

8th Grade Distance Learning: April 20-24 Mrs. Preece, Language Arts

It is my goal to provide meaningful educational experiences within the "30 minutes a day" guideline provided by the district for each middle and high school teacher. I want my students to be engaged and to work hard when "school" is in session, but I am completely aware that this is not the preferred method for any of us. I appreciate your help at home, parents, but I know questions will come up that you may not be able to answer. I will have office hours every weekday from 10:00-11:00 and again from 2:00-3:00 beginning Monday, April 20th. I will be available by email and will use Zoom sessions as well at times. If you cannot touch base with me during these times, send an email and I will respond as quickly as possible.

Everything I assign after Spring Break will be available online to complete and comparable work will be available in a packet to be picked up from Poet on specific dates. Also, everything I assign starting Monday, April 20th will be required and graded.

While the paper packet will be available, as a teacher, my preference would be to have your child complete work or at least turn in work in a digital manner so I can give more timely feedback. He/she may submit word documents through his/her school Office 365 account, or take a picture of work done on binder paper or handouts and email it to me.

Reading:

1. Finish reading your 7th novel of the year, which was due on 3-13, if you haven't already done so. Give a commercial during the 8th grade commercials Zoom meeting at 1:45 Tuesday, April 21st
<https://us04web.zoom.us/j/961299681?pwd=VFd6bFB2NERQQWlQM0RVRVUxOcmpKQT09>
or write a one paragraph summary, including a main event from the end of the story to submit. (Use attached summary rubric.) *An 8th novel will be due by year's end, so keep reading!
1. Complete and submit the character, theme and close read lessons for "Abuela Invents the Zero" (Study Sync, Unit 3). For the close read lesson, you only need to complete Focus Questions 1, 2 and 3. In addition to highlighting and annotating in the text, you must answer each question **in complete sentences** in which you share your **Claim, Evidence and Reasoning (C.E.R.)**. Remember to embed your evidence using the **T.L.Q.C.** strategy we've been learning in class. (See attachment)

Writing:

1. Complete the writing prompt activity for "Abuela Invents the Zero" **after** completing the reading lessons above. This writing should be a **minimum** of one well-organized paragraph in which you thoroughly answer each question embedded in the prompt, and once again use the **T.L.Q.C.** strategy. Use the rubric provided to review your work. Copy it onto a new Office 365 document and do your writing below. When you share it with me, I'll be able to use the rubric to grade it.

Optional Ongoing Activities for students who want more:

Literature Circle Groups using novels available for free from the Study Sync library. If you want to read your final novel of the year with a group, send me an email, and I will send you more information. These groups will meet with me via weekly Zoom meetings.

Writers' Feedback Group If you love to write and want to collaborate on writing pieces of your choice, this is the group for you! You will get structured feedback from your peers and me as you work through the writing process. We will have weekly Zoom meetings to touch base and share our writing, questions, comments...

Although this doesn't officially start until the 20th, please know that I am around and available to help with anything at all. I truly appreciate your support and patience, as we begin this new adventure together! Send me emails with any questions you may have. HPreece@tusd.net

I miss you. Stay safe and healthy!

Heidi Preece

Study Sync Theme and Character Lessons: "Abuela Invents the Zero"

Theme is the central idea or message an author expresses in a work of fiction, poetry, or drama.

Sometimes an author explicitly states a theme through a title, the words of a character, or a descriptive line. For example, the theme of most fables is stated at the end of the text as a moral.

More often, though, themes grow and develop over the course of a text, and they are not directly stated at all. In this case, you will have to infer the theme. When readers try to infer the theme of a story, novel, poem, or play, they usually ask themselves: What is this text really about? Often, though, readers confuse the subject (or topic) of a text (what the text is about) with the text's theme. A topic can often be summed up in a word or two, while a theme is usually stated in a sentence. For example, the topic of Aesop's fable, "The Tortoise and the Hare," is a road race. But the theme is "slow and steady wins the race," or "perseverance is more important than speed."

Analyzing story elements and poetic features such as setting, characters, how they interact, and what they learn from resolving a conflict in the plot, can help you identify the central idea or insight about human nature that the writer wishes to convey through a work of literature.

Identification and Application:

- Themes often develop over the course of a work of literature, recurring across an entire work or a part of the work.
- The author may state the theme directly or readers may need to infer the theme.
- To determine the theme, and analyze its development over the course of the text:
 - Readers should first identify the narrator and the point of view from which the work is written. The point of view may give a clue to the theme.
 - Listen to the narrator; a work may have only the narrator, or there may be additional characters that the narrator describes. Readers should look at what motivates the narrator and characters and what happens as a result of their actions.
 - Readers should pay attention to cause-and-effect relationships, as they help to reveal the theme.
 - Consider the plot's central conflict and the way in which it is resolved.
 - Details about the setting can help to reveal the theme.
 - Readers will need to use the details in the text to infer the theme if it is not directly stated.
 - The title and any section headings can also be clues to the theme.

Model:

A theme often develops over the course of a work of literature. To determine the message that the author wants to leave with readers, you will need to consider the events of the plot and think about how characters in the story react to specific situations. Then look closely at the central conflict the main character faces in the story and how it is—or is not—resolved.

Judith Cofer Ortiz's "Abuela Invents the Zero" opens with a statement of accusation: "You made me feel like a zero, like a nothing," she says in Spanish, "un cero, nada." Constancia, the narrator, is scolded by her grandmother for abandoning her at church. She is sent to her room "like I was a child, to think about my grandmother's idea of math."

Constancia then recalls the events that led to this incident, her grandmother's arrival from Puerto Rico in the middle of a New Jersey winter:

Right up to the time when we're supposed to pick up **the old lady** at the airport, my mother is telling me stories about how hard times were for la familia on la isla, and **how la abuela worked night and day** to support them after their father died of a heart attack. **I'd die of a heart attack too if I had a troop like that to support.**

Anyway, **I had seen her only three or four times in my entire life,**

whenever we would go for somebody's funeral. I was born here and I have lived in this building all my life. But when Mami says, "Connie, please be nice to Abuela. She doesn't have too many years left. Do you promise me, Constanica?"—when she uses my full name, I know she means business. So I say, "Sure." **Why wouldn't I be nice? I'm not a monster, after all.**

The author makes it clear in the second paragraph that Constanica does not have a relationship with her grandmother. Notice how she refers to her—as "the old lady," as if her grandmother was a stranger and not a relative. Constanica also seems to have little interest in or respect for the fact that her grandmother had to work night and day to raise ten children after her husband died, noting that "I'd die of a heart attack too if I had a troop like that to support." After Abuela arrives, Constanica is embarrassed by her grandmother's appearance and behavior:

...since she's only four feet eleven inches tall, she walks around in my mother's big black coat looking ridiculous.

I try to walk far behind them in public so that no one will think we're together. I plan to stay very busy the whole time she's with us so that **I won't be asked to take her anywhere,** but my plan is ruined when my mother comes down with the flu and **Abuela absolutely has to attend Sunday mass or her soul will be eternally damned.** She's more Catholic than the Pope.

Constanica clearly does not want to be seen in public with her grandmother. Beyond that, she shows no desire to get to know the woman, and exhibits no respect for her grandmother's beliefs. But her disrespect and the embarrassment Constanica feels have consequences when Abuela becomes lost in the middle of the church service:

I realize to my horror that my grandmother is lost. She can't find her way back to the pew. I am so embarrassed that even though the woman next to me is shooting daggers at me with her eyes, **I just can't move to go get her.** I put my hands over my face like I'm praying, but it's really to hide my burning cheeks. **I would like for her to disappear.**

Instead of helping her grandmother, Constanica doesn't move, and on the way home, Abuela turns the tables on her granddaughter: She makes her disappear. "She doesn't speak to me on the way home," Constanica notes, "and she doesn't let me help her walk, even though she almost falls a couple of times."

At this point in the story, things have come full circle. Now readers can begin to think about what Constanica may learn from this conflict with her grandmother, and how it has developed over the course of the text.

Your Turn

Read this section from "Abuela Invents the Zero" and look for details that will help you determine the theme of the story. Then answer the follow-up questions.

When we get to the apartment, my parents are at the kitchen table, where my mother is trying to eat some soup. They can see right away that something is wrong. Then Abuela points her finger at me like a judge passing a sentence on a criminal. She says in Spanish, "You made me feel like a zero, like a nothing." Then she goes to her room.

I try to explain what happened. “I don’t understand why she’s so upset. She just got lost and wandered around for a while,” I tell them. But it sounds lame, even to my own ears. My mother gives me a look that makes me cringe and goes in to Abuela’s room to get her version of the story. She comes out with tears in her eyes.

“Your grandmother says to tell you that of all the hurtful things you can do to a person, the worst is to make them feel as if they are worth nothing.”

I can feel myself shrinking right there in front of her. But I can’t bring myself to tell my mother that I think I understand how I made Abuela feel. I might be sent into the old lady’s room to apologize, and it’s not easy to admit you’ve been a jerk—at least, not right away with everybody watching. So I just sit there not saying anything.

My mother looks at me for a long time, like she feels sorry for me. Then she says, “You should know, Constanica, that if it wasn’t for the old woman whose existence you don’t seem to value, you and I would not be here.”

Which of the following statements states an important idea that could be the theme of this selection?

- ☐ A. Parents can always tell when there is a problem.
- ☐ B. It is important to treat the people in your family with respect, or else you may lose respect for yourself.
- ☐ C. Only vain people have a strong sense of self-respect.
- ☐ D. It is often too difficult to understand how another person feels.

Which statement from the text best supports your answer?

- ☐ A. “They can see right away that something is wrong.”
- ☐ B. “Then Abuela points her finger at me like a judge passing a sentence on a criminal.”
- ☐ C. “You should know, Constanica, that if it wasn’t for the old woman whose existence you don’t seem to value, you and I would not be here.”
- ☐ D. “I might be sent into the old lady’s room to apologize, and it’s not easy to admit you’ve been a jerk—at least, not right away with everybody watching.”

Character Lesson, “Abuela Invents the Zero”

Every work of fiction or drama needs characters. Whether they are people or animals, robots or creatures from outer space, their thoughts, feelings, actions, and reactions drive the plot. Characters move the action forward, so they are inseparable from the plot. Authors construct characters through description, dialogue, and situations that reveal their personalities and traits, such as whether they are honest or devious, humorous or clever.

The main character in a story or play—the one the story revolves around and who usually has a problem to solve—is called the protagonist. The character whose goals work against the protagonist is called the antagonist. Minor characters provide support for the protagonist and antagonist, helping to reveal aspects of their personalities. Think of the plot as the engine, and the main character as the person behind the steering wheel.

Identification and Application:

When reading fiction, examine what characters say to one another.

- Particular lines of dialogue in a story can reveal aspects of a character or influence a character’s decisions.

- Note how characters react to what others say and do. These reactions also reveal character traits and may show the reason for a character's decisions.
- A character's thoughts can also help readers understand the character's actions and decisions.
- Examine how fictional characters are affected by plot events.
 - Plot events often propel characters into action.
 - Characters often make decisions in response to events as they occur in a story.
 - Notice how plot events influence changes in characters' thoughts and behavior.

Model:

Even a brief exchange of dialogue can disclose a great deal about the characters in a story. What the characters say and the words they choose can help readers understand a character's traits and what motivates him or her. In this brief scene between Constancia and her father from "Abuela Invents the Zero," notice how the author reveals the main character's perspective through the dialogue.

My father decides that he should stay home with my mother and that I should escort la abuela to church. He tells me this on Saturday night as I'm getting ready to go out to the mall with my friends. **"No way," I say.**

I go for the car keys on the kitchen table: he usually leaves them there for me on Friday and Saturday nights. He beats me to them.

"No way," he says, pocketing them and grinning at me.

Needless to say, we come to a compromise very quickly. **I do have a responsibility to Sandra and Anita, who don't drive yet. There is a Harley-Davidson fashion show at Brookline Square that we cannot miss.**

"The mass in Spanish is at ten sharp tomorrow morning, entiendes?" My father is dangling the car keys in front of my nose and pulling them back when I try to reach for them. He's really enjoying himself.

"I understand. Ten o'clock. I'm out of here." I pry his fingers off the key ring. He knows that I'm late, so he makes it just a little difficult. Then he laughs. I run out of our apartment before he changes his mind. I have no idea what I'm getting myself into.

Because Constancia's mother has the flu, her father decides that Constancia will take her grandmother to church on Saturday morning. Constancia's response is short and abrupt: "No way," she says. In her mind, there is no room for discussion or negotiation. Constancia actually seems to be responding to her father as if she is his equal, and has some bargaining power in the decision. In reality, it is Constancia's father who is holding the car keys and owns the car she wants to use.

But look at how Constancia's father responds. "No way," he says, pocketing the keys and grinning. He has obviously played this game with his daughter before, and the grin suggests that he knows he will win in the end. They do come to a compromise very quickly. "I understand. Ten o'clock. I'm out of here," Constancia says, and the short, curt sentences reveal a character who is impatient and not very happy about losing. The incident also shines a light on another aspect of Constancia's character. She is thoughtless, especially when it comes to realizing what her true priorities are. She feels she has a "responsibility to Sandra and Anita," her friends who don't drive yet, but apparently she has no responsibility when it comes to helping another member of her family. Constancia cannot miss the fashion

show at the mall, but she refuses to try to understand why her grandmother might feel the same way about going to church.

Read this section from “Abuela Invents the Zero” to learn more about the main character and answer the follow-up questions.

Then Abuela points her finger at me like a judge passing a sentence on a criminal. She says in Spanish, “You made me feel like a zero, like a nothing.” Then she goes to her room.

I try to explain what happened. “I don’t understand why she’s so upset. She just got lost and wandered around for a while,” I tell them. But it sounds lame, even to my own ears. My mother gives me a look that makes me cringe and goes in to Abuela’s room to get her version of the story. She comes out with tears in her eyes.

“Your grandmother says to tell you that of all the hurtful things you can do to a person, the worst is to make them feel as if they are worth nothing.”

I can feel myself shrinking right there in front of her. But I can’t bring myself to tell my mother that I think I understand how I made Abuela feel. I might be sent into the old lady’s room to apologize, and it’s not easy to admit you’ve been a jerk—at least, not right away with everybody watching. So I just sit there not saying anything.

My mother looks at me for a long time, like she feels sorry for me. Then she says, “You should know, Constanica, that if it wasn’t for the old woman whose existence you don’t seem to value, you and I would not be here.”

Which statement best explains what readers learn about Constanica from the dialogue in this excerpt?

- ☐ A. Constanica does not know much about her family.
- ☐ B. Constanica has difficulty paying attention to details.
- ☐ C. Constanica does not realize the effect that her actions can have on others.
- ☐ D. Constanica has little interest in her family’s culture.

Which detail from the passage best supports your answer?

- ☐ A. “You made me feel like a zero, a nothing.”
- ☐ B. “I try to explain what happened.”
- ☐ C. “I don’t understand why she’s so upset.”
- ☐ D. “You should know, Constanica, that if it wasn’t for the old woman whose existence you don’t seem to value, you and I would not be here.”

Writing Rubric / Informational

Name: _____

_____ Period # _____

Content	1	2	3	Feedback
Clearly introduce topic using a topic sentence. (I.V.F.)				
Use an appropriate organizational structure. (Plan, chrono. order)				
Develop the topic with the relevant <u>facts</u> , <u>definitions</u> , <u>concrete details</u> , quotations, or other information and examples. (4 main events)				
Use appropriate transitions to create cohesion. (Sentence variety)				
Use content specific language to inform or explain the topic. (Not applicable)	X	X	X	
Provide a strong conclusion. (Not applicable)	X	X	X	
Conventions	1	2	3	Feedback
Edit for proper capitalization, punctuation, indentation, and grammar/usage.				
Spell high frequency words and content specific vocabulary correctly.				

1 = Missing; **2** = Almost There/Not Yet; **3** = Got it!

Writing Rubric / "Abuela Invents the Zero"

Name: _____ # _____ Period # _____

Content	1	2	3	Feedback
Identify the theme of the story				
Analyze how it developed over the course of the text				
Support claims with evidence and inferences from the text using T.L.Q. R. strategy.				
Explain how theme helps you understand a larger life lesson about how life experiences can shape our values				
Conventions	1	2	3	Feedback
Edit for proper capitalization, punctuation, indentation, and grammar/usage.				
Spell high frequency words and content specific vocabulary correctly.				

1 = Missing; **2** = Almost There/Not Yet; **3** = Got it!

Using Office365

1. Restart the computer
2. Log on to the computer using your individual email:
Student ID@student.tusd.net and password: Password!
3. From the Poet web page click on the **STUDENT** tab (Very top right of screen)
4. Click on the **Office365** tiles (middle of the screen)
5. Enter your user name (Student ID@student.tusd.net)
6. Enter your password on the next screen (Password!)
7. Make sure **YOUR NAME** appears in the blue ribbon at the top of the page. If it is somebody else's name, **log them off**, or they will "own" your document.
8. Go to Microsoft Word and click on a new document.
9. Press "Save as" and then "rename". Choose a name that starts with your name and describes the assignment. Example: "Aliyah Gothic Narrative". Be sure to type your name, date, period # and assignment title on your document. Left justify all paragraphs.
10. As you type, it will save automatically. You may share this document with me to avoid printing multiple drafts. ☺
11. If I have shared a rubric or other document with you, you will need to download it, make a copy of your own, then you may type on it. When you share it with me, make sure you keep the blank rubric at the top.

Logging in to your Study Sync Account

- Google: My.MHeducation.com
- User name: Student ID followed by TUSD (no spaces)
Ex: 10366595TUSD
- The first time only, type in the temporary password given to you.
- Immediately change to the standard password: Password! This will be your permanent password.

Zoom Meeting Guidelines:

1. Your face is the only picture that may be shown. – No computer screens, characters, ...
2. Do not play any background music as we are having a conversation.
3. Do not eat, drink or do other things. Stay focused on the meeting.
4. Have yourself muted until you have been called on so we don't have background noises interfering.
5. Have all materials you are planning to share during the meeting ready and available.
6. If you or anyone in your background uses inappropriate language, you will be removed from the meeting and will not be able to participate in a Zoom meeting again.
7. Remember to actively listen and acknowledge/build upon the comment of the person who spoke before you.

Before you ZOOM

1. You will need your computer, Chromebook, tablet, or smartphone.
2. You will receive a notification from your teacher with a 9-digit meeting ID that you can use to join your class.

To Join a ZOOM

1. Join the meeting by clicking on a ZOOM link provided by your teacher. (join.zoom.us).
2. Follow the prompts to download and run ZOOM.
3. Enter your meeting ID if you are prompted to do so.
4. Click to join the audio conference.
5. When you are in the meeting, you may click on the start video button to turn on the camera on your device.

ZOOM Controls

Using the icons along the bottom of the screen you can:

* Mute/Unmute your microphone - your teacher may ask you to mute your microphone during the lesson to limit background noises. You can un-mute your device to ask your teacher a question.

*Turn on/off your camera - turning your camera on allows your teacher to see you and know you are following along with her.

*View participant list - this opens a list of all the students logged into the classroom. This also has an option to 'raise your hand.' If you click to raise your hand, it will notify your teacher so she can talk to you.

*Share screen - this allows your teacher to share her computer screen with you.

*Chat - this opens a chat window where the teacher can see any questions you may have and respond to you. (This may be disabled.)

