

Literacy Skills Teacher's Guide for Crazy Weekend by Gary Soto

Book Information

Gary Soto, Crazy Weekend
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Book Level: 4.6
Interest Level: MG

After their photograph of a robbery is published in the newspaper, Hector and Mando find themselves pursued by two goofy thieves.

Topics: Interpersonal Relationships, Friendship; Mysteries, Thefts; People, Hispanic; Recommended Reading, California Recommended Lit., English, 6-8; U.S. States/Regions, California

Main Characters

Freddie Bork the brains and muscle of the team of thugs

Hector Beltran a boy who is visiting his uncle in Fresno, California

Huey "Crybaby" Walker Freddie's sidekick; a sensitive criminal

Julio Silva (Uncle) Hector's divorced uncle; a free-lance photographer attracted to Vicky

Mando Tafolla Hector's good friend who accompanies him to Fresno

Vicky Moreno a beautiful journalist at <I>The Fresno Bee</I>

Vocabulary

chiropractor a doctor who specializes in manipulating body structures, especially the spine

counterfeit something that is a fake or false copy of a real object

juvie the slang term for juvenile detention; a prison for adolescents

thug a criminal

Synopsis

Hector and Mando are two seventh-grade boys who have a weekend of adventure while they are visiting

Hector's Uncle Julio, a free-lance photographer in Fresno, California. After a rather uncomfortable night in Julio's drably furnished apartment, the boys accompany Julio on an aerial photo shoot of a local farm. On the return flight they spot a vehicle below that appears to be on fire and Julio takes several pictures of the scene.

When the boys and Julio return home, they learn that what they had seen was an armored car robbery and Julio's pictures hold very important clues for the case. Julio immediately calls the local paper and arranges a meeting to attempt to sell his pictures. While they are there, the two boys are interviewed by Vicky, a journalist, and Julio is instantly smitten by her beauty.

The next day, the boys appear in the column "Today's Youth" as eyewitnesses to the robbery which took place the previous day. As a result of the article, Mando, Hector, and Uncle Julio find themselves the new target of the robbers.

After seeing the story in the paper, the thugs, Freddie Bork and Huey "Crybaby" Walker, first dispose of their stolen get-away vehicle, and then plot to ensure that no evidence remains and that none of the three witnesses will talk. Their attempt to run Julio's car off the road gives Hector the opportunity to take a close-up picture of Freddie. As a result, the thugs become even more desperate and determined to get Julio's negatives. They finally find out where Julio lives and wait for him and the boys to return that night.

Julio, Hector, and Mando, however, have been out to dinner with Vicky. The boys are left at home alone later that evening, as Julio is invited to go to Vicky's house for a drink. Realizing that the two thugs know their whereabouts, Hector and Mando are formulating an escape plan when the attack comes.

Using their heads and many of Uncle Julio's household objects, the boys not only manage to defend themselves, but capture the criminals as well. In the end, they consider the generous reward they will receive, and the boys, along with Julio and

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Vicky, begin to plan a vacation to the Mexican beaches.

Open-Ended Questions

Use these open-ended questions as the basis for class discussions, student presentations, or extended writing assignments.

Initial Understanding

Why do Hector and Mando exaggerate the story of how they witnessed the robbery when Vicky interviews them?

There are several possible answers to this question. The boys may want to impress Vicky because she is a good-looking woman, or they may want her to think they are smart and tough because they do not want anyone to know how scared they were in the plane. Also, they might have thought adding exciting details would give her a better story.

Literary Analysis

Although Freddie is vicious when he is trying to get things from other people, in many other ways he acts like a conscientious citizen. What are some of Freddie's actions and comments that contradict his ruthless nature?

Freddie often voices opinions about how modern youth get too much from the world and have no respect for their elders. He also comments that not many people are civil or polite anymore. When he sees water left running, Freddie gets angry that people are wasting it and at one point shuts it off himself.

Inferential Comprehension

Describe Freddie's personality using examples from the book to support your judgment.

Freddie is a selfish person. The evidence to support this statement is plentiful. For example, he hates kids but has five of his own that he resents, he feels no remorse for stealing anything, he rationalizes that because he has little money he can rob an armored car, he is vengeful and violent, he is willing to corrupt other people and children, and he blames everyone else for his own problems.

Constructing Meaning

Although not everyone may understand the Spanish words in the story such as "mucho gusto" or "andale," most readers probably have a good idea of what the words mean. How does the reader figure out their meanings?

With most of the words, the context in which they are used suggests their intended meaning. For example, in the cases where actual phrases are used, another character's response to the statement helps the reader understand what is being said, and often the next line practically repeats the Spanish phrase in English. Some editions of this book have a glossary of vocabulary and definitions.

Teachable Skills

Understanding Hist./Cultural Factors Most of the main characters in the story are Chicano. Have students research the Chicano culture and examine the contributions that population has had on American culture. Ask each student to choose a person to research and then give a short presentation to the rest of the class.

Comparing and Contrasting In the story, two young boys must fight off two ruthless criminals alone in order to survive, much like the plot of the movie *Home Alone*. Watch the movie *Home Alone* as a class. Then, in a class discussion, compare and contrast the characters and events in the movie with those in *Crazy Weekend*.

Describing Actions or Events In every story

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there are particular events which stand out in the reader's mind as being important to the plot or the outcome of the story. Divide the students into groups of four to six people and let them choose one event from *Crazy Weekend* they thought was significant. Then have them act out the event for the class and explain how that event influenced the rest of the story.

Differentiating Fact and Opinion In *Crazy Weekend*, many characters voice opinions about various topics ranging from the problems of society to a person's appearance. Give the class a definition of both fact and opinion. As a class, identify five opinions and five facts that are found in the story. Then have each student choose a newspaper article and identify both facts and opinions in it. If there are different papers in town, make sure articles from each one are being examined. Have the students share their results with the class and compare the results from the different papers. Is there one that offers more factual news? Is one more opinionated?