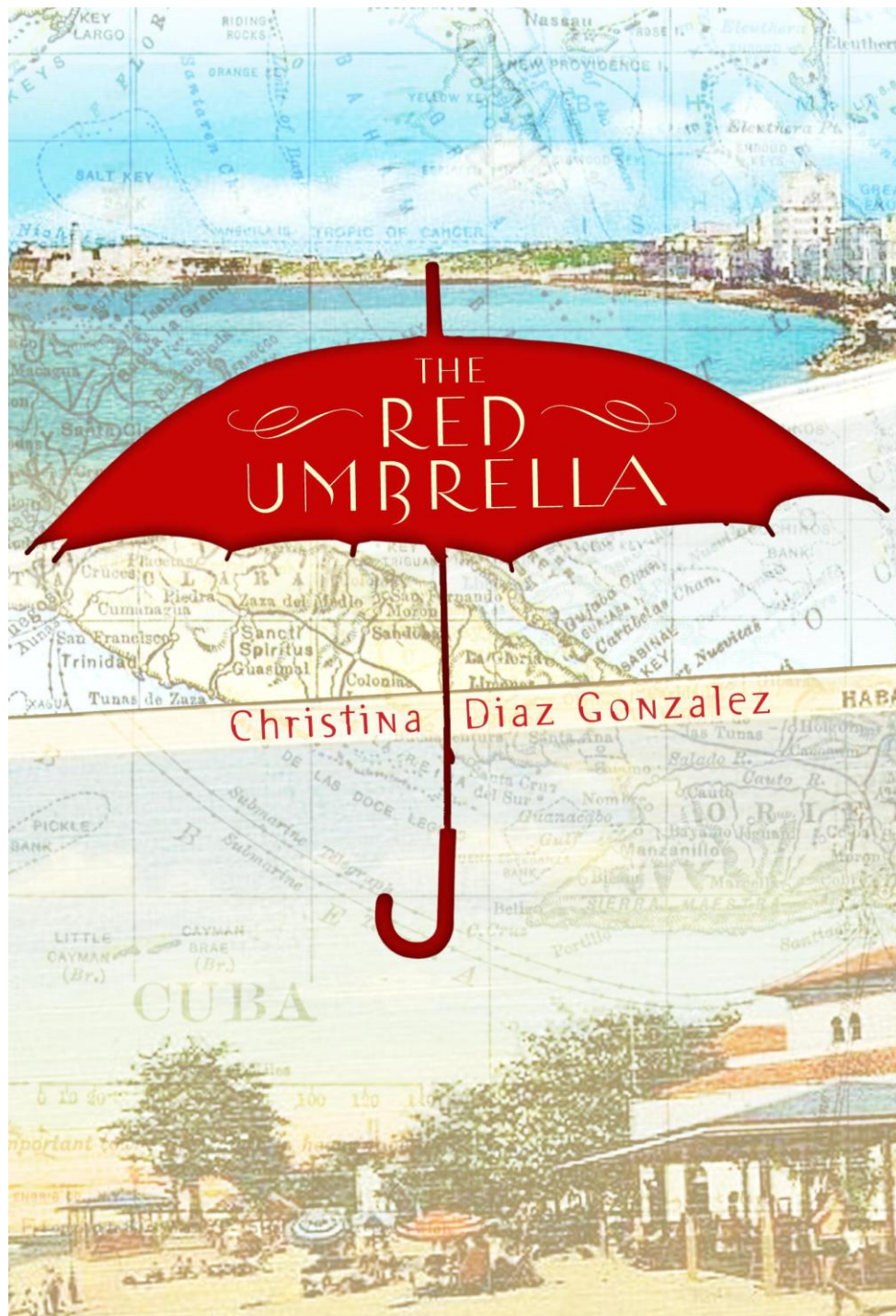


A Teacher's Guide to
THE RED UMBRELLA
Written By Christina Diaz Gonzalez



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HONORS AND PRAISE FOR THE RED UMBRELLA

2011 Best Fiction for Young Adults ~ *ALA/YALSA*

Top Ten Book ~ *Summer Indie Next List*

New Voices Pick ~ *Association of Booksellers for Children*

2010 Best Children's Books ~ *Miami Herald*

2010 Best Books for Kids ~ *Christian Science Monitor*

2010 Top Five Books ~ *Latina Magazine*

2010 Florida Book Award Winner

2011 CCBC Choices Book

“Gonzalez enters the literary scene with this exceptional historical novel.” ~ *Kirkus Reviews*

“Christina Diaz Gonzalez captures the fervor, uncertainty and fear of the times through Lucía's first-person perspective and the newspaper headlines that begin each chapter...a compelling first novel.” ~ *Washington Post*

“Debut author Gonzalez excels at highlighting the cultural difficulties... memorable heroine and supporting cast offer a moving portrait of resilience and reinvention.” ~ *Publisher's Weekly*

“An insightful window into the aspect of recent history known as Pedro Pan.” ~ *Denver Post*

“Gonzalez deals effectively with separation, culture shock, homesickness, uncertainty and identity as she captures what is also a grand adventure—resilient kids taking to a new way of life.” ~ *San Francisco Chronicle*

“Well-written novel has a thoroughly believable protagonist and well-chosen period details... it could generate some excellent classroom discussions.” ~ *School Library Journal*

“Through the eyes of (the) likable young narrator, readers will understand a compelling part of history. Kudos to Christina Diaz Gonzalez for sharing her family’s story, and for telling it so well.” ~ *Christian Science Monitor*

STORY SUMMARY

In 1961, two years after the Communist revolution, Lucía Álvarez still leads a carefree life, dreaming of parties and her first crush. But when the soldiers come to her sleepy Cuban town, everything begins to change. Freedoms are stripped away. Neighbors disappear. Her friends feel like strangers. And her family is being watched.

As the revolution's impact becomes more oppressive, Lucía's parents make the heart-wrenching decision to send her and her little brother to the United States—on their own.

Suddenly plunked down in Nebraska with well-meaning strangers, Lucía struggles to adapt to a new country, a new language, a new way of life. But what of her old life? Will she ever see her home or her parents again? And if she does, will she still be the same girl?

Based on the real events of Operation Pedro Pan where over 14,000 Cuban children were sent to the U.S. in the two year period between 1960-1962, this novel depicts the pain of losing one's homeland and showcases the generosity of the American spirit.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Christina Diaz Gonzalez was born in a small Southern town, but she was always very aware of her Cuban heritage (loving both grits and Cuban *pastelitos*). She is the author of the highly acclaimed children's novel, *THE RED UMBRELLA*, which reviewers from publications such as *The Washington Post*, *Publisher's Weekly* and *School Library Journal* have praised as being exceptional, compelling and inspirational. Ms. Gonzalez's novel (the story of a 14 year old Cuban girl who is sent to the U.S. in 1961 in order to escape Castro's communist revolution) showcases the generosity of the American spirit and highlights the pain of losing one's homeland. Her second novel, *A THUNDEROUS WHISPER*, is set to be released in 2012.

TEACHER'S GUIDE CONTENTS

1. Pre-Reading Activities

Activities and discussion starters to activate students' prior knowledge.

2. Chapter Guides

Chapter guides may be used to encourage whole class discussions, lead teacher-guided reading groups, or to provide structure for students working either in cooperative small groups or independently. **The guide is not meant to be assigned to students in its entirety.**

Each chapter guide includes:

- ▶ **Vocabulary** that might be new for your students. Choose a few words from each list and guide students in using context clues to infer meanings.
- ▶ **Discussion Starters** inspired by Bloom's Taxonomy that lead students from basic comprehension to higher level thinking skills.
- ▶ **Predicting** where students are invited to make predictions based on their analysis of the characters' traits in the story.

The chapter guides address the following curriculum standards:

Students will:

- √ use context clues to determine meanings of unfamiliar words.
- √ determine the correct meaning of words with multiple meanings in context.
- √ use background knowledge of subject and related content areas, pre-reading strategies (e.g., previewing, discussing, generating questions) to make and confirm complex predictions.
- √ determine the main idea or essential message in grade-level or higher texts through inferring, paraphrasing, summarizing, and identifying relevant details.
- √ identify cause-and-effect relationships in text.
- √ analyze and develop an interpretation of a literary work by describing an author's use of literary elements (e.g., theme, point of view, characterization, setting, plot).

√ analyze, interpret, and evaluate an author's use of descriptive language (e.g., tone, mood, imagery), figurative language (e.g., symbolism, metaphor), and explain how they impact meaning in a variety of texts.

√ use information from the text to answer questions or to state the main idea or provide relevant details.

3. Culminating Activities

Following the chapter guides, you'll find suggested culminating projects that address the eight multiple intelligences identified by Dr. Howard Gardner: Bodily-Kinesthetic, Interpersonal, Intrapersonal, Logical-Mathematical, Musical, Naturalistic, Verbal-linguistic and Visual-spatial. Consider having students choose a culminating activity that best matches their learning styles.

4. Author Interview with CHRISTINA DIAZ GONZALEZ

PRE-READING

1. Look at the title and cover. What do you notice? What might the red umbrella symbolize?
2. Read the book's cover blurb. What is this story about? Make a t-chart with the background knowledge you'll bring to the story and questions you have before reading (see below):

What I already know about Cuba:	Questions and predictions I have about the story:

3. Read the Author's Note at the end of the book. Peruse the C.I.A.'s World Fact Book site and select Cuba: <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/>. Revise your predictions and questions according to what you have learned.
4. Go through the chapter headings and read only the headlines. What predictions can you make about the story arc?
5. Have you ever been separated from your family? For how long? How did you feel?

CHAPTER I

Word Study

reevaluated	flustered	caravan	camouflaged
fatigues	oblivious	promptly	strained

Discussion Starters

1. Why are Lucía and Frankie at the beach? (*knowledge*)
2. What does Lucía see as one positive aspect of Castro's revolution?
(*comprehension*)
3. Find Cuba on the map. Using the key, calculate the distance from Cuba to Miami, Florida. How might changes in Cuba's government affect the United States?
(*application*)
4. Reread the opening paragraph. What might the heron and its actions represent?
(*analysis*)
5. Lucía overhears the radio announcer calling for "Socialism or death!" What is socialism? Compare its definition to capitalism and communism. (*synthesis*)
6. Find clues in the text that show how Lucía feels when the military trucks pass by. How does this contrast with the way she explains the event to her little brother, Frankie?

Do a similar analysis with Lucía's parents' words and actions. Which text clues show the way they feel about the radio broadcast? How do these feelings contrast with the way they act in front of the children? (*evaluation*)

Predict

Why are Lucía's parents so secretive about the radio broadcast? Who are they afraid might overhear?

CHAPTER 2

Word Study

drapes	Fellini	devour	nasal	monotone
corruption	glared	anti-revolutionaries	hostage	irrational

Discussion Starters

1. Why do Lucía and Frankie have to stay home? (*knowledge*)
2. How does Lucía's mother feel about the soldiers? What clues from the text reveal her feelings? (*comprehension*)
3. What do you know about Lucía's friendship with Ivette? Why doesn't Lucía tell Ivette the truth about why she can't leave the house? Act out the possible responses Ivette might have had if Lucía had told her the truth. (*application*)
4. What is the Álvarez family's economic situation? What clues from the text led you to your conclusion? (*analysis*)
5. How does Frankie's teacher explain the concept of socialism to the class? How could you use ice cream to explain your own country's form of government to seven-year-old children? (*synthesis*)
6. Do you agree with Lucía's decision to follow Frankie outside? What else could she have done? Weigh the pros and cons of each. (*evaluation*)

Predict

What will Lucía and Frankie find outside? Will their mother discovered that they disobeyed her?

CHAPTER 3

Word Study

rifle butt	traitors	execute
vanity	chaperoning	tousled
gestured	promotion	custody

Discussion Starters

1. What do Lucía and Frankie see through the hole in the fence? (*knowledge*)
2. Why does the soldier strike Señor Betafil? (*comprehension*)
3. Lucía's father says that his promotion "...came from Havana." Find Havana on a map of Cuba. Why would his promotion come from that city? (*application*)
4. What do you think Frankie sees from behind the fence after Lucía turns away? How is Frankie dealing with what he witnessed? Give evidence from the text to support your answer. (*analysis*)
5. Ivette says that Laura Milian's father, a newspaper owner, has been arrested for "...writing lies about Castro." Read the author's note at the end of the story. Based on what you know about Castro so far, write a short article or editorial that could have appeared in Señor Milian's newspaper. (*synthesis*)
6. Should Lucía join the Communist youth movement, Jóvenes Rebeldes? List the pros and cons of joining. Which list is longer? (*evaluation*)

Predict

Will Lucía's father be safe in his new job? Will Lucía or Frankie tell their parents what they saw?

CHAPTER 4

Word Study

cooped up	consolation	intoxicating	cloaking
ushered	nationalization	starched linen	corrupt
judgmental	infiltrated	rhetoric	classified
dictate	code of ethics	silhouette	elongated

Discussion Starters

1. Which organization has Ivette's mother joined? (*knowledge*)
2. Why does Lucía want to join the Jóvenes Rebeldes? Why does her father forbid it? (*comprehension*)
3. Lucía's father says that the government wants "...to destroy the family so the only thing left is the revolution, just like Karl Marx suggested." Who was Karl Marx? Read about him here: <http://kids.britannica.com/comptons/article-9275714/Karl-Marx>. Respond to Lucía's father as if you were Karl Marx. (*application*)
4. Lucía tries to dissuade her mother from carrying the red umbrella by saying that red is the color of the revolution. Her mother says that red symbolizes strength. What does the color red symbolize to you? Why might the Communist party have chosen this color to represent their cause? (*analysis*)
5. Mr. Álvarez says of Ivette's father, "...he wants to dictate my code of ethics." What does this mean? Write a "code of ethics" for Mr. Álvarez, and then write one for Lucía. Compare. Are they more alike or more different? (*synthesis*)
6. Why does Lucía's father call the movement a "so-called revolution?" Is he correct? Why or why not? (*evaluation*)

Predict

Are people watching Lucía's father and family? Would Ivette's family betray them?

CHAPTER 5

Word Study

monotony	rummaged	take the plunge	elite
chiseling	holdings	confiscating	shares
stock certificates	traitorous	absorb	hoarding

Discussion Starters

1. Where does Lucía want to go with Ivette? (*knowledge*)
2. Why does Lucía's father ask for a hammer? (*comprehension*)
3. Lucía's father hides important papers and expensive jewelry under a tile in the floor. If you only had a shoebox-sized space in which to hide your most precious belongings, what would you choose to hide? (*application*)
4. How does Lucía behave the week before she asks go to the dance? Did her change in behavior affect her mother's decision? How does your behavior change before asking permission to do something your parents may not like? (*analysis*)
5. Lucía's father has worked for everything he has. Castro says he should share what he has earned. What would the following people say to Castro if they could speak candidly: Lucía's father, a poor laborer, a poor person who has not tried to get a job, a wealthy person who has not had to work? (*synthesis*)
6. Is Lucía's father making the right decision to not join the revolution? He says that he is not joining either side. Is that possible? Why or why not? Have two classmates debate the merits and drawbacks of joining the revolution vs. remaining neutral. (*evaluation*)

Predict

Will the authorities discover the switch that Lucía's father has made at the bank? If so, what will happen?

CHAPTER 6

Word Study

camphor	cosmetics	soundtrack	paranoid
paranoid	azaleas	bearings	

Discussion Starters

1. Where did Lucía's mother send her? (*knowledge*)
2. According to Laura Milian, how are she and Lucía alike? (*comprehension*)
3. Lucía was looking for a shade of nail polish called Mademoiselle Pink. Read the description of the color she ended up buying. Invent a name for this color. Read the last page in the chapter, where the bottle slips from Lucía's hand and shatters. What color would you name the nail polish color in this scene? (*application*)
4. How did Señora Garra act when she told Lucía that Doc Machado would be back soon? How do her actions compare with her words? (*analysis*)
5. What might the soldiers be discussing in the bank with Lucía's father? Act out possible variations of this conversation. (*synthesis*)
6. Would Laura make a good friend for Lucía? Why or why not? (*evaluation*)

Predict

Will Lucía be stopped by the soldiers on her way home? What will her father say when he returns?

CHAPTER 7

Headline

Word Study

firing squad	welled	floodgate	adrenaline	spared
dialogue	betrayal	trudged	temples	insinuated

Discussion Starters

1. What does Mrs. Álvarez think has upset Lucía? (*knowledge*)
2. How does Mr. Álvarez want the family to act from now on? Why? (*comprehension*)
3. Tell or write about a time when you had to “keep up appearances” so as not to arouse suspicion about something. (*application*)
4. Why do you think Lucía’s father still does not want her to join the Jóvenes Rebeldes? (*analysis*)
5. Mrs. Álvarez tells Frankie that “everything is fine.” Mr. Álvarez says that it’s not, “...but it will be.” How might Mrs. Álvarez explain the whole situation to Frankie? How would Mr. Álvarez or Lucía explain it? (*synthesis*)
6. How have Lucía’s feelings about the dance changed? Should she go? Why or why not? (*evaluation*)

Predict

What will the dance be like for Lucía? Will she dance with Manuel?

CHAPTER 8

Word Study

chamomile	snagged	privilege
wisps	neckline	stashed
ragged	cuticles	manicure

Discussion Starters

1. Who does Mrs. Álvarez invite to lunch? (*knowledge*)
2. What surprises Lucía about the argument between her father and her uncle? (*comprehension*)
3. Ivette says the white daisy necklace "...screams out 'I'm a little girl'" and the cross necklace says, "holy and untouchable." She suggests that Lucía wear her mother's necklace with tiny hearts. Design a necklace for Lucía that represents how she feels now. (*application*)
4. What is Ivette hiding from Lucía? Why is she being secretive? (*analysis*)
5. Ivette says her brother and the other *brigadistas* are excited about going into the countryside to teach the peasants to read. Draw a scene the way the *brigadistas* might imagine their time in the country. Draw another picture of the way you think it will actually turn out. What are the similarities? The differences? (*synthesis*)
6. Lucía almost tells Ivette where her mother's jewelry is hidden and about Doc Machado. Why doesn't she tell Ivette everything? Can Lucía trust Ivette? Give examples from the text to support your answer. (*evaluation*)

Predict

What kind of trouble could Lucía's uncle cause for the family? Will he betray them?

CHAPTER 9

Word Study

sing-song	cinched	illusion	patent-leather
twinge	stifled	paced	pipsqueaks

Discussion Starters

1. Why is Lucía running late for the dance? (*knowledge*)
2. What makes Lucía uneasy when she steps outside her home? (*comprehension*)
3. Why did the newspapers called the Yacht Club “a nest of parasites” before they shut it down? What might be some arguments for keeping it open? (*application*)
4. How would you characterize Lucía’s uncle? What kind of a person is he? What is important to him? Compare and contrast his character with what you know about Lucía’s father. (*analysis*)
5. Tío Antonio says that Fidel Castro would never take children from their parents. If this does indeed happen, what would be the pros and cons for the government? (*synthesis*)
6. Is it a good idea for Mrs. Álvarez to let Tío Antonio take Lucía to the dance? Why or why not? (*evaluation*)

Predict

Why is Lucía’s father still at the bank? Will he return home? Why or why not?

CHAPTER 10

Word Study

canopy	merengue	snickered
composure	doused	straddled

Discussion Starters

1. What does Lucía learn about Ivette's plans? (*knowledge*)
2. How does Lucía react to Ivette's news? (*comprehension*)
3. When Lucía explains what happened with Manuel, she thinks Ivette will chide her for not being more prepared. What does Ivette say instead? What would you say to a friend in a similar situation? (*application*)
4. Is Lucía right to be angry at Ivette for not telling her about the *brigadistas*? How would you react if you were Lucía? (*analysis*)
5. Ivette says of Manuel, "I'm going to give him a piece of my mind!" What would you say in the same situation? Considering the danger, should Ivette temper her reaction? If so, how? (*synthesis*)
6. Compare and contrast the way Lucía sees Manuel before and after this evening. (*evaluation*)

Predict

At the end of the chapter, Lucía wonders how the night could get any worse. What *could* be worse?

CHAPTER II

Word Study

scorn	cuffed	underground	Yankee	traitor
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Discussion Starters

1. What does Lucía find when she arrives home? (*knowledge*)
2. Why do the soldiers arrest Lucía's father? (*comprehension*)
3. As the soldiers escort Lucía's father out the door, he tells her to take care of her mother. List the things that Lucía could do to help in her father's absence. Which one on the list will be the most difficult? (*application*)
4. As the soldiers leave, one spits on the floor and calls the Álvarez family "worms." Why is he so angry? (*analysis*)
5. If Lucía had given Ivette a chance to explain, what might Ivette had said? If Ivette didn't tell anyone about the jewelry, what other explanation might there be? (*synthesis*)
6. Ivette claims she did not betray Lucía. Do you believe her? Why or why not? Give evidence from the text to support your answer. (*evaluation*)

Predict

What will happen to Lucía's father? What will his family do while he is away?

CHAPTER 12

Word Study

confided	valuables	foyer	priority	filtered
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Discussion Starters

1. Who assures Mrs. Álvarez that her husband will return home soon? (*knowledge*)
2. What is the one thing of value the soldiers did not take from the Álvarez's home? Why didn't they take it? (*comprehension*)
3. One example of "character vs. self" conflict is when Lucía struggles over whether or not to call Ivette. What is one argument Ivette might be having with herself? (*application*)
4. Why does Lucía decide not to call Ivette? Does she make the right decision? Why or why not? (*analysis*)
5. If Lucía were to write a note back to Ivette, what might she say? Write two versions of the note—one that Lucía might write if she knew only Ivette would read it, and one that Lucía suspects might be intercepted by an adult. (*synthesis*)
6. Mrs. Álvarez tells Lucía that joining the brigades must have been Ivette's parents' idea. Do you agree? If so, why does Ivette act as if she wants to go? (*evaluation*)

Predict

Will Lucía ever see Ivette again? Will she forgive Ivette?

CHAPTER 13

Word Study

amphitheater	industries	handyman	indoctrinate	abruptly
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Discussion Starters

1. What is different about Mr. Álvarez when he returns home from prison?
(*knowledge*)
2. What does the government expect Lucía and Frankie to do to show their support for the revolution? (*comprehension*)
3. Reread the first page of the chapter. Cite examples of how the characters' physical movements reveal their feelings and convictions. (*application*)
4. Compare the impression that Tío Antonio gives Mrs. Álvarez over the phone (in chapter 12) with the reality that Mr. Álvarez describes in this chapter. (*analysis*)
5. Mr. Álvarez says, "From now on, we need to expect the worst and hope for the best." What would be best and worse-case scenarios for the Álvarez family?
(*synthesis*)
6. Tío Antonio blames Mr. Álvarez for landing himself in jail. He says that Mr. Álvarez should have listened to his warnings. Is there an element of truth to what Tío Antonio says? Should Mr. Álvarez have listened to his brother? Why or why not?
(*evaluation*)

Predict

How will the Alvarez's lives change from now on?

CHAPTER 14

Word Study

muffled	gestured	vacant
tousled	somber	visa waivers

Discussion Starters

1. Who does Mrs. Álvarez invite to the house? (*knowledge*)
2. What news do Mr. and Mrs. Álvarez deliver to Lucía and Frankie? (*comprehension*)
3. Lucía is only allowed to take one small bag and a package of cigars to sell. If you had to leave your country and could only take one bag, what would you pack? Which American product would you bring to sell? (*application*)
4. Lucía suspects something is wrong from the way her mother is acting. What are the clues that arouse Lucía's suspicions? (*analysis*)
5. If Lucía were to go to Frankie's room to talk, what might they say? (*synthesis*)
6. Have Lucía's parents made the right decision? Why or why not? (*evaluation*)

Predict

How will Lucía and Frankie react when it's time to say goodbye? How will their parents react?

CHAPTER 15

Word Study

partition	pried	ruffled	obediently
hunched	random	contraband	sneered
herded	absorb	second-hand	stewardess

Discussion Starters

1. What is the code that Lucía and Frankie must remember once they arrive in Miami? (*knowledge*)
2. How were Lucía's parents able to buy the airline tickets? (*comprehension*)
3. Lucía's mother opens her big, red umbrella so that her children can spot her in the crowd. What symbol would you use to say goodbye to your family if you couldn't speak to them? (*application*)
4. Lucía doesn't know what to believe when Laura says Tío Antonio was the one who betrayed them. Why might he have done so? Use evidence from the text to support your answer. (*analysis*)
5. If Lucía could speak to Ivette now, what would she say? What would Ivette say? (*synthesis*)
6. How do the soldiers treat the children waiting for the flight? Why do you think they act this way? (*evaluation*)

Predict

What will happen when Lucía and Frankie arrive in Miami? What could go wrong? What will happen to Lucía's parents who are left behind in Cuba?

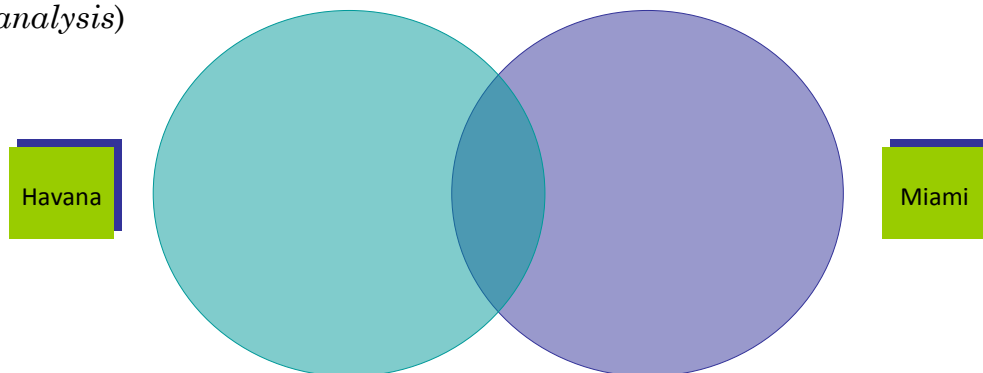
CHAPTER 16

Word Study

altitude	perspective	godfather
pudgy	sterile	barracks
looming	horn-rimmed glasses	splayed

Discussion Starters

1. With whom will Laura be staying in the U.S.? (*knowledge*)
2. Compare Frankie and Lucía's impressions of Miami from the air. (*comprehension*)
3. What would Lucía's first impression of your hometown be? Choose a place and jot down the sounds, smells, and sights that you observe for 15 minutes. Add tastes and textures that remind you of home. Compare your impressions with those of your classmates. What similarities and differences did you find? (*application*)
4. In a Venn diagram like the one below, compare the "pulse" of Havana with that of Miami. (*analysis*)



5. Create a postcard that Lucía might send to her parents in Cuba. Draw Miami as Lucía sees it, using colors that reflect her impressions. Add a note from Lucía. What would she tell her parents about being separated from Frankie? (*synthesis*)
6. What is your impression of George? Is he trustworthy? Why or why not? Compare your reaction with Lucía's first impression. Why does she trust George? (*evaluation*)

Predict

Will Lucía find a way to keep Frankie and her together? If so, how? If not, how will they cope?

CHAPTER 17

Word Study

flurry	urgency	mimeograph machine
stow away	telegram	foster homes

Discussion Starters

1. Why does the bell ring in the morning? (*knowledge*)
2. What rules do Angela explain to Lucía? (*comprehension*)
3. Lucía tells Frankie that they'll probably receive a letter from their parents soon. Pretend to be either Mr. or Mrs. Álvarez and write a letter to Lucía and Frankie. (*application*)
4. The newspaper headline at the beginning of this chapter reads:

CASTRO ADOPTS BRAINWASHING
Nevada State Journal, June 4, 1961

Does Lucía's plan to be home by the end of summer sound reasonable? Why or why not? What would the headlines need to say before Lucía and Frankie could return home safely? (*analysis*)

5. How does Frankie seem to be adjusting to life at camp? Use clues from the text to support your answer. Would it be more difficult for a young child like Frankie to adjust to a new culture, or someone Lucía's age? Explain your answer. (*synthesis*)
6. Lucía is used to a breakfast of *café con leche* and *pan cubano*. While she thinks the cereal and milk isn't bad, it tastes too sweet. Will she get used to this breakfast? How might this be a metaphor for her life in America? Will one be better than the other? Explain your thinking. (*evaluation*)

Predict

Will Frankie run into trouble at the camp? Will he and Lucía go to live with a foster family? If so, will they stay together? How will they adjust?

CHAPTER 18

Word Study

dwindling	censors	clobbered
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Discussion Starters

1. Who was hiding in Lucía's bed? (*knowledge*)
2. How does Frankie convince Lucía to let him stay just one night? (*comprehension*)
3. While Lucía sleeps, she dreams of “silly things” that remind her of home, like her pink pillow cases, her record collection, her 6th grade spelling award, her mother's cooking, the sounds of her father arriving home from work. Make your own “silly things” list of things you may not appreciate every day, but that you would miss if you had to leave home. (*application*)
4. How do the letters in Lucía's suitcase differ from the letter she sends her parents? Why does she write two kinds of letters and only send one? (*analysis*)
5. In a group of four classmates, act out the next 60-second scene with Lucía, Frankie and the two shadowy figures. Have all groups of four perform the scene. How does the scene differ from group to group? How are they similar? (*synthesis*)
6. Was it a good idea for Frankie to sneak into Lucía's bed? Should she have sent him back? How might she have handled the situation differently? (*evaluation*)

Predict

Who has discovered Frankie? What will happen to him and to Lucía?

CHAPTER 19

Word Study

unsupervised	consequences	oversee	facility
defiant	process	gauging	relenting
squarely	funny business	stifled	far-fetched

Discussion Starters

1. Where do Mr. Ramírez and Mrs. Eckhart threaten to send Frankie? (*knowledge*)
2. How does Mr. Ramírez know Lucía's father? (*comprehension*)
3. Visit www.grand-island.com to find out about the town where Lucía and Frankie will be living. Check the map and visit www.weather.com to learn about Grand Island's climate. How will Lucía's expectations compare with the reality that awaits her? (*application*)
4. Why is Lucía reluctant to leave the camp and go to Nebraska with Frankie? Support your answer with evidence from the text. (*analysis*)
5. Lucía's letter home was upbeat, because she didn't want to add to her parents' sadness. Write a new letter that Lucía might send to her parents now that she and Frankie are headed to Nebraska. Highlight the truth in one color, non-truths in another color, then compare. (*synthesis*)
6. Angela is surprised that Lucía will be placed in a foster home before she leaves for Oregon. Is this fair? Explain your answer. (*evaluation*)

Predict

What will the Baxter family be like? How will Frankie behave? What challenges lie ahead for Lucía and Frankie?

CHAPTER 20

Word Study

trench coats	the mob	kiosk	envisioning	monotony
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Discussion Starters

1. How do Lucía and Frankie know who the Baxters are at the airport? (*knowledge*)
2. Why does Mrs. Baxter speak to Lucía in a loud voice? (*comprehension*)
3. What might Mr. Baxter be thinking throughout this chapter? Write or discuss his reaction to meeting Lucía and Frankie. (*application*)
4. Lucía is nervous in the Chicago airport because of what she had heard about Al Capone and the mafia. What impressions do you have about Cuba based on what you've heard in the news? How accurate do you think your impressions are? (*analysis*)
5. Mrs. Baxter says, "I've read some horrible things about what's been happening in Cuba. You must be so happy to be out of there. Oh, I can't imagine living like that. In all that fear." If Lucía had understood what Mrs. Baxter had said, how might Lucía have responded? (*synthesis*)
6. Who do you think will have an easier time learning English, Lucía or Frankie? Why? (*evaluation*)

Predict

At the end of the chapter, Lucía wonders about home and her future. How would you answer her questions?

CHAPTER 21

Word Study

parishioners	mortified	medley	contorting
liberties	coax	ushered	skedaddle

Discussion Starters

1. Why doesn't Mrs. Baxter let Lucía call her parents in Cuba? (*knowledge*)
2. How do Lucía and Frankie react to the belongings given to them by the Baxters? (*comprehension*)
3. Lucía starts a letter to her parents. How might she finish the letter? (*application*)
4. How does life at the Baxters' house compare to Lucía's life in Cuba? How does it compare to life at camp? Which is better? Explain your answer. (*analysis*)
5. If the Baxters don't have much money to spare, why did they agree to take in Lucía and Frankie? List some possible reasons. Which reason do you think is most likely? Which reason would Lucía choose? Frankie? Their parents? (*synthesis*)
6. How does Mrs. Baxter try to help Lucía with English? Will this be an effective way for Lucía to learn? Why or why not? (*evaluation*)

Predict

What will Luca's and Frankie's first full day with the Baxters be like? Will Lucía and Frankie meet and friends their age?

CHAPTER 22

Word Study

whisked	Tabasco sauce	polka music
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Discussion Starters

1. What do Lucía and Frankie have for breakfast? (*knowledge*)
2. Why does Mrs. Baxter give Lucía and Frankie Tabasco sauce with their eggs? (*comprehension*)
3. Take a look at the menu from this Cuban restaurant:
<http://www.casalariosonline.com/Menu.html>. What might Frankie and Lucía order from the menu? Make a list of the foods you would like to try. (*application*)
4. Lucía wonders if Lawrence Welk is similar to Elvis Presley. Show a clip of the Lawrence Welk Show here:
<http://video.google.com/videoplay?docid=2542203771753759207&hl=en#> and a live Elvis performance here:
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tpCU7YeTikc&feature=related>. Will Lucía think like the Lawrence Welk show? Why or why not? (*analysis*)
5. Mrs. Baxter tries to make Lucía and Frankie feel at home. Why aren't her efforts successful? Think of ways people dress, act and speak in your hometown. If someone met you, what assumptions might they make about all Americans? Why might some people assume cultural similarities between Americans, Canadians, Australians and the British? (*synthesis*)
6. What kind of a person is Mrs. Baxter? Evaluate her intentions. How do Frankie and Lucía feel about her? (*evaluation*)

Predict

Mrs. Baxter thinks Lucía and Frankie will still be in Nebraska when winter comes, but Lucía thinks they'll be back home in Cuba by then. Who is right?

CHAPTER 23

Word Study

canvas	penny loafers	gunk
declaration	mercilessly	sludge
riled	savages	kink

Discussion Starters

1. Why is Lucía exhausted? (*knowledge*)
2. What does Mrs. Baxter have behind her back? (*comprehension*)
3. How does Frankie feel about reading the book Mrs. Baxter chose for him? How would you go about teaching English to Frankie? (*application*)
4. Lucía says, "...most of the tension that I'd carried with me to Nebraska had been washed away by Mrs. Baxter's green hose." What does she mean? (*analysis*)
5. What would have happened if Mr. Baxter had come upon the scene? Write or act out what he might have said and done. For whom was the mud-fight scene a turning point, and why? Invent a scene that might be a turning point for Mr. Baxter. (*synthesis*)
6. Reevaluate Mrs. Baxter's character. (*evaluation*)

Predict

Will Lucía and Frankie still be with the Baxters when school begins? If so, will they have learned enough English to make friends?

CHAPTER 24

Word Study

trance	thrust	longing
quiver	whimper	unison

Discussion Starters

1. Who calls on the phone in the early morning? (*knowledge*)
2. How does Lucía communicate to Frankie that he shouldn't say anything to worry their parents? (*comprehension*)
3. Describe the scene at the Álvarez home in Cuba after Lucía's parents hang up the phone. Just as Lucía and Frankie don't share their sadness with their parents, what might their parents be hiding from the children? (*application*)
4. Mr. Álvarez told Lucía and Frankie to "...think of this as an adventure..." in order to help them cope with being away from home. Will his advice help? Choose a scene from the story and change it from a realistic voice to an adventurous one. How would Lucía and Frankie react to the new version? (*analysis*)
5. What might Frankie have said on the phone if Lucía hadn't warned him not to upset their parents? (*synthesis*)
6. Why do you think Mr. Álvarez always reminds Frankie to be strong and protect Lucía? Is this a good thing to say? Why or why not? (*evaluation*)

Predict

What might Lucía and Frankie have to say the next time they speak with their parents?

CHAPTER 25

Word Study

sharp contrast	traitor	eliminate	sinister
parish hall	chided	chitchatting	beehive hairdo
rascal	tolerated	apologetic	record album
jarring	pleaded	stiffer	beamed

Discussion Starters

1. What surprised Lucía about the American newspapers? (*knowledge*)
2. How has Lucía's opinion of Castro changed? (*comprehension*)
3. Lucía is surprised when Mrs. Baxter tells a friend that Mr. Baxter "...has taken a real liking to the kids." How would Mr. Baxter react to that statement if he had overheard his wife? Compare what he might say, do and think. (*application*)
4. When Lucía sees the girls outside, she thinks, "If any of them wanted to be my friends, wouldn't they approach me?" What might the girls be thinking when they look at Lucía? (*analysis*)
5. What does the conversation between Mrs. Baxter and Mrs. Trenton reveal about both women? Use evidence from the text to support your answer. (*synthesis*)
6. Lucía says, "The Baxters were good like that. They treated us like we were their own children, which meant we had chores to do, but we were also given the freedom to make our own decisions..." How does this compare to Mr. and Mrs. Alvarez's parenting style? Is one better than the other? Why or why not? How will Mrs. Baxter and Mrs. Álvarez react to Lucía's request for a haircut? (*evaluation*)

Predict

Will Lucía make friends with the girls at church? If so, who will initiate friendship, Lucía or one of the girls?

CHAPTER 26

Word Study

hemmed	checkered	beeline
needy	swarmed	expansive
chime	strutted	singled out

Discussion Starters

1. Who befriends Lucía on her first day of school? (*knowledge*)
2. How does Betty embarrass Lucía? (*comprehension*)
3. If you had been sitting next to Betty on the bus, what would you have said to her when she commented on Lucía's dress? Would you have spoken to Lucía? If not, why? If so, what would you have said? (*application*)
4. Describe the atmosphere when Lucía and Frankie board the school bus. Lucía says, "I'd been on the bus for about five minutes and already knew who my friends and enemies were going to be." How might the bus ride foreshadow what school will be like for Lucía and Frankie? (*analysis*)
5. Rewrite or retell the scene in English class from Eddie's point of view. (*synthesis*)
6. Although Lucía is mortified when Mrs. Brolin introduced her to the class, the other students don't seem to take much notice. Was it a good idea for Mrs. Brolin to single out Lucía? Why or why not? What was her goal in doing so? Could she have accomplished this goal in another way? (*evaluation*)

Predict

Will Eddie and Lucía become friends? Will he be like Manuel? What will Betty say or do when she discovers that Eddie has reached out to Lucía?

CHAPTER 27

Word Study

peered	pity party	transition
circumstances	secretarial	doozies

Discussion Starters

1. Why does Frankie offer to help Lucía with her homework? (*knowledge*)
2. Why does Lucía get angry? (*comprehension*)
3. When Frankie sees how long it's taking Lucía to do her homework, he says, "You used to be smart." Lucía replies, "I'm still smart. It just takes me longer because it's all in English." Learn to count to ten in a new language (<http://www.zompist.com/million.htm>). Answer 20 simple addition or subtraction problems orally where the answer is limited to the numbers one to ten. Compare how long it takes you to answer under the following conditions: questions and answers in English, questions in English and answers in the foreign language, questions and answers in the foreign language. (*application*)
4. Lucía is tempted to give up and just "pretend to be really dumb" so her teachers won't expect anything from her. Would this be easier for Lucía? Will she do it? Why or why not? (*analysis*)
5. What will Lucía's English teacher think when she reads Lucía's essay? Using one color, write some teacher comments that Lucía expects to see on her essay. Using a different color, add comments that you might write if you were Lucía's teacher. Circle the one comment that would be most helpful to Lucía. (*synthesis*)
6. Mrs. Baxter says she didn't go to college because she wasn't smart enough. Do you think that's true? Explain why Lucía says, "Next to my parents, Mrs. Baxter was the smartest person I knew." (*evaluation*)

Predict

Will Lucía give up trying to do well in school? Why or why not? How will Frankie do both socially and academically at his school?

Chapter 28

Word Study

varsity	cocked	comeback
doormat	monotony	insecurities
a far cry from	referred to	venom

Discussion Starters

1. Who says hello to Lucía in the hallway? How does Betty react? (*knowledge*)
2. Why does Jennifer call Betty's friends the Betty-ites? (*comprehension*)
3. When Betty is cruel, Lucía thinks, "I wanted to have a smart comeback, but by the time I thought of something in English, most conversations usually moved on." What comeback does Lucía come up with? What might her comeback have been if she could have spoken in Spanish? (*application*)
4. Rita thinks Eddie has a crush on Lucía because he doesn't give her a nickname like he does the other girls. Do you agree that this is evidence that he likes Lucía? Why or why not? What other evidence might reveal his feelings for Lucía? (*analysis*)
5. If Jennifer were a new student at Lucía's school in Cuba, how would Lucía have acted? Would they have become friends? Why or why not? (*synthesis*)
6. Lucía says that being "midlevel" suits her just fine. What does "midlevel" mean? Do you see Lucía as an average girl? Why or why not? (*evaluation*)

Predict

How might Betty cause more trouble for Lucía? Will Lucía fall for either Alex or Eddie?

CHAPTER 29

Word Study

Parisian	halfhearted	dreariness	barren
perched	intricate	swiping	draped
soft spot	prized possessions	sappy	learner's permit
wood paneling	influence	churned	race riots

Discussion Starters

1. What do Lucía and Frankie experience for the first time? (*knowledge*)
2. What do Mrs. Baxter and Mr. Baxter give Lucía for her birthday? How does Lucía react? (*comprehension*)
3. Using the description from the chapter, draw Lucía as she would have looked in Cuba on her 15th birthday, and how she looks now on her birthday in Nebraska. (*application*)
4. What does Ivette write at the end of her letter? Why? Do you think she believes it? Why or why not? (*analysis*)
5. What is Ivette's impression of the United States? Where does she get this impression? Write a letter back to Ivette from Lucía. What could Lucía write that would make it through the government censors? (*synthesis*)
6. Lucía says, "Turning fifteen had always been something I'd looked forward to, a day when I'd finally be considered a young lady."

Do you think Lucía is a "young lady" at fifteen? Why or why not? At what age do you consider yourself "grown up"? Why? (*evaluation*)

Predict

Will Lucía and Ivette see each other again? Will they continue to keep in touch?

CHAPTER 30

Word Study

garlands	trivets	yuca
bounded	prodding	improvise

Discussion Starters

1. What does Mrs. Baxter serve for Christmas Eve dinner? (*knowledge*)
2. How did Lucía and her family normally spend Christmas Eve in Cuba? (*comprehension*)
3. Write about or discuss your own holiday traditions. Which traditions would you miss most if you were away from home? (*application*)
4. Why do you think Mr. Baxter has started including his son, Carl, and Lucía's family in the blessing before dinner? (*analysis*)
5. If Mr. and Mrs. Álvarez could join Lucía, Frankie and the Baxters for dinner this evening, what would their impressions be? What things might surprise them that are no longer surprising for Lucía and Frankie? (*synthesis*)
6. Has Mr. Baxter changed since Lucía and Frankie arrived, or is he only now revealing his true nature? (*evaluation*)

Predict

Why does Mrs. Baxter have a secretive smile at dinner? What do the Baxters have planned?

CHAPTER 31

Word Study

extravagant	draped
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Discussion Starters

1. What do Lucía and Frankie find in their Christmas stockings? (*knowledge*)
2. Why does Lucía especially love the pink scarf? (*comprehension*)
3. What gifts would you give Lucía and Frankie if they were staying at your house? (*application*)
4. What do the gifts from the Baxters reveal about their character? (*analysis*)
5. What gifts might Mr. and Mrs. Álvarez have given Lucía and Frankie in Cuba if the Revolution had never taken place? What would they give their children now if they could? (*synthesis*)
6. How do Lucía's and Frankie's actions reveal how they feel about each gift? (*evaluation*)

Predict

How will the conversation go this time between Lucía and her mother?

CHAPTER 32

Word Study

glistened	puckered	devoting	capitalist society
comrades	rosary	velour	braced

Discussion Starters

1. Whose letter does Lucía receive? (*knowledge*)
2. What happened to Lucía's father? (*comprehension*)
3. After talking to her mother, Lucía says, "It felt like a boulder had been lifted off my chest." What other similes can express a feeling of relief? (*application*)
4. Why does Mrs. Álvarez decide to tell Lucía the extent of Mr. Alvarez's injuries? Do you think she's telling the full story about the accident? Why or why not? (*analysis*)
5. Ivette knows that her letters will be read by government officials. Rewrite the letter the way she might have written it if she knew it would only be read by Lucía. (*synthesis*)
6. Lucía's mother reminds her to "behave like a proper young lady." Is Lucía behaving like a "proper" young lady? Why or why not? Would her mother agree with you? Explain your answer. (*evaluation*)

Predict

What will the new year hold for Lucía and Frankie? Will her father be released from the hospital? Will the Álvarez family be reunited this year?

CHAPTER 33

Word Study

cradling	undergoing	seeped	stare-down
eavesdropping	sauntered	clasping	pushover

Discussion Starters

1. According to Lucía, what are the seasons that divide the school year? (*knowledge*)
2. Why is Lucía distracted when talking on the phone with Jennifer? Why does Jennifer think Lucía is distracted? (*comprehension*)
3. How does Lucía convince Frankie not to tell anyone about the conversation he overheard? What are some ways you convince your siblings or friends to keep a secret? (*application*)
4. Although Mr. Álvarez tells Lucía that she would be sad to see Cuba as it is now, Lucía still wants to go back home. Would it be a good idea for her to go back one day once it's safe? Would you want to revisit your home if it had changed for the worse? Why or why not? (*analysis*)
5. Lucía says that Jennifer always has a way of making her feel better when she's down. How does Jennifer cheer Lucía up? How did Ivette used to cheer Lucía up? Compare the two friends. Would Jennifer and Ivette be friends if circumstances were different? Why or why not? (*synthesis*)
6. Frankie says, "Man, Lucía, I liked it more when you were a pushover." What does he mean? Do you think Lucía used to be a pushover? Use evidence from the text to support your answer. (*evaluation*)

Predict

Will Eddie find out how Lucía feels? If so, how will he react?

CHAPTER 34

Word Study

migration	pelted	studious	scouring
contagious	sentimental	stifled	materialist
imperialist	propaganda-speak	blatant	trudged

Discussion Starters

1. What is the town gearing up to do? (*knowledge*)
2. Why does Lucía care about doing a good job on her bird project? (*comprehension*)
3. Read more about the white heron (also called the blue heron) here: <http://animals.nationalgeographic.com/animals/birds/great-blue-heron.html> Sketch a plan that Lucía might use for her project. (*application*)
4. Why doesn't Lucía want to tell her parents about the freshman spring dance? (*analysis*)
5. What does the white heron symbolize to Lucía? Reread the first paragraph from chapter one. Why does the theme of migration resonate with Lucía? (*synthesis*)
6. After reading Ivette's letter, what do you think might have happened to Lucía and Frankie if they had stayed in Cuba? (*evaluation*)

Predict

Will Lucía ever hear from Ivette again? What will become of Ivette in Castro's Cuba?

CHAPTER 35

Word Study

rafters	tacky	cinched	mock
home economics	towered	stammered	on cue

Discussion Starters

1. How is the gym decorated for the dance? (*knowledge*)
2. Where did Lucía get her dress? (*comprehension*)
3. Why hasn't Eddie given Lucía a nickname before? What does he decide to call her now? Why? Is it fitting? Why or why not? Come up with nicknames for the other main characters in the story that reflect their personalities. (*application*)
4. How does Eddie arrange to dance with Lucía? (*analysis*)
5. Lucía and her friends dance to musical hits from 1962 such as "Runaround Sue" and "Blue Moon." Create an annotated playlist for Lucía using songs that you know. Explain why you chose each song, as well as its significance to Lucía's situation. (*synthesis*)
6. Do you think Eddie and Lucía make a good pair? Why or why not? (*evaluation*)

Predict

Will Lucía and Eddie become more than friends? Will he be anything like Manuel?

CHAPTER 36

Word Study

dangled	tilling	matinee	malt shop	canasta
unwritten motto	exit visa	indefinitely	daze	expectant

Discussion Starters

1. Who telephones the house? (*knowledge*)
2. What does Mrs. Baxter say that reminds Lucía of a phrase her mother always uses? (*comprehension*)
3. List phrases that your parents say often. Have your classmates do the same and compare. How many phrases are heard in more than one household? Which phrases are unique? (*application*)
4. Describe the sounds Lucía hears after her mother tells her that her father's exit visa was not approved. Why did the author choose to amplify these sounds in this scene? (*analysis*)
5. Read the last page of the chapter. How have Lucía and her mother switched roles? Would this role reversal continue if her mother came to the U.S.? If so, in which circumstances? If not, how would Lucía help her mother to transition to life in the U.S.? (*synthesis*)
6. What is Mrs. Alvarez's dilemma? What does Lucía advise her to do? Is this the right decision? Why or why not? (*evaluation*)

Predict

Will Lucía's mother arrive safely in the U.S.? What will become of Lucía's father?

CHAPTER 37

Word Study

persuaded	furnish	inventory	jabbed
fidged	abandoned	smothering	frail
hobbling	devour	cologne	the underground

Discussion Starters

1. Where will Lucía's mother be living when she arrives? (*knowledge*)
2. Why is Lucía worried as she waits for her mother at the airport? What is Frankie worried about? (*comprehension*)
3. The last line of the story is Lucía's, who says, "It was good to be home." What does she mean? Aside from your own home, name the places where you feel "at home." What makes you feel comfortable there? (*application*)
4. Analyze how Lucía has changed from the beginning of the story to the end. (*analysis*)
5. A million thoughts run through Lucía's head as she waits to see her mother. What thoughts might be running through her mother's head as she waits to see Lucía and Frankie? (*synthesis*)
6. Will the Álvarez family be happy in the United States? Why or why not? Did they make the right decision to leave Cuba? (*evaluation*)

Predict

What joys and challenges lie ahead for the Álvarez family? How will their lives be different from now on?

CULMINATING ACTIVITIES

The following projects incorporate Dr. Howard Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences. Consider having students choose a culminating project that best matches their learning styles.

Exploring the Cuban Landscape

Explore the Cuban landscape via an Internet image search. What natural features appear in many of the landscapes? Which colors are dominant? Let students choose one of the landscapes or a scene from *The Red Umbrella* to illustrate.

(Naturalistic, Visual-Spatial)

Dance!

Listen to some of the music from

http://worldmusic.nationalgeographic.com/view/page.basic/country/content.country/cuba_11/en_US.

Read about Cuban Dance here: <http://www.cuba-culture.com/cuban-dance.html> and how it's making a comeback among second-generation Cuban-American kids here: <http://www.cubanet.org/CNews/y01/ago01/16e9.htm>.

Invite a dance teacher to school to give a lesson on traditional Cuban dances such as the Rumba, Son Montuno and the Salsa.

(Bodily-Kinesthetic, Musical)

Songs of Pedro Pan

Take a look at this website for the grown children of the Pedro Pan Operation: <http://www.pedropan.org/>. Under “Camp Resources” you will find some of the camp songs that the children sang: <http://www.pedropan.org/content/camp-resources>.

What are some camp songs you know? Take a look at some traditional American camp songs by visiting <http://www.ultimatecampresource.com/>, and clicking on “songs” from the menu.

Rewrite one of the traditional songs to reflect Lucia's and Frankie's experience at their camps.

(Musical)

A Life in Photos

What if Lucía had kept a scrapbook of her life in America to show her parents when they were reunited? Peruse the photos in the media gallery of the Pedro Pan site. Go to <http://www.pedropan.org/content/media-gallery> and click on the first photo where the boy is on the phone. Which scene from the story does this photo remind you of? (Note: Right click on photos to enlarge). Choose photos from the gallery that mirror Lucía and Frankie's experience and right-click to print photos. Assemble them into a scrapbook that Lucía might create. Add captions from Lucia's point of view to describe each photo.

(Linguistic)

Dueling Points of View

The Cuban Missile Crisis occurred shortly after the time period in which *The Red Umbrella* takes place. See the American view of this crisis here: [http://www1.teachertube.com/viewVideo.php?video_id=169280&title=Cuban Missile Crisis](http://www1.teachertube.com/viewVideo.php?video_id=169280&title=Cuban_Missile_Crisis)

For the Russian perspective of the missile crisis, watch an interview with Russian leader Nikita Krushchev's son here: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=phpe0DsisbY&feature=related>.

Evaluate both points of view. With three or four classmates, discuss how Lucía and Ivette may have viewed this crisis. Act out a debate where a moderator asks Lucía and Ivette about the crisis.

(Interpersonal)

¿Comprendes?

(Do You Understand?)

Choose a DVD of a movie that you have never heard of before. In the set-up menu, choose a language that you have studied in school. (If you have not yet studied a foreign language, choose any language). Watch the first 10-15 minutes of the movie in the foreign language. As you watch, use the graphic organizer on the following page to record what you think is happening in the story. Replay the movie, selecting English this time. Fill in what you missed the first time around.

Analyze the information you recorded in the graphic organizer. What percentage of the items recorded during the first viewing were incorrect? What is the ratio of information recorded during the first and second viewings? How might your data differ if you had listened to the movie, but not been able to watch the images?

Put yourself in Lucia's place. How would you have felt sitting in class listening to a lesson in a foreign language? What might you have done to help yourself?

(Mathematical, Intrapersonal)

Name: _____ **Movie Title:** _____

Write what you know about the following elements as you watch the film in...

...the foreign language.

...English.

Character(s):	Character(s):
Setting (where and when the story takes place):	Setting (where and when the story takes place):
Plot (What is the main character's problem in the story?):	Plot (What is the main character's problem in the story?):
Questions and predictions about the rest of the movie:	Questions and predictions about the rest of the movie:

AN INTERVIEW WITH AUTHOR

CHRISTINA DIAZ GONZALEZ



How did you get the idea for *The Red Umbrella*?

My parents were two of the over fourteen thousand kids who were part of Operation Pedro Pan, so this was a story I'd heard since I was child. However, it wasn't until I realized that this important part of American History (the largest exodus of unaccompanied minors in the Western Hemisphere) was not only unknown to most Americans, it was a story that my own children didn't fully appreciate. That's when I knew I had to write the book.

Once the idea came to you, what happened next? Did you jot it down right away? Let it simmer?

A little of both. I was at a writers' conference when I heard author Ruth Van Der Zee talk about one of her books, *Erika's Story*. This was a picture book for older readers that dealt with a true story about a baby whose mother saved her from the Nazi concentration camps by throwing her from the train. Hearing this powerful story encouraged me to immediately write my own short story about my family's history. It took about another year of receiving very nice rejections before I followed everyone's advice and wrote the story as a novel. So, I guess I wrote it down right away and then let it simmer.

What was the most challenging and rewarding parts of writing this book?

The most challenging part was making sure that I honored the experience that the real life people who went through Operation Pedro Pan endured. The most rewarding part has been the numerous Operation Pedro Pan children who have contacted me to thank me for sharing their story with a new generation.

Are any of the characters or places in the story modeled after real people or places?

Although *The Red Umbrella* is loosely based on my parents and mother-in-law's experiences, it is really a compilation of many people's stories. I used my imagination for several aspects of the story (including the creation of the fictional

town of Puerto Mijares, Cuba), but the scene at the airport involving the umbrella really did occur between my mother and grandmother.

When did you know you wanted to become a writer?

When I was about nine or ten I dreamt of being an author, but I never thought it would become a reality. It wasn't until I had my children that my "secret" dream was re-awakened and I decided to go for it.

What's the best piece of writing advice you've ever received?

Write the book that you would want to read.

What advice do you have for young writers?

Read! It sounds basic, but reading other people's books opens your mind to different styles of writing, different genres and all sorts of possibilities.

Do you have a writing routine?

I usually meet a fellow author at local coffee shop several times a week and we sit there for hours writing. Writing can be a very solitary activity and it's nice to be around other people.

When you aren't writing, what are some of your favorite things to do?

I'm a full-time mom, so my activities usually revolve around my kids. When I get some free-time to myself I love to watch TV, read and dream up great vacation plans.