage the reader to think sympathetically about hungry foxes or freezing grasshoppers.

  The lesson that fables teach is called "the moral of the story." The lesson of a fable usually becomes clear when the main character is outwitted, or forced to see his own foolishness. Does Juan learn this way, by being outwitted or humiliated, or does he learn from the positive actions he takes and the kindness of the good people he meets?

- **Language Arts Skill: Sequence of Events**

  Juan learns his lessons gradually. As you are reading, look for the events that lead to Juan's final decision about the coin. Look for them in the order in which they occur. This is called the **sequence of events.** When you summarize a story, you give only the main points. Understanding the sequence of events will help you do this.

- **About Plot: Conflict**

  The plot of a story is often driven by a conflict between the main character and someone or something else. This story has several different conflicts. For example, Juan wants the coin desperately, but he keeps missing his chance to get it. Juan also is in conflict with society, because he is a criminal who acts outside of the law to get what he wants.

100 ~ Unit I

Language Alert

Note how the adjectives and verbs used to describe Juan, even in just the first paragraph, tell the reader *who* he is at the outset of the story. All of the words suggest a *creature* rather than a *man*, and convey an almost palpable feeling of repellence, as if he had emerged from underground, from the dead—and, indeed, he seems to be morally dead at the story's beginning. Because Juan represents the dark side and lives in the dark, he is described as

pale, sickly, twisted (adjectives)
hiding, sneaking (verbs)
shriveled, bent (passive verbs that may be confused with adjectives)

If it is appropriate, talk with students about looking for opposites. (This is an early lesson in finding symbols. You may choose whether or not you want to use the word, *symbol.* In this story, both dark and light—gold—are symbols.) Authors often use opposites to serve the theme of a story. You may want to look ahead to *The Richer, the Poorer* (page 302). Also, you may want to point out to your students that **conflict** is often based on opposite, or mutually exclusive, ideas.

Repetition of words also points to symbols, opposites, or important ideas. Here is a list:

a light shining through the trees, shining in her hand, gold coin (p. 101)
gold (3x), *daylight* (p. 102)
gold, light of the moon, gold coin(s) (3x) (p. 103)
corn, each ear of corn, closer to his treasure, yellow kernels glittered like gold coins, beauty of the sunrise, rays of the morning sun, gold coin, gold (p. 104)
warmed as if by the rays of the sun, summer sun, gold, gold coin (p. 105)
gold (3x), *daybreak, bathed in soft dawn light, gold coin* (3x), *coin* (2x) (p. 106)
gold coin (p. 107)

INTO *THE GOLD COIN*

This story stands in sharp contrast to the fables that it mimics, because it is not about the outsmarting of one fixed character by another, but about growth and transformation. Fables leave one cold, but *The Gold Coin* warms the heart. Interestingly, in relatively few pages, the transformation of Juan is believably demonstrated. Here is the roundest of round characters! And one of the finest elements of the story is that Juan changes throughout its telling, not just at the last minute. We climb with him, as he makes his ascent into the light. The people he meets along the way are trusting, hardworking, and generous. They never ask, Should I trust this person? Consequently, each encounter thaws Juan. Each experience brings light to the darkness in which he dwells and to the darkness of his spirit. Who *is* Juan, after all? The gradual expansion of his spirit *is* the story.

The Gold Coin convincingly makes the following points:

- 'Bad' people are not irredeemable. Sick people can be restored to health.
- Negative and destructive attitudes are countered by their opposite: Light dilutes and eradicates dark.
- Warmth drives out the cold.
- Light and warmth straighten the bent.
- Smiles lay waste to frowns.
- The actualization of self may be a balm to the shriveled psyche.
- An isolated person may exist in a moral vacuum.
- When we believe in someone, that person comes to believe in him- or herself.
- A person can become decent, when treated with decency.

Juan believes he needs the coin, because it glows with light, and he is starved for warmth. But the coin, a miniaturization of the sun, is not what Juan needs—and it is clear at the story's end, that the coin is not what *anyone* needs.

Continuing the discussion begun in Language Alert, have students look for symbols of evil (darkness) and good (light). What is the broader meaning of a smile? What is the darkness in which Juan lives? Does it symbolize evil, aloneness, or ignorance? What do students think the gold coin represents? Does it represent goodness or generosity or greed? It is offered *and refused* with generosity and selflessness.

FOCUS

Genre: Fable

Fables have existed as a literary genre for thousands of years in cultures across the globe. Fables often use animal characters to demonstrate the full range of human foibles. Fables make a point and teach a lesson. Sometimes the lesson is summed up and stated at the end of the story. This statement is called the *moral* of the story. The moral is a concisely expressed general truth. In fables, the **protagonist** is often outwitted or taught a lesson by an **antagonist**, a force that opposes the protagonist. You can summarize the familiar Aesop fable *The Tortoise and the Hare* to help students identify these components.

Aesop's fables were presumably written by a freed Greek slave who lived from the 7th to 6th century B.C.E. Even by the 5th century B.C.E., his identity was unknown. In the first century B.C.E., Phaedrus, a Roman, produced a collection of fables that was based on those of Aesop. Our modern version evolved from the writings of Phaedrus and was refined in 1668 by Jean de La Fontaine in his *Fables*. The first six texts of Aesop commonly known as the *Anonymus Neveleti*, an English collection composed in the late twelfth century, was used in schools throughout Europe well into the sixteenth century.

The Panchatantra is a famous collection of Indian animal fables, also called the *Fables of Bidpai*. The stories were written between 100 B.C.E. and 500 B.C.E.—although some are thought to date back as far as 1500 B.C.E.—and their original language was Sanskrit. These fables were carried by people who traveled from India to Persia and Arabia, and later in the 11th century to Greece.

Language Arts Skill: Sequence of Events

A *sequence* is the following of one thing after another—a continuous, connected series. In a **sequence of events**, events are given in the order in which they occurred. The word *sequencing* means listing the steps of an event in chronological order.

Point out to students that a sequence of events can be given in greater or lesser detail. When students want to summarize a piece, they need to give *much less* detail than is given in a sequence of events. Summarizing and sequencing are very different activities. Learning to summarize can be very difficult for students. It may be hard to choose between mentioning one event or another. It is not always easy to say—and sometimes it is impossible to say—which events in a succession of events are the most important.

What is the **sequence of events** in *The Gold Coin*? This is a good piece for drawing up a list with students, because the piece is not too long, and there is a string of equal and similar events.

- Juan, a thief for many years, is drawn by a light shining through the trees.
- He comes upon a hut and peers through a crack in the door.
- He sees an old woman holding a gold coin. She says she must be the richest person in the world. He decides to take all of her gold.
- When she leaves the hut, he climbs through a window.
- He looks everywhere, but finds no gold. He tears away beams supporting the thatched roof. He decides he must find her. He follows the path she has taken.
- When daylight comes, he meets a man and his son who are hoeing potatoes. He asks if they have seen the woman. They say she has crossed the river. They will help Juan, when they have finished harvesting the potatoes.
- Juan becomes impatient waiting, and helps the farmers with the hoeing.
- They finish at dusk, and invite him to eat dinner before departing.
- Juan experiences the pleasure of sharing a home-cooked meal with others.
- The farmers take him across the river that night, and talk about what a wonderful healer Doña Josefa is—and that she offered her patient a gold coin.
- When they reach the other side, they meet a young man who says that Doña Josefa has left. He promises to take Juan over the mountains, when he has harvested the corn.
- Juan spends the next day working in the fields until sundown.
- The following day Juan and the corn farmer set off over the mountains. He also talks about Doña Josefa, who healed his wife and brought her a gold coin.
- Juan reaches a house on the other side of the mountain. A woman and child say Doña Josefa has just left. They will take him the next day, after they have gathered their squash and beans.
- Juan spends another day in the fields. His skin is beginning to tan. He is no longer bent. The child shows him a family of rabbits. Juan smiles. The next day the woman takes him in her wagon. She too talks about Doña Josefa, who cured her husband and brought him a gold coin. Juan learns that Doña Josefa has also left Don Teodosio's house. Juan stays to help with the coffee harvest.
- Don Teodosio takes him the next day on horseback back to Doña Josefa's hut. He also praises Doña Josefa's devotion and generosity. Juan reaches the hut, runs up to the old woman and asks, "Where's the gold?" She responds that he must be the one who needs it.
- A young girl runs up and begs Doña Josefa to come quickly to help her mother. Doña Josefa agrees and then notices that the roof has been damaged. How can she leave?

• Juan reassures Doña Josefa that he will fix the roof. As she leaves, he hands her back the gold coin.

Talk with students about how a summary would be different.

Juan sees the old woman in the hut with the coin and decides he wants her gold. After she leaves, he searches the hut. He even pulls down some of the roof beams. But he finds no gold. He follows the path the woman has taken, and encounters a series of farmers who have recently seen her. They all are willing to take him to her, but first they must finish their harvesting. Each time, Juan works hard with them, so that they will be done sooner. He shares meals with them. They shake his hand. Juan keeps missing the old woman, and finally ends up back where he started, at the hut. He asks Doña Josefa where the gold is, and she gives him the coin. A child comes begging for her help. She is torn because of the damage to her roof. Juan says he will fix the roof and returns the coin.

About Plot: Conflict

In many fairy tales, folktales, and fables, the protagonist is outwitted or taught a lesson by an antagonist. The opposition of the protagonist and antagonist is a **conflict**. The conflict propels the rising action.

The primary conflict of *The Gold Coin* is between good and evil, light and dark, honesty and deceit. This conflict broadens to include an honest day's work vs. theft of another's property—and many of the other themes described in **Into…**

Talk with students about whether, at any point before the end of the story, Juan gives indications of feeling conflicted about his desire to take Doña Josefa's gold. Are we always aware of our own conflicts?

SUMMING UP THE PLOT

- Juan has been a thief for many years. His sneaking around and hiding, as well as his working only at night, has made him sickly, pale, and bent over.
- He has no friends.
- His face is twisted in an angry frown.
- He comes upon a hut, peers through a crack in the door, and sees an old woman holding a gold coin.
- He hears the woman say, "I must be the richest person in the world."

The Gold Coin

Alma Flor Ada

Juan[1] had been a thief for many years. Because he did his stealing by night, his skin had become pale and sickly. Because he spent his time either hiding or sneaking about, his body had become shriveled and bent. And because he had neither friend nor relative to make him smile, his face was always twisted into an angry frown. (1)

One night, drawn by a light shining through the trees, Juan came upon a hut. He crept up to the door and through a crack saw an old woman sitting at a plain, wooden table. (2) (3)

What was that shining in her hand? Juan wondered. He could not believe his eyes: it was a gold coin. Then he heard the woman say to herself, "I must be the richest person in the world." (4) (5)

1. *Juan* (WHAN)

LITERARY COMPONENTS

▶ **1. Exposition; Characterization; Symbol:** We are introduced to Juan, and shown that physical characteristics and emotional well-being are affected by a person's moral life. Juan is a creature of the night, of the dark.

▶ **2. Symbol:** The light shining through the trees may symbolize the goodness of Doña Josefa. This is the first use of light and warmth as a symbol that is repeated throughout the story.

▶ **3. Exposition:** We are introduced to Doña Josefa.

▶ **4. Symbol:** The gold coin stands for generosity and goodness.

▶ **5. Exposition; Foreshadowing:** This is what Juan learns at the end: That being the richest person in the world has nothing to do with money or material possessions.

GUIDING THE READING

LITERAL

Q. How does Juan support himself?

A. He is a thief.

Q. How has his way of making a living affected him physically?

A. His skin is pale and sickly. His body is shriveled and bent.

Q. What does Juan see in the hut?

A. He sees a woman holding a gold coin.

ANALYTICAL

Q. Why has working as a thief affected Juan physically?

A. Apparently, he is a thief by night and sleeps by day, so he is pale. He hides and sneaks, so he has become bent. If he does not feel good about himself because of what he does, without his even being aware of it, he may curl inward, so that no one will see him, because he is ashamed.

Q. What do the woman's house and furniture tell you about her financial situation?

A. She is probably poor.

Q. Why does the woman say, "I must be the richest person in the world"?

A. Answers will vary. Some may say the woman must have a lot of gold coins, even though her house and belongings are plain. Others may say that she is a happy person.

SUMMING UP THE PLOT

- The old woman leaves the hut with two companions.
- Juan searches the hut, but finds no gold. He even tears down the beams of the thatch roof.
- He sets out along the path the woman has taken. He will find her and make her give him the gold.
- Juan meets a father and son, potato farmers, and asks if they have seen the old woman.
- They know Doña Josefa. She cared for the grandfather, and has already crossed the river to administer to another sick person.

LITERARY COMPONENTS

▶ **6. Rising action:** The old woman leaves the hut with two companions. This is Juan's chance to look for gold in the hut.

▶ **7. Foreshadowing:** Juan's damaging the roof has repercussions that bring the story full circle at its conclusion.

▶ **8. Rising action; Setting; Beginning of transformation:** It is daylight when Juan reaches the river. How long has it been since he was outside in the daylight? The country setting is described.

▶ **9. Characterization; Transformation:** It has been so long since Juan has spoken to anyone that his voice is raspy from disuse. With his moving about during the daylight, this is the beginning of his transformation.

▶ **10. Characterization:** Juan is self-centered. He cuts off the boy, not caring what was wrong with his grandfather.

▶ **11. Indirect characterization:** From the dialogue, we learn that Doña Josefa travels great distances to care for the sick.

Juan decided instantly that all the woman's gold must be his. He thought that the easiest thing to do was to watch until the woman left. Juan hid in the bushes and huddled under his poncho, waiting for the right moment to enter the hut.

Juan was half asleep when he heard knocking at the door and the sound of insistent voices. ❻ A few minutes later, he saw the woman, wrapped in a black cloak, leave the hut with two men at her side.

Here's my chance! Juan thought. And forcing open a window, he climbed into the empty hut.

He looked about eagerly for the gold. He looked under the bed. It wasn't there. He looked in the cupboard. It wasn't there, either. Where could it be? Close to despair, ❼ Juan tore away some beams supporting the thatch roof.

Finally, he gave up. There was simply no gold in the hut.

All I can do, he thought, is to find the old woman and make her tell me where she's hidden it.

So he set out along the path that she and her two companions had taken.

It was daylight by the time Juan reached the river. The countryside had been deserted, but here along the riverbank were two huts. ❽ Nearby, a man and his son were hard at work, hoeing potatoes.

It had been a long, long time since Juan had spoken to another human being. ❾ Yet his desire to find the woman was so strong that he went up to the farmers and asked, in a hoarse, raspy voice, "Have you seen a short, gray-haired woman, wearing a black cloak?"

"Oh, you must be looking for Doña Josefa,"[2] the young boy said. "Yes, we've seen her. We went to fetch her this morning, because my grandfather had another attack of—" ❿

"Where is she now?" Juan broke in.

"She is long gone," said the father with a smile. ⓫ "Some people from across the river came looking for her, because someone in their family is sick."

"How can I get across the river?" Juan asked anxiously.

"Only by boat," the boy answered.

2. *Doña Josefa* (DON yah kho SAY fah)

GUIDING THE READING

LITERAL

Q. What does Juan decide after he sees and hears the old woman?
A. He decides to take her gold.

Q. What does Juan do, when he can't find the gold?
A. He sets out to find the old woman.

Q. Why is Juan's voice hoarse and raspy?
A. It has been a very long time since Juan had spoken to anyone.

ANALYTICAL

Q. What is the last thing we are told that Juan does, before he gives up looking in the hut for the gold? If this action seems odd, it may point towards what will occur at the end of the story.
A. The last part of his search is his tearing away roof beams that support the thatched roof. This act may not be entirely believable, which suggests that it serves the literary device of foreshadowing.

Q. Why does Juan interrupt the young boy, as he talks about his grandfather?
A. Juan doesn't know how to relate to other people or to care about them. His own needs are in the forefront, and he believes he needs the gold.

Q. What do the descriptions of the environment tell us about the setting of the story?
A. This is the countryside, farmland. The word *hut* suggests rural poverty. The time period is unclear.

Q. What do you know about Doña Josefa, based on the words of the farmers?
A. We know she leaves before dawn to help someone who is sick, and that she has departed again to assist another family.

SUMMING UP THE PLOT

- The son offers to take Juan across the river after they finish their hoeing.
- Juan helps them so that they will finish more quickly.
- They lay down their hoes at dusk.
- Juan eats dinner with them. The shared, home-cooked meal brings back memories from far away and long ago.
- The boy and his father take Juan in their boat across the river. Juan learns Doña Josefa is a skilled healer, who offers gold coins to her patients.
- On the other side of the river, they meet a man who says that Doña Josefa has left to go to the other side of the mountain.

12 "We'll row you across later, if you'd like." Then turning back to his work, he added, "But first we must finish digging up the potatoes."

The thief muttered, "Thanks." But he 13 quickly grew impatient. He grabbed a hoe and began to help the pair of farmers. The sooner we finish, the sooner we'll get across the river, he thought. And the sooner I'll get to my gold!

14 It was dusk when they finally laid down their hoes. The soil had been turned, and the wicker baskets were brimming with potatoes.

"Now can you row me across?" Juan asked the father anxiously.

"Certainly," the man said. "But let's eat supper first."

15 Juan had forgotten the taste of a home-cooked meal and the pleasure that comes from sharing it with others. As he sopped up the last of the stew with a chunk of dark bread, memories of other meals came back to him from far away and long ago.

By the light of the moon, father and son guided their boat across the river.

16 "What a wonderful healer Doña Josefa is!" the boy told Juan. "All she had to do to make Abuelo[3] better was give him a cup of her special tea."

"Yes, and not only that," his father added, "she brought him a gold coin."

17 Juan was stunned. It was one thing for Doña Josefa to go around helping people. But how could she go around handing out gold coins—*his gold coins?*

When the threesome finally reached the other side of the river, they saw a young man sitting outside his hut.

"This fellow is looking for Doña Josefa," the father said, pointing to Juan.

18 "Oh, she left some time ago," the young man said.

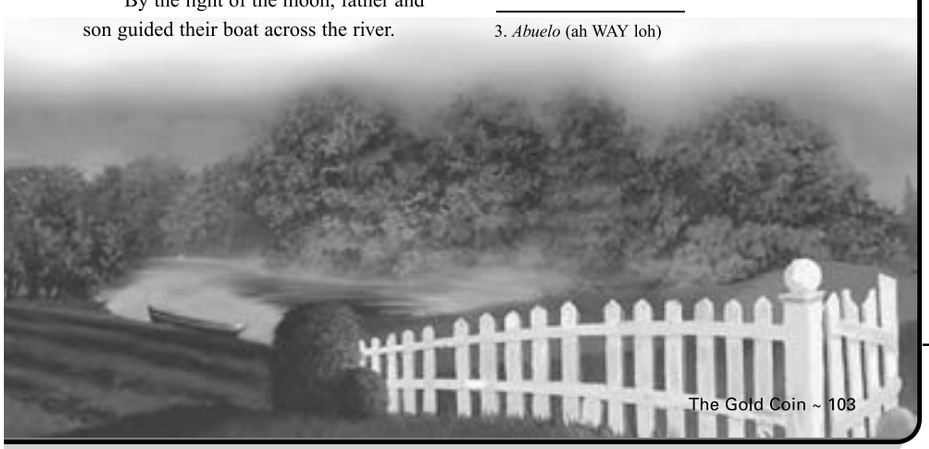
"Where to?" Juan asked tensely.

"Over to the other side of the mountain," the young man replied, pointing to the vague outline of mountains in the night sky.

"How did she get there?" Juan asked, trying to hide his impatience.

"By horse," the young man answered.

3. *Abuelo* (ah WAY loh)



LITERARY COMPONENTS

▶ **12. Characterization:** The boy and his father are hardworking, caring, trusting people.

▶ **13. Rising action; Characterization:** Juan is so impatient to find Doña Josefa, that he helps them hoe their potatoes.

▶ **14. Characterization; Transformation:** But does he help them only out of greed? Juan works from morning to nightfall, and he is not accustomed to physical labor.

▶ **15. Rising action; Characterization:** Juan has memories from long ago of the pleasure of sharing home-cooked meals.

▶ **16. Indirect characterization:** Doña Josefa is characterized by the dialogue of the boy and his father.

▶ **17. Thread of characterization:** This is the first of several instances in which Juan will hear that Doña Josefa has given away a gold coin to a patient. Here he is stunned, angry that she would give away *his* gold coins.

▶ **18. Rising action; Suspense; Folktale repetition:** A sequence of similar events is occurring. Juan will travel to find Doña Josefa, she will have already left, and he will help each of the farmers he encounters with their harvesting. He will work hard in the sun. He will share their meals at dusk. They will take him to his next destination. This pattern is typical of folktales and builds suspense.

GUIDING THE READING

LITERAL

Q. Why does Juan help the potato farmers?

A. It seems that he helps because he is in a hurry for them to take him across the river, but perhaps there is more to it. See Analytical Questions below.

Q. How does Juan feel during the meal?

A. The home-cooked food and the pleasure of sharing it with others brings back memories of long ago.

Q. As they row across the river, what does the farmer tell Juan that stuns him?

A. The farmer tells Juan that Doña Josefa brought his father (and his son's grandfather) a gold coin.

Q. What is Juan told when he reaches the other side of the river?

A. He learns that Doña Josefa has already left.

ANALYTICAL

Q. Are you surprised that Juan helps the farmers and works until dusk?

A. Juan's helping is a surprise, considering his poor physical condition and his attitude that he must steal in order to have anything of his own. When it is clear he has worked the entire day in the hot sun, we have the sense that his industry comes out of something more than his impatience to find Doña Josefa. Perhaps there is selflessness in him, after all.

Q. Why does Juan think of the gold coins as *his* gold coins?

A. It has become a habit for Juan to take what does not belong to him. If he needs it, he must have it. Since he has decided he must have the gold, he already feels as if the coins are his.

SUMMING UP THE PLOT

- The corn farmer agrees to take Juan over the mountains on horseback after he harvests his corn.
- Juan spends the next day working in the fields from sunup to sundown.
- As he husks corn for dinner, the yellow kernels glitter like gold coins.
- As he eats dinner, Juan wonders why a rich woman like Doña Josefa would spend all her time taking care of sick people for miles around.
- The next morning, Juan and the corn farmer set off at dawn. Juan cannot recall when he last noticed the beauty of the sunrise.
- The young man tells Juan that the whole countryside needs Doña Josefa. She cured his wife and brought her a gold coin.
- Juan grins inwardly. To think one could hand out gold so freely!
- The young man stretches out his hand to say good-bye. At first, Juan simply stares.

LITERARY COMPONENTS

▶ **19. Rising action; Transformation:** Juan spends another day in the fields, working from sunup to sundown.

▶ **20. Simile; Imagery:** The yellow kernels are compared to gold coins. They *glitter.*

▶ **21. Characterization; Transformation; Symbol:** Juan notices the beauty of the sunrise. He cannot recall when he last did so. But the rays of the sun are still faint—he still has a distance to go.

▶ **22. Indirect characterization:** The corn farmer praises Doña Josefa.

▶ **23. Continuing thread of characterization:** Now Juan "grins inwardly," showing pleasure at the news that Doña Josefa has given out another gold coin. He reflects on Doña Josefa's strangeness, but experiences no anger.

▶ **24. Indirect characterization:** Doña Josefa is revealed by Juan's musings.

▶ **25. Rising action; Transformation:** The young man holds out his hand to say good-bye to Juan. Juan stares. This is new for him.

"They came on horseback to get her because someone had broken his leg."

"Well, then, I need a horse, too," Juan said urgently.

"Tomorrow," the young man replied softly. "Perhaps I can take you tomorrow, maybe the next day. First I must finish harvesting the corn."

19 So Juan spent the next day in the fields, bathed in sweat from sunup to sundown.

Yet each ear of corn that he picked seemed to bring him closer to his treasure. And later that evening, when he helped the young man husk several ears so they could 20 boil them for supper, the yellow kernels glittered like gold coins.

While they were eating, Juan thought about Doña Josefa. Why, he wondered, would someone who said she was the world's richest woman spend her time taking care of every sick person for miles around?

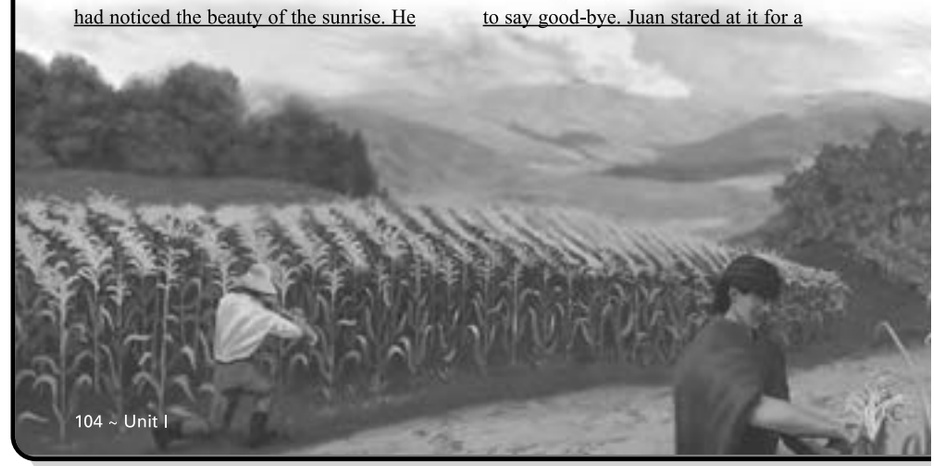
The following day, the two set off at 21 dawn. Juan could not recall when he last had noticed the beauty of the sunrise. He felt strangely moved by the sight of the mountains, barely lit by the faint rays of the morning sun.

As they neared the foothills, the young man said, "I'm not surprised you're 22 looking for Doña Josefa. The whole countryside needs her. I went for her because my wife had been running a high fever. In no time at all, Doña Josefa had her on the road to recovery. And what's more, my friend, she brought her a gold 23 coin!"

Juan grinned inwardly. To think that 24 someone could hand out gold so freely! What a strange woman Doña Josefa is, Juan thought. Not only is she willing to help one person after another, but she doesn't mind traveling all over the countryside to do it!

"Well, my friend," said the young man finally, "this is where I must leave you. But you don't have far to walk. See that house over there? It belongs to the man who broke his leg."

The young man stretched out his hand 25 to say good-bye. Juan stared at it for a



GUIDING THE READING

LITERAL

Q. As Juan husks ears of corn with the farmer, what image comes to his mind?

A. The yellow kernels glitter like gold coins.

Q. As Juan eats with the corn farmer, what does he think about?

A. Juan wonders why Doña Josefa, who has said she is the world's richest person, travels around the countryside taking care of every sick person.

Q. What does Juan notice as he and the corn farmer set off at dawn?

A. He notices the beauty of the sunrise.

ANALYTICAL

Q. Why does Juan notice the beauty of the sunrise now?

A. Answers will vary. In his life as a thief, he may have been going to bed at sunrise. More importantly, all of the healthy, constructive things Juan is doing—working hard, being outdoors in the sunshine, eating healthy meals, sharing the society of others—are healing him. He is no longer focused only on himself.

Q. Has Juan's desire to get the gold changed since the beginning of the story?

A. Answers will vary. Students will point out that he is still trying to find Doña Josefa. Some will mention that his reaction has been tempered. Here, he grins as the corn farmer describes Doña Josefa's behavior.

Q. Why does Juan initially just stare, when the corn farmer reaches out his hand to say good-bye?

A. Juan is not ordinarily around people. He doesn't interact with them. He doesn't help them. They have not previously appreciated his company. Yet all of this has happened with the corn farmer, and now a handshake is appropriate.

SUMMING UP THE PLOT

- Juan grasps his companion's hand firmly in his own. He is warmed by this.
- He reaches the next house, but the woman tells him they have just taken Doña Josefa to Don Teodosio's house.
- The woman tells Juan she will take him there tomorrow. She must first gather her squash and beans.
- Juan spends another day working in the fields beneath the summer sun. He is becoming tan. His back is straighter.
- The woman's daughter shows him a family of rabbits burrowed under a fallen tree. Juan smiles for the first time in a long time.
- The next day the woman and Juan begin their journey to Don Teodosio's house.
- She describes Doña Josefa's caring for her husband's broken leg.
- She says that Doña Josefa even brought her husband a gold coin.

moment. It had been a long, long time since the thief had shaken hands with anyone. Slowly, he pulled out a hand from under his poncho. 26 When his companion grasped it firmly in his own, Juan felt suddenly warmed, as if by the rays of the sun.

27 But after he thanked the young man, Juan ran down the road. He was still eager to catch up with Doña Josefa. When he reached the house, a woman and a child were stepping down from a wagon.

"Have you seen Doña Josefa?" Juan asked.

28 "We've just taken her to Don Teodosio's," the woman said. "His wife is sick, you know—"

"How do I get there?" Juan broke in. "I've got to see her."

"It's too far to walk," the woman said amiably. "If you'd like, I'll take you there tomorrow. But first I must gather my squash and beans."

So Juan spent yet another long day in the fields. Working beneath the summer sun, 29 Juan noticed that his skin had begun to tan. And although he had to stoop down to pick the squash, he found that he could now stretch his body. His back had begun to straighten too.

Later, when the little girl took him by the hand to show him a family of rabbits burrowed under a fallen tree, 30 Juan's face broke into a smile. It had been a long, long time since Juan had smiled.

31 Yet his thoughts kept coming back to the gold.

The following day, the wagon carrying Juan and the woman lumbered along a road lined with coffee fields.

32 The woman said, "I don't know what we would have done without Doña Josefa. I sent my daughter to our neighbor's house, who then brought Doña Josefa on horseback. She set my husband's leg and then showed me how to brew a special tea to lessen the pain."

Getting no reply, she went on. "And, as if that weren't enough, she brought him a gold coin. Can you imagine such a thing?"

LITERARY COMPONENTS

▶ **26. Characterization; Simile:** Juan is moved by human touch. It heals him. He is warmed, *as if by the rays of the sun.*

▶ **27. Characterization; Transformation:** This is the first time we read that Juan thanks someone.

▶ **28. Rising action; Folktale repetition:** Suspense continues to build as a similar sequence of events continues the pattern. Juan narrowly misses Doña Josefa once more, and will stay to help with the harvest.

▶ **29. Characterization; Theme:** Juan's body is healing from his repeated bouts of hard work in the fields and, probably, from his helping people.

▶ **30. Rising action; Transformation:** The little girl takes him by the hand. Juan smiles.

▶ **31. Suspense; Characterization:** Juan continues to change, but he still wants the gold. Will he disappoint us?

▶ **32. Indirect characterization; Repetition:** The woman praises Doña Josefa, and describes her trying to give her husband a gold coin.

GUIDING THE READING

LITERAL

Q. When the little girl takes Juan by the hand, what does she show him?

A. She shows him a family of rabbits living under a fallen tree.

Q. What is Juan's reaction?

A. He smiles.

ANALYTICAL

Q. Why does shaking the corn farmer's hand make Juan feel suddenly warmed?

A. Answers will vary, but students should see that Juan hasn't had physical contact with another human being for a long time. When he finally does, it affects him deeply.

Q. Why has Juan's body begun to change?

A. It is changed by the physical work he has been doing outdoors.

Q. What shows us that people change gradually?

A. His body is becoming healthier, he responds to the little girl, and yet his thoughts still keep going back to the gold.

Q. Juan passes coffee fields while riding in the wagon to find Doña Josefa. What crop do you think he will help harvest next?

A. He will probably harvest coffee plants.

Q. What shows us Doña Josefa's expertise as a healer?

A. She can set a broken leg and brew a tea that reduces pain.

SUMMING UP THE PLOT

- Juan sighs when the woman tells him about another gold coin. He concludes Doña Josefa is someone special.
- When they arrive at Don Teodosio's house, Doña Josefa is already gone, so Juan stays to help harvest coffee beans.
- When Don Teodosio offers to take Juan to Doña Josefa's hut, Juan finds it hard to say goodbye.
- Don Teodosio describes Doña Josefa's caring for his wife and offering her a gold coin.
- Juan finds Doña Josefa shaking her head as she surveys her ransacked hut. She tells him she's been trying to give the coin to someone who needs it, but no one will accept it.
- She says that Juan must be the one who needs it, and hands him the coin. He stares at the coin, speechless.
- A young girl appears and begs Doña Josefa to come to her mother.

LITERARY COMPONENTS

▶ **33. Continuing thread of characterization:** Juan only sighs when he hears another story about Doña Josefa's giving a patient a gold coin. He concludes she is someone special. Now he doesn't know whether to be happy or angry about her giving away her gold.

▶ **34. Rising action; Folktale repetition:** Suspense continues to build as a similar sequence of events continues the pattern. Juan narrowly misses Doña Josefa once more, and stays to help with a coffee bean harvest.

▶ **35. Characterization; Transformation:** Juan experiences the tranquility of the coffee plantation.

▶ **36. Symbol:** *Soft dawn light* may stand for peace and a new beginning.

▶ **37. Personification:** The mountains seemed to smile.

▶ **38. Characterization; Transformation:** Juan finds it hard to say good-bye to Don Teodosio.

▶ **39. Indirect characterization; Repetition:** Don Teodosio praises Doña Josefa, and describes her caring for his wife and bringing her a gold coin.

▶ **40. Foreshadowing; Symbol:** A storm is about to break. Actually, two storms are about to break. One refers to weather, the other to Juan.

▶ **41. Continuing thread of characterization:** Juan sighs and mops his brow at Don Teodosio's story about Doña Josefa's giving his wife a gold coin.

▶ **42. Plot; Metaphor; Suspense:** Juan has traveled full circle. He is back in "familiar territory." Has his journey changed him, or has he remained the same?

▶ **43. Action peaks; Confrontation; Resolution:** Juan has found Doña Josefa at long last. By this time, he feels as if he knows her and speaks familiarly. "So I've caught up with you at last!" This is the end of the repeated pattern.

▶ **44. Moral climax; Summing up; Interaction of characters; Transformation:** Doña Josefa queries Juan, "Have you come for the gold coin?" She puts him to shame, as she describes those to whom she offered the coin but who refused it: (1) an old man who'd had a heart attack; (2) a young woman running a fever; (3) a man with a broken leg; (4) Doña Teodosio who was ill.

▶ **45. A turn of the screw:** Doña Josefa says to him, "You must be the one who needs it."

▶ **46. Mounting tension; Moment of truth:** Doña Josefa hands him the coin. Juan is speechless.

33 Juan could only sigh. No doubt about it, he thought, Doña Josefa is someone special. But Juan didn't know whether to be happy that Doña Josefa had so much gold she could freely hand it out, or angry for her having already given so much of it away.

34 When they finally reached Don Teodosio's house, Doña Josefa was already gone. But here, too, there was work that needed to be done . . .

Juan stayed to help with the coffee harvest. As he picked the red berries, he gazed up from time to time at the trees that grew, row upon row, along the hillsides.

35 What a calm, peaceful place this is! he thought.

The next morning, Juan was up at

36 daybreak. Bathed in the soft dawn light,

37 the mountains seemed to smile at him.

When Don Teodosio offered him a lift on

38 horseback, Juan found it difficult to have to say good-bye.

39 "What a good woman Doña Josefa is!" Don Teodosio said, as they rode down the hill toward the sugarcane fields. "The minute she heard about my wife being sick, she came with her special herbs. And as if that weren't enough, she brought my wife a gold coin!"

40 In the stifling heat, the kind that often

41 signals the approach of a storm, Juan simply sighed and mopped his brow. The pair continued riding for several hours in silence.

42 Juan then realized he was back in familiar territory, for they were now on the stretch of road he had traveled only a week ago—though how much longer it now seemed to him. He jumped off Don Teodosio's horse and broke into a run.

This time the gold would not escape him! But he had to move quickly, so he could find shelter before the storm broke.

Out of breath, Juan finally reached Doña Josefa's hut. She was standing by the door, shaking her head slowly as she surveyed the ransacked house.

"So I've caught up with you at last!" 43 Juan shouted, startling the old woman. "Where's the gold?"

"The gold coin?" Doña Josefa said, 44 surprised and looking at Juan intently. "Have you come for the gold coin? I've been trying hard to give it to someone who might need it," Doña Josefa said. "First to an old man who had just gotten over a bad attack. Then to a young woman who had been running a fever. Then to a man with a broken leg. And finally to Don Teodosio's wife. But none of them would take it. They all said, 'Keep it. There must be someone who needs it more.' "

Juan did not say a word.

"You must be the one who needs it," 45 Doña Josefa said.

She took the coin out of her pocket 46 and handed it to him. Juan stared at the coin, speechless.

At that moment a young girl appeared, her long braid bouncing as she ran. "Hurry, Doña Josefa, please!" she said breathlessly. "My mother is all alone, and the baby is due any minute."

GUIDING THE READING

LITERAL

Q. Earlier, when Juan was told of Doña Josefa's generosity with gold coins, he is first stunned, angry that she would give away *his* gold coins. The second time he grins inwardly and is amazed. How does he react this time, when the woman farmer relates the story?

A. He can only sigh, and concludes she is someone special. He doesn't know whether to be happy she has so much gold, or angry that she has given so much of it away.

Q. What does Juan do at Don Teodosio's house?

A. He helps with the coffee harvest.

Q. Where does Juan find Doña Josefa?

A. He finds her where he first spied her, at her hut.

SUMMING UP THE PLOT

- Doña Josefa tells the young girl she will come, but glances up at the black clouds. A storm is nearly upon them.
- How can she leave when her roof has been damaged and a storm is approaching?
- Juan looks at the child, Doña Josefa, and the ransacked hut.
- He promises to fix the roof and tells her to go.
- Juan gives back the coin. He says the baby will need it more.

"Of course, dear," Doña Josefa replied. But as she glanced up at the sky, 47 she saw nothing but black clouds. The storm was nearly upon them. Doña Josefa sighed deeply.

"But how can I leave now? Look at my house! I don't know what has happened to the roof. The storm will wash the whole place away!"

And there was a deep sadness in her voice.

Juan took in the child's frightened eyes, Doña Josefa's sad, distressed face, and the ransacked hut.

"Go ahead, Doña Josefa," he said. 48 "Don't worry about your house. I'll see that the roof is back in shape, good as new."

The woman nodded gratefully, drew her cloak about her shoulders, and took the child by the hand. As she turned to leave, Juan held out his hand.

"Here, take this," he said, 49 giving her the gold coin. "I'm sure the newborn will need it more than I."

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

ALMA FLOR ADA, born in 1938, draws from her Cuban heritage and her childhood experiences to write stories for children. As a child she listened to the tales told by her grandmother and uncles, and she spent lots of time outdoors reading books. Ms. Ada writes in both Spanish and English, and feels that learning more than one language is an important creative tool. She teaches at the University of San Francisco.

LITERARY COMPONENTS

▶ **47. Symbol; Metaphor:** Doña Josefa sees nothing but black clouds. A storm is nearly upon them. Will Juan pass the test?

▶ **48. Juan transformed:** Juan will fix the roof.

▶ **49. Realization; Resolution:** Juan returns the coin. He realizes that someone else may need it more than he.

GUIDING THE READING

LITERAL

Q. Why has the young girl come to fetch Doña Josefa?

A. Her mother is about to have a baby, and she needs Doña Josefa's help.

Q. Why is Doña Josefa conflicted about leaving?

A. A storm is coming, and her roof must be fixed before the rain arrives.

Q. How had Doña Josefa's roof been ruined?

A. Juan had pulled the beams of the thatch roof down in his search for gold.

ANALYTICAL

Q. Why does Juan offer to fix the roof?

A. Answers will vary. Some will say that he destroyed the roof and so now he should fix it. Some will point out that this shows how much he has changed. He wants to take responsibility for his destructive acts, and he wants to reassure Doña Josefa and make it possible for her to go to her patient.

Q. If Doña Josefa had given Juan the gold coin at the beginning of the story, would he have kept it?

A. Answers may vary. Most students probably will say he would have kept it, because he had not yet begun to change. At the beginning of the story he thought only of himself.

ANALYTICAL (page 106)

Q. Why did Juan find it difficult to say goodbye to Don Teodosio's farm?

A. It was a beautiful, peaceful place, and perhaps he had come to like Don Teodosio's company.

Q. Doña Josefa had tried to give the coin to many people. Why did they all refuse to take it?

A. They all thought someone else would need it more than they did.

Q. Do you think Doña Josefa believes that Juan needs the gold coin more than the other people she tried to give it to?

A. Answers will vary. Some students may say she believes that Juan needs it, because he seems to want it so desperately. Others may feel she gives it to him, because the juxtaposition of his own situation with that of the others to whom she has offered the coin will show him that he doesn't really *need* it at all.

Q. After traveling so far and working so hard for it, how do you think Juan feels about simply being handed the gold coin?

A. Answers will vary. He may be embarrassed. This final act of trust may take him right over the top, in terms of his transformation.

QUICK REVIEW

1. His skin is pale and sickly-looking, because he is out and about only at night, as his occupation requires. He is shriveled and bent, because he is always hiding and sneaking about. His voice is raspy from not having spoken to anyone in a long time.
2. He wants to find her and make her tell him where the gold is hidden.
3. The old woman is a skilled healer and offers each of her patients a gold coin.
4. Doña Josefa gives Juan the coin. He returns it to her.

FOCUS

1. Students will have various suggestions. See Into…
2. Tell students that their summaries may reasonably require more than three to five sentences. Here is an example: Juan is a thief who sees an old woman with a gold coin. He searches her hut and then follows her. He encounters a series of farmers, but Doña Josefa has always just left. Each time, they take him to her, after they have finished harvesting their crops with Juan's help. Ultimately, he ends up where he started and asks Doña Josefa for the gold. She says that he must be the one who needs it, and gives it to him. He is stunned, returns the coin, and fixes her roof, which he had damaged in his early search.
3. Answers will vary, but each account should include a conflict of some kind and describe its resolution.

CREATING AND WRITING

1. Answers will vary.
2. Answers will vary.

Studying the Selection

QUICK REVIEW

1. How has Juan's life as a thief affected him physically?
2. Why does Juan follow Doña Josefa as she moves from place to place?
3. What does Juan learn about Doña Josefa, from the people who offer to take him to her?
4. What does Doña Josefa offer to give Juan, and how does he respond?

FOCUS

1. What lesson do you think the author is teaching us in *The Gold Coin*?
2. When you summarize, you include only the most important ideas of a piece of writing, and you leave out the minor details. Summarize *The Gold Coin* in three to five sentences.
3. A conflict occurs when two different forces work against each other. At first, Juan is in conflict with society because he steals, and this breaks society's rules. Think of a time when you experienced a conflict. What were the two opposing forces? How was the conflict resolved?

FIRST IMPRESSIONS

You have read stories with surprise endings. Does the ending of *The Gold Coin* surprise you?

CREATING AND WRITING

1. One of the themes of *The Gold Coin* is that you can be a rich person without money or belongings. Write a list of the ways in which you are rich. Do not include money or things that you own.
2. Think of a lesson that you have learned. For example, maybe you learned that it's better to share than to be stingy. Now, write a short fable. In your fable, the main character will learn the lesson that you have learned.
3. The illustrations for *The Gold Coin* help bring the story to life. Now you have the opportunity to illustrate your own fable. Help your readers imagine the scenes and characters you wrote about in #2. Bring your fable to life with the illustrations you create.

Most pages are omitted from this preview.

This content is included with purchase of the book.

MOSDOS PRESS

The Passenger Pigeon

Blueprint for Reading

BACKGROUND BYTES

How does an animal species go from a population of billions to none?

In 1857, a committee of the Ohio State Legislature declared, "The passenger pigeon needs no protection."

Passenger pigeons were slaughtered by the millions. They were killed for their feathers, for sport, for food. In the 19th century, forests in the U.S. began to disappear. The forests held the nuts and berries the passenger pigeon needed.

Once the number of passenger pigeons had fallen below a certain level, the species could not recover. The balance tipped toward extinction—the disappearance of an entire species.

When there are many life forms, it is called biodiversity. With biodiversity, *everything is in balance*, as it was meant to be. When a species becomes extinct, there are massive die-offs of other species, because each depends on the others.

INTO . . . The Passenger Pigeon

30,000 species are becoming extinct each year. Nearly half of all living animal and plant species could be lost in the next 50 years. Sadly, those who follow us will not even know what they have missed.

FOCUS

- **Memorial Poem**
  Written in free verse, this form poem cries for the passing of an entire species.

  The similes compare the passenger pigeon with stars in the heavens, grains of sand in the sea, and the American buffalo. The metaphors tell us that when these birds took flight, "the sun was darkened and day became dusk."

- **Using Repetition in Poetry**
  In *The Passenger Pigeon*, the poet repeats words to create an echo. This echo gives emphasis and importance to the words. Because of the way the repeated words are laid out on the page, they look like pigeons in flight.

- **New Words to Describe Repetition**
  Sometimes, we need new words, if we want to describe something perfectly. Try these:
  epistrophe (eh PIH stroh fee): The repetition of a word or words at the end of two or more successive verses.

  anaphora (an ah FOR ah): The repetition of a word or phrase at the beginning of two or more successive verses.

  palillogy (pal ILL oh jee): The repetition of a word or phrase for emphasis.

GETTING STARTED

Talk with your students about whether they know of any other species that could say, "Once, we were counted not in thousands but in millions. Once we were counted in thousands, not in hundreds." In *The Passenger Pigeon*, poet Paul Fleischman compares the now-extinct passenger pigeon, first, with the stars in the heaven, which still number in the billions; next, with the grains of sand in the sea—which surely number at least in the billions—and finally with the buffalo. Since Fleischman grew up in the 1950s, he surely knows what happened to the buffalo. It is a double whammy, a turning of the screw, when he makes the comparison with the buffalo, after the comparisons with the stars and with grains of sand. What did the buffalo *once* number? What happened also to the buffalo?

It is estimated that when Columbus landed, there were 60 to 75 million bison in the territory that is now the United States. In fact, bison once roamed the United States from the East Coast to the West Coast, from the Canadian border to Florida and Mexico. By 1800, there were forty million buffalo. By 1883, there were no wild bison left in the United States. By 1900, there were fewer than six hundred on the North American continent. The majority of the forty million animals were killed in a fifty-five year period, beginning in 1830.

Regarding the buffalo population in the early 1800s, the PBS script for "The Buffalo Nation" reads:

> Sometimes,…the rumbling of thunder could be heard in the distance, though no storm clouds could be seen. Then the ground would begin to tremble, and suddenly the astonished newcomers [the white settlers who moved west of the Mississippi River] would be surrounded by a thundering herd of hulking animals that stretched further than the eye could see. The majestic welcoming committee made it clear that the settlers had, at last, arrived in the buffalo nation—a land where tens of million of American Bison held sway…
>
> Indeed, for hundreds of years the huge bison herds were able to accommodate the loss of the relatively few animals taken by Native Americans. In the 1500s, however, things began to change. First, Spanish explorers introduced horses to the region. By the 1800s, Native Americans had learned to use the speedy steeds to chase bison, dramatically expanding their hunting range and effectiveness. Next, guns made their way into the hands of buffalo hunters, making them increasingly deadly hunters. But it was that arrival of vast waves of white settlers in the 1800s—and their conflict with the Native American residents of the prairies—that spelled the end for the buffalo. Among the earliest waves of settlers were trappers and traders, people who made their living selling meat and hides. By the 1870s, they were shipping hundreds of thousands of buffalo hides eastward each year: More than 1.5 million were packed aboard trains and wagons in the winter of 1872-1873 alone.
>
> The commercial killers, however, weren't the only ones shooting bison. Train companies offered tourists the chance to shoot buffalo from the windows of their coaches, pausing only when they ran out of ammunition or the gun's barrel became too hot. There were even buffalo killing contests. In one, a Kansan set a record by killing 120 bison in just 40 minutes. "Buffalo" Bill Cody, hired to slaughter the animals, killed more than 4,000 buffalo in just two years.
>
> Some U.S. government officials even promoted the destruction of the bison herds as a way to defeat their Native American enemies, who were resisting the takeover of their lands by white settlers. One Congressman, James Throckmorton of Texas, believed that "it would be a great step forward in the civilization of the Indians and the preservation of peace on the border if there was not a buffalo in existence." Soon, military commanders were ordering their troops to kill buffalo—not for food, but to deny Native Americans their own source of food. One general believed that buffalo hunters "did more to defeat the Indian nations in a few years than soldiers did in 50." By 1880, the slaughter was almost over. Where millions of buffalo once roamed, only a few thousand animals remained. Soon, their numbers dwindled, with the largest wild herd—just a few hundred animals—sheltered in the isolated valleys of the newly created Yellowstone National Park.

The buffalo suffered a fate similar to that of the passenger pigeon, but the ultimate protection of a few hundred meant that the buffalo did not become extinct. The extinction of species and their habitat has also been

discussed in other parts of this book. The history of the passenger pigeon is reviewed in Background Bytes. A current list of Endangered and Extinct Animals can be found in the Appendix after page 531.

Information regarding the plight of several species may be helpful for additional class discussion. This information can be found in the Appendix after page 531.

Teaching Your Students Letter-Writing Skills As They Learn about the International Environmental Crisis

Children develop expertise writing letters when the letters are real, not simply exercises, and have purpose. An important, real-world exercise is to have each of your students write to one of the organizations below. Students can look forward to receiving responses, and feel good about corresponding about an important matter. This will increase their knowledge, their awareness, and give them practice writing letters. We have included a sufficient number of organizations, in the hope that not more than two children will write to the same organization. This list can be found in the Appendix after page 531.

BACKGROUND BYTES

The term, *passenger pigeon*, was coined by French settlers. They used the name passenger pigeon, meaning migratory pigeon. The migration of passenger pigeons was apparently phenomenal to see, because they passed overhead in incredible numbers.

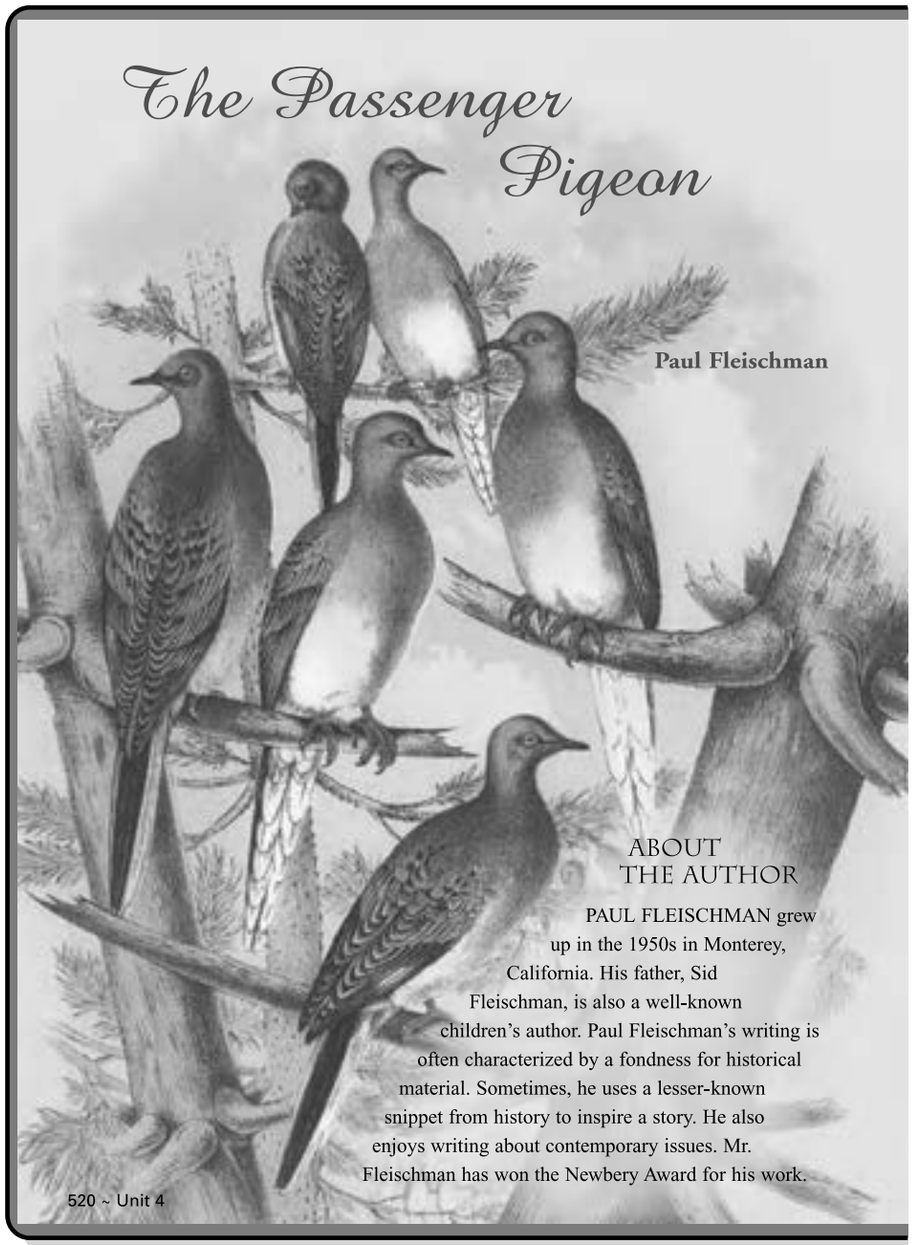
March 24, 2000 was the 100th anniversary of the last authenticated sighting of a passenger pigeon in the wild.

Language Alert

Don't let your students confuse the extinct passenger pigeon with the carrier pigeon. A carrier pigeon is a homing pigeon used to carry messages. Carrier pigeons have been used since ancient times to convey letters from a distant point to their homes.

INTO *THE PASSENGER PIGEON*

We need to value the creatures of the world and the beauty of the unspoiled earth. The extinction of the passenger pigeon is a stunning example of destruction. The importance of saving every life form on earth is a powerfully obvious lesson for us to teach our children.



FOCUS

Memorial Poem

The Passenger Pigeon is a poem written to memorialize a species that could not survive the overwhelming presence of man—in spite of its population that numbered in the billions. The poem is written in free verse, and is a concrete or form poem that looks like a flock of birds moving across the sky.

The poem uses extensive repetition, so that the words echo like the cries of birds. This repetition is also the repetition of sobbing, what we would expect in a dirge.

Similar to the poet's use of syllabification in *Icicles*, most of the words here are monosyllables. This is Martha's poem, Martha's cry, and it is written in the first person. Besides "*billions. billions.*," the poem's most vivid lines, as well as its saddest, as Martha sings her dirge, are "We were numerous as the," "When we burst into flight," and "we so filled the sky." These are also its longest lines except for the magnificent Line 24, the climax of the poem, with its grand, operatic, desperate, and angry *Humblers of the sun we were!*

The similes and metaphor, comparing the passenger pigeon with stars in the heavens, grains of sand in the sea, the American buffalo, as well as attesting that the passenger pigeon brought the sun to its knees, suggest the passenger pigeon as having been nearly elemental, one of the basic components of the Earth.

Talk with your class about the final part of the poem: *Yet it's 1914, and here I am alone…* Do students like this ending? Do they find it strong? Weak? How might it have been done differently?

Using Repetition in Poetry

Talk with your class about how *The Passenger Pigeon* makes use of two columns that, with the repetition of words, create an echo. Visually, the poem is almost difficult to grasp, like a trick puzzle with repeated words. See if they can find all of the instances of repetition.

SUMMING UP THE POEM

- They were counted in billions.
- They were as numerous as the stars, sand, and the buffalo.
- When they filled the sky, day turned to dusk.
- They humbled the sun.
- How could they be gone?
- Yet she is alone, caged in the Cincinnati Zoo, the last of her kind.

We were counted not in
thousands

nor
millions

but in
billions.
billions.
We were numerous as the
stars
in the heavens

stars

As grains of
sand
at the sea
sand

As the
buffalo
on the plains.

buffalo

When we burst into flight
we so filled the sky

that the
sun
was darkened
sun

and
day
became dusk.

day

Humblers of the sun
we were!
Humblers of the sun
we were!

The world
inconceivable
inconceivable
without us.

Yet it's 1914,
and here I am
alone
alone
caged in the Cincinnati Zoo,

the last
of the passenger pigeons.

LITERARY COMPONENTS

- **Alliteration:** ***b****ut in* ***b****illions…****b****uffalo…****b****urst* ***d****arkened…****d****ay…****d****usk*
- **Rhyme:** *millions…billions*
- **Simile:** *numerous* ***as the stars***
  [numerous] ***as grains of sand***
  [numerous] ***as the buffalo on the plains***
- **Assonance:** *st****a****rs…d****ar****kened*
- **Internal rhyme:** *grains…plains*
- **Double entendre; Dreadful irony:** The comparison with the buffalo on the plains has twofold meaning: The buffalo *once* numbered in the what? What happened to the buffalo?

ANALYZING THE POEM

The Passenger Pigeon is a dirge, a song or hymn of grief or lamentation intended to accompany funeral or memorial rites. This free verse, form poem is the first-person final testament of Martha—although she is not named in the poem—the last of her kind. In spite of a population that numbered in the billions, a bird species that was the most numerous on earth, the passenger pigeon could not survive the stunning destructiveness of humankind. The poem uses extensive repetition, and the words echo like the cries of birds. This repetition is also the repetition of sobbing, what we would expect in a dirge.

GUIDING THE READING

LITERAL

Q. Where is the speaker of the poem, and what year is it?
A. The speaker of the poem is caged in the Cincinnati Zoo, and the year is 1914.

Q. How were passenger pigeons counted?
A. They were counted in billions.

Q. Name three things the passenger pigeons were as numerous as.
A. The stars in the heavens, grains of sand at the sea, and the buffalo on the plains.

Q. Who is telling this story?
A. The one who is the last of the passenger pigeons.

ANALYTICAL

Q. What does Martha mean when she says that the passenger pigeons were "humblers of the sun"?
A. She means that they were so numerous that the sun was obscured when a flock crossed the sky. As she says, when they burst into flight, they so filled the sky that the sun was darkened and day became dusk.

Q. Why does she say that the world is "inconceivable without us"?
A. They were so many, how could they be gone? Students may well have other good answers.

FIRST IMPRESSIONS

Answers will vary.

A HANDS-ON ACTIVITY

Divide your class into groups of four to six students. Review the hands-on activity carefully with students and make certain each group has:

- A simple map of the survey area
- Pads of paper, pens, and pencils
- Magnifying glasses
- Field guides

Encourage students to have fun with this activity while still being precise and respectful of both plant and animal life. The preparation and creation of a mini field guide should be a source of teamwork and pride for you and your class.

Studying the Selection

FIRST IMPRESSIONS

Is the ending of the poem a good one?

A HANDS-ON ACTIVITY

Thank You, World Wildlife Fund!

Does your town or city have grizzly bears in the woods? Condors flying in the sky? Manatees in the rivers? No? Well, it's still full of life. This activity will show the biodiversity (variety of life) in your region. Here is your chance to do a rapid assessment, or quick survey, of your locale.

- **Each Student Group Needs**
  - ✓ A simple map of the survey area
  - ✓ pads of paper, pens, and pencils
  - ✓ magnifying glasses
  - ✓ field guides
- **The Task**

1. Select an area to study. Form small survey teams.
2. Each team member is assigned a role. Each is responsible for different parts of the survey area, or for tracking specific organisms: insects, plants, mammals, reptiles, or birds.
3. Note all signs of living things and their location. If you can't name an organism, make a sketch and write a description, such as *tiny white flowers with red middles* or *dark caterpillar eating an oak leaf*.
4. Walk softly, slowly, and quietly. Don't frighten the animal life. Don't destroy the evidence! Respect any signs of life, including spider webs and insect hills. Do not injure any organisms.

- **Look for Animal and Insect Signs**
  - tracks
  - burrows
  - nests
  - digging and scratching marks
  - bones
  - feathers
  - insect eggs
  - cocoons
  - spider webs
  - nibbled leaves and branches
  - animal droppings
  - feeding holes in dead trees and logs
- **Questions for Discussion**

1. Which organisms—plant, insect, reptile, bird, mammal—did your group find? Have you noticed these organisms before?
2. Are organisms present throughout all of your survey area?
3. Would your results be the same during another season of the year?
4. Wildlife habitats are disappearing quickly because of destruction by man. Why do scientists find rapid assessments so useful?
5. All of the small groups from your class can now pool their knowledge. With your teacher's guidance, the class will create a mini field guide, following the model of the field guides used for your survey. The class field guide will show the biodiversity of your survey area. Existing field guides will help members of the class identify the organisms and animal signs they observed.