

# The Medicine Bag

 Video link at [thinkcentral.com](http://thinkcentral.com)

Short Story by Virginia Driving Hawk Sneve

## Who Are You Today, María?

Vignette by Judith Ortiz Cofer

VIDEO TRAILER



KEYWORD: HML8-246

# What shows others **WHO** we are?

### COMMON CORE

**RL 1** Cite textual evidence to support inferences drawn from the text. **RL 3** Analyze how dialogue or incidents in a story reveal aspects of character.

The clothes we wear, the way we speak, and the traditions we follow are just a few of the ways we show others who we are. Our families and our heritage can also play important roles in shaping our identity, which is how we see ourselves and how we want others to see us. In the stories you are about to read, two young people must decide which parts of their identities they want to share with the world.

**PICTURE IT** Create a collage or drawing that reflects your identity. Think of ways to visually represent your background, the beliefs that are important to you, and the meaningful activities and relationships in your life.



## ● TEXT ANALYSIS: CENTRAL CHARACTER

Short stories usually focus on one **central character**. The plot and central conflict of the story generally revolve around this person. As you read each of the following stories, get to know the central character just as you would get to know a real person. Ask questions like these:

- Where does the character live, and how does that place affect him or her?
- With whom does the character have important relationships? What conflicts develop in these relationships?
- What is the character’s social background or cultural heritage? How does the character feel about who he or she is?

## ● READING STRATEGY: SET A PURPOSE FOR READING

In this lesson, your **purpose** for reading is to compare two central characters. As you read, begin filling in a chart like the one shown. You will be asked to add to this chart later.

	<i>Martin</i>	<i>María</i>
<i>How does his or her environment affect him or her?</i>		
<i>What is his or her relationship with grandparent like?</i>		
<i>What is his or her attitude toward cultural heritage?</i>		

## ▲ VOCABULARY IN CONTEXT

The words in the box help tell two stories of family relationships. Match each numbered word or phrase with a vocabulary word.

<b>WORD LIST</b>	authentic	conspiracy	sheepishly
	commotion	descendant	unseemly

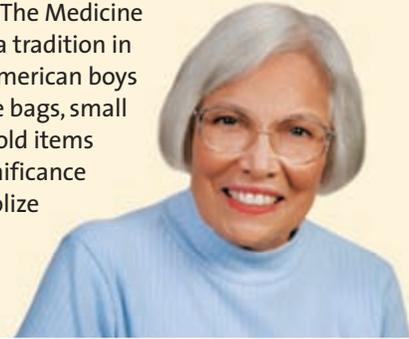
- |               |                    |            |
|---------------|--------------------|------------|
| 1. excitement | 3. son or daughter | 5. scheme  |
| 2. improper   | 4. not fake        | 6. timidly |

## Virginia Driving Hawk Sneve

born 1933

### Sioux Storyteller

Born at the height of the Great Depression, Virginia Driving Hawk Sneve grew up on the Rosebud Sioux reservation in South Dakota. Since her parents often had to leave the reservation to find work, Sneve spent a great deal of time with her grandmothers, whose tales inspired many of her books. Sneve has said that her goal in writing is to present accurate portrayals of Native American life. “The Medicine Bag” describes a tradition in which Native American boys create medicine bags, small pouches that hold items of religious significance and that symbolize the wearer’s transition to adulthood.



## Judith Ortiz Cofer

born 1952

### A Rich Identity

Judith Ortiz Cofer was born in Puerto Rico, but she spent much of her childhood in New Jersey after her father joined the U.S. Navy. When her father was at sea, the family returned to Puerto Rico for extended visits with Cofer’s grandmother. At times, Cofer felt that she did not fit in either culture—American or Puerto Rican. She uses her writing to explore the difficulties and rewards of her dual identity.



Complete the activities in your **Reader/Writer Notebook**.

Authors Online



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# The Medicine Bag

Virginia Driving Hawk Sneve

**M**y kid sister Cheryl and I always bragged about our Sioux grandpa, Joe Iron Shell. Our friends, who had always lived in the city and only knew about Indians from movies and TV, were impressed by our stories. Maybe we exaggerated and made Grandpa and the reservation sound glamorous, but when we'd return home to Iowa after our yearly summer visit to Grandpa we always had some exciting tale to tell.

We always had some **authentic** Sioux article to show our listeners. One year Cheryl had new moccasins that Grandpa had made. On another visit he gave me a small, round, flat, rawhide drum which was decorated with a painting of a warrior riding a horse. He taught me a real Sioux chant to sing while I beat the drum with a leather-covered stick that had a feather on the end. Man, that really made an impression. **A**

We never showed our friends Grandpa's picture. Not that we were ashamed of him, but because we knew that the glamorous tales we told didn't go with the real thing. Our friends would have laughed at the picture, because Grandpa wasn't tall and stately like TV Indians. His hair wasn't in braids, but hung in stringy, gray strands on his neck and he was old. He was our great-grandfather, and he didn't live in a tipi, but all by himself in a part log, part tarpaper shack on the Rosebud Reservation in South Dakota. So when Grandpa came to visit us, I was so ashamed and embarrassed I could've died. **B**

There are a lot of yippy poodles and other fancy little dogs in our neighborhood, but they usually barked singly at the mailman from the safety of their own yards. Now it sounded as if a whole pack of mutts were barking together in one place. **B**

## Analyze Visuals ▶

What **details** of the man's face tell you the most about him?

**authentic** (ô-thĕn'tĭk)  
*adj.* having a verifiable origin; not counterfeit

### **A** CENTRAL CHARACTER

Why did the narrator and his sister exaggerate when they talked about their grandfather?

### **B** CENTRAL CHARACTER

What **conclusions** can you draw about the narrator's neighborhood?



I got up and walked to the curb to see what the **commotion** was. About a block away I saw a crowd of little kids yelling, with the dogs yipping and growling around someone who was walking down the middle of the street.

I watched the group as it slowly came closer and saw that in the center of the strange procession was a man wearing a tall black hat. He'd pause now and then to peer at something in his hand and then at the houses on either side of the street. I felt cold and hot at the same time as I recognized the man. "Oh, no!" I whispered. "It's Grandpa!"

I stood on the curb, unable to move even though I wanted to run and hide. Then I got mad when I saw how the yippy dogs were growling and nipping at the old man's baggy pant legs and how wearily he poked them away with his cane. "Stupid mutts," I said as I ran to rescue Grandpa.

When I kicked and hollered at the dogs to get away, they put their tails between their legs and scattered. The kids ran to the curb where they watched me and the old man.

"Grandpa," I said and felt pretty dumb when my voice cracked. I reached for his beat-up old tin suitcase, which was tied shut with a rope. But he set it down right in the street and shook my hand.

"*Hau,*<sup>1</sup> *Takoza,* Grandchild," he greeted me formally in Sioux.

All I could do was stand there with the whole neighborhood watching and shake the hand of the leather-brown old man. I saw how his gray hair straggled from under his big black hat, which had a drooping feather in its crown. His rumpled black suit hung like a sack over his stooped frame. As he shook my hand, his coat fell open to expose a bright-red, satin shirt with a beaded bolo tie under the collar. His getup wasn't out of place on the reservation, but it sure was here, and I wanted to sink right through the pavement. **C**

"Hi," I muttered with my head down. I tried to pull my hand away when I felt his bony hand trembling, and looked up to see fatigue in his face. I felt like crying. I couldn't think of anything to say so I picked up Grandpa's suitcase, took his arm, and guided him up the driveway to our house.

Mom was standing on the steps. I don't know how long she'd been watching, but her hand was over her mouth and she looked as if she couldn't believe what she saw. Then she ran to us.

"Grandpa," she gasped. "How in the world did you get here?"

She checked her move to embrace Grandpa and I remembered that such a display of affection is **unseemly** to the Sioux and would embarrass him.

"*Hau,* Marie," he said as he shook Mom's hand. She smiled and took his other arm.

As we supported him up the steps the door banged open and Cheryl came bursting out of the house. She was all smiles and was so obviously glad to see Grandpa that I was ashamed of how I felt.

"Grandpa!" she yelled happily. "You came to see us!"

**commotion** (kə-mō'shən)  
n. a disturbance

**SOCIAL STUDIES CONNECTION**



The Rosebud Reservation in South Dakota

**CENTRAL CHARACTER**

How does Martin feel about his grandfather's outfit?

**unseemly** (ŭn-sēm'lē)  
adj. inappropriate

1. *Hau* Sioux: hello.

Grandpa smiled and Mom and I let go of him as he stretched out his arms to my 10-year-old sister, who was still young enough to be hugged.

“*Wicinca*,<sup>2</sup> little girl,” he greeted her and then collapsed.

70 He had fainted. Mom and I carried him into her sewing room, where we had a spare bed.

After we had Grandpa on the bed Mom stood there helplessly patting his shoulder.

“Shouldn’t we call the doctor, Mom?” I suggested, since she didn’t seem to know what to do.

“Yes,” she agreed with a sigh. “You make Grandpa comfortable, Martin.”

I reluctantly moved to the bed. I knew Grandpa wouldn’t want to have Mom undress him, but I didn’t want to, either. He was so skinny and frail that his coat slipped off easily. When I loosened his tie and opened his shirt collar,  
80 I felt a small leather pouch that hung from a thong around his neck. I left it alone and moved to remove his boots. The scuffed old cowboy boots were tight and he moaned as I put pressure on his legs to jerk them off. **D**

I put the boots on the floor and saw why they fit so tight. Each one was stuffed with money. I looked at the bills that lined the boots and started to ask about them, but Grandpa’s eyes were closed again.

Mom came back with a basin of water. “The doctor thinks Grandpa is suffering from heat exhaustion,” she explained as she bathed Grandpa’s face. Mom gave a big sigh, “*Oh hinh*, Martin. How do you suppose he got here?”

We found out after the doctor’s visit. Grandpa was angrily sitting up in bed  
90 while Mom tried to feed him some soup.

“Tonight you let Marie feed you, Grandpa,” spoke my dad, who had gotten home from work just as the doctor was leaving. “You’re not really sick,” he said as he gently pushed Grandpa back against the pillows. “The doctor said you just got too tired and hot after your long trip.”

Grandpa relaxed, and between sips of soup, he told us of his journey. Soon after our visit to him Grandpa decided that he would like to see where his only living **descendants** lived and what our home was like. Besides, he admitted **sheepishly**, he was lonesome after we left.

I knew everybody felt as guilty as I did—especially Mom. Mom was all  
100 Grandpa had left. So even after she married my dad, who’s a white man and teaches in the college in our city, and after Cheryl and I were born, Mom made sure that every summer we spent a week with Grandpa.

I never thought that Grandpa would be lonely after our visits, and none of us noticed how old and weak he had become. But Grandpa knew and so he came to us. He had ridden on buses for two and a half days. When he arrived in the city, tired and stiff from sitting for so long, he set out, walking, to find us. **E**

He had stopped to rest on the steps of some building downtown and a policeman found him. The cop, according to Grandpa, was a good man who

#### **D** CENTRAL CHARACTER

Reread lines 77–82. Which details in these lines indicate that Martin is uneasy around his grandfather?

**descendant** (dĭ-sĕn’dĕnt)  
*n.* a person whose descent can be traced to an individual or group

**sheepishly** (shĕ’pĭsh-lĕ)  
*adv.* meekly; with embarrassment

#### **E** CENTRAL CHARACTER

Reread lines 99–106. What do you learn about Martin’s relationship with his grandfather?

2. *Wicinca* Sioux: girl.

took him to the bus stop and waited until the bus came and told the driver to  
110 let Grandpa out at Bell View Drive. After Grandpa got off the bus, he started  
walking again. But he couldn't see the house numbers on the other side when  
he walked on the sidewalk so he walked in the middle of the street. That's  
when all the little kids and dogs followed him.

I knew everybody felt as bad as I did. Yet I was proud of this 86-year-old  
man, who had never been away from the reservation, having the courage to  
travel so far alone. **F**

"You found the money in my boots?" he asked Mom.

"Martin did," she answered, and roused herself to scold. "Grandpa, you  
shouldn't have carried so much money. What if someone had stolen it from you?"

120 Grandpa laughed. "I would've known if anyone tried to take the boots off  
my feet. The money is what I've saved for a long time—a hundred dollars—for  
my funeral. But you take it now to buy groceries so that I won't be a burden to  
you while I am here."

"That won't be necessary, Grandpa," Dad said. "We are honored to  
have you with us and you will never be a burden. I am only sorry that we  
never thought to bring you home with us this summer and spare you the  
discomfort of a long trip."

Grandpa was pleased. "Thank you," he answered. "But do not feel bad  
that you didn't bring me with you for I would not have come then. It was  
130 not time." He said this in such a way that no one could argue with him. To  
Grandpa and the Sioux, he once told me, a thing would be done when it was  
the right time to do it and that's the way it was.

"Also," Grandpa went on, looking at me, "I have come because it is soon  
time for Martin to have the medicine bag."

We all knew what that meant. Grandpa thought he was going to die and he  
had to follow the tradition of his family to pass the medicine bag, along with  
its history, to the oldest male child.

"Even though the boy," he said still looking at me, "bears a white man's  
name, the medicine bag will be his."

140 I didn't know what to say. I had the same hot and cold feeling that I had  
when I first saw Grandpa in the street. The medicine bag was the dirty  
leather pouch I had found around his neck. "I could never wear such a  
thing," I almost said aloud. I thought of having my friends see it in gym  
class, at the swimming pool, and could imagine the smart things they would  
say. But I just swallowed hard and took a step toward the bed. I knew I  
would have to take it. **G**

But Grandpa was tired. "Not now, Martin," he said, waving his hand in  
dismissal, "it is not time. Now I will sleep."

So that's how Grandpa came to be with us for two months. My friends kept  
150 asking to come see the old man, but I put them off. I told myself that I didn't  
want them laughing at Grandpa. But even as I made excuses I knew it wasn't  
Grandpa that I was afraid they'd laugh at.

**F CENTRAL CHARACTER**

What is Martin's attitude toward his grandfather's journey?

**G CENTRAL CHARACTER**

How does Martin feel about receiving the medicine bag?

Nothing bothered Cheryl about bringing her friends to see Grandpa. Every day after school started there'd be a crew of giggling little girls or round-eyed little boys crowded around the old man on the patio, where he'd gotten in the habit of sitting every afternoon.

Grandpa would smile in his gentle way and patiently answer their questions, or he'd tell them stories of brave warriors, ghosts, animals, and the kids listened in awed silence. Those little guys thought Grandpa was great.

160 Finally, one day after school, my friends came home with me because nothing I said stopped them. "We're going to see the great Indian of Bell View Drive," said Hank, who was supposed to be my best friend. "My brother has seen him three times so he oughta be well enough to see us." H

When we got to my house Grandpa was sitting on the patio. He had on his red shirt, but today he also wore a fringed leather vest that was decorated with beads. Instead of his usual cowboy boots he had solidly beaded moccasins on his feet that stuck out of his black trousers. Of course, he had his old black hat on—he was seldom without it. But it had been brushed and the feather in the beaded headband was proudly erect, its tip a brighter white. His hair lay in  
170 silver strands over the red shirt collar.

I stared just as my friends did and I heard one of them murmur, "Wow!"

Grandpa looked up and when his eyes met mine they twinkled as if he were laughing inside. He nodded to me and my face got all hot. I could tell that he had known all along I was afraid he'd embarrass me in front of my friends.

"*Hau, hoksilas*, boys," he greeted and held out his hand.

My buddies passed in a single file and shook his hand as I introduced them. They were so polite I almost laughed. "How, there, Grandpa," and even a "How-do-you-do, sir."

"You look fine, Grandpa," I said  
180 as the guys sat on the lawn chairs or on the patio floor.

"*Hanh*, yes," he agreed. "When I woke up this morning it seemed the right time to dress in the good clothes. I knew that my grandson would be bringing his friends."

"You guys want some lemonade or something?" I offered. No one answered. They were listening to  
190 Grandpa as he started telling how he'd killed the deer from which his vest was made.

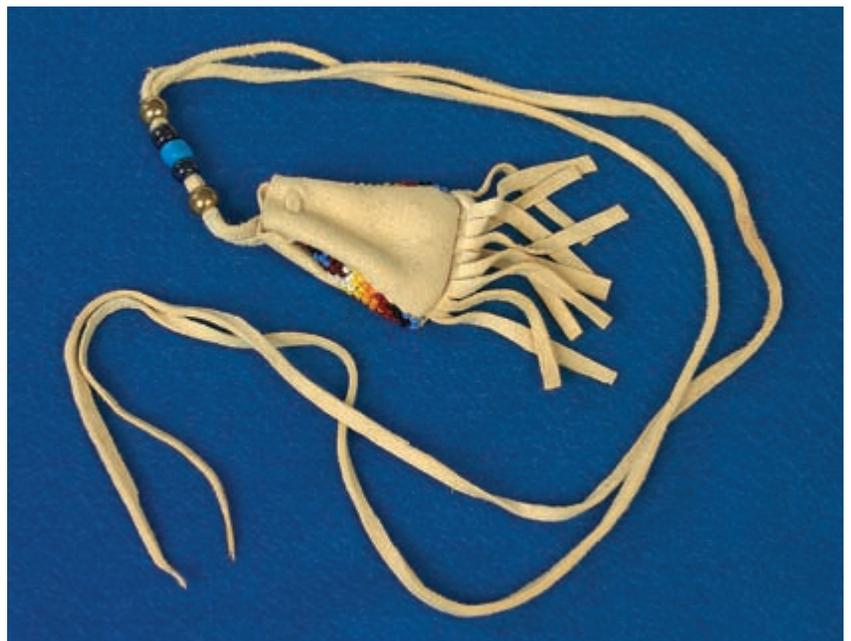
Grandpa did most of the talking while my friends were there. I was so proud of him and amazed at how respectfully quiet my buddies

### H CENTRAL CHARACTER

What bothers Martin about bringing his friends home to meet his grandfather?

### ▼ Analyze Visuals

Compare this picture of a medicine bag to the way you imagine the medicine bag in the story. How is it similar?



were. Mom had to chase them home at supper time. As they left they shook Grandpa's hand again and said to me:

"Martin, he's really great!"

200 "Yeah, man! Don't blame you for keeping him to yourself."

"Can we come back?" ❶

But after they left, Mom said, "No more visitors for a while, Martin. Grandpa won't admit it, but his strength hasn't returned. He likes having company, but it tires him."

That evening Grandpa called me to his room before he went to sleep. "Tomorrow," he said, "when you come home, it will be time to give you the medicine bag."

I felt a hard squeeze from where my heart is supposed to be and was scared, but I answered, "OK, Grandpa."

210 All night I had weird dreams about thunder and lightning on a high hill. From a distance I heard the slow beat of a drum. When I woke up in the morning I felt as if I hadn't slept at all. At school it seemed as if the day would never end and, when it finally did, I ran home. ❷

Grandpa was in his room, sitting on the bed. The shades were down and the place was dim and cool. I sat on the floor in front of Grandpa, but he didn't even look at me. After what seemed a long time he spoke.

"I sent your mother and sister away. What you will hear today is only for a man's ears. What you will receive is only for a man's hands." He fell silent and I felt shivers down my back.

220 "My father in his early manhood," Grandpa began, "made a vision quest to find a spirit guide for his life. You cannot understand how it was in that time, when the great Teton Sioux were first made to stay on the reservation. There was a strong need for guidance from *Wakantanka*, the Great Spirit. But too many of the young men were filled with despair and hatred. They thought it was hopeless to search for a vision when the glorious life was gone and only the hated confines of a reservation lay ahead. But my father held to the old ways.

230 "He carefully prepared for his quest with a purifying sweat bath and then he went alone to a high butte<sup>3</sup> top to fast and pray. After three days he received his sacred dream—in which he found, after long searching, the white man's iron. He did not understand his vision of finding something belonging to the white people, for in that time they were the enemy. When he came down from the butte to cleanse himself at the stream below, he found the remains of a campfire and the broken shell of an iron kettle. This was a sign which reinforced his dream. He took a piece of the iron for his medicine bag, which he had made of elk skin years before, to prepare for his quest.

"He returned to his village, where he told his dream to the wise old men of the tribe. They gave him the name *Iron Shell*, but neither did they understand the

❶ **CENTRAL CHARACTER**

Why is Martin proud of his grandfather?

❷ **CENTRAL CHARACTER**

How have Martin's feelings about receiving the medicine bag changed?

**Language Coach**

**Etymology** The history of a word is its etymology. The words *quest* and *question* both come from the Latin verb *quaerere*, which means "to ask or seek." Use this etymology and context clues to help you figure out the meaning of *quest* in line 220.

3. **butte** (byōōt): an abruptly rising hill with sloping sides and a flat top.

meaning of the dream. This first Iron Shell kept the piece of iron with him at all  
 240 times and believed it gave him protection from the evils of those unhappy days.

“Then a terrible thing happened to Iron Shell. He and several other young men were taken from their homes by the soldiers and sent far away to a white man’s boarding school. He was angry and lonesome for his parents and the young girl he had wed before he was taken away. At first Iron Shell resisted the teachers’ attempts to change him and he did not try to learn. One day it was his turn to work in the school’s blacksmith shop. As he walked into the place he knew that his medicine had brought him there to learn and work with the white man’s iron.

“Iron Shell became a blacksmith and worked at the trade when he returned to the reservation. All of his life he treasured the medicine bag. When he was old,  
 250 and I was a man, he gave it to me, for no one made the vision quest any more.”

Grandpa quit talking and I stared in disbelief as he covered his face with his hands. His shoulders were shaking with quiet sobs and I looked away until he began to speak again.

“I kept the bag until my son, your mother’s father, was a man and had to leave us to fight in the war across the ocean. I gave him the bag, for I believed it would protect him in battle, but he did not take it with him. He was afraid that he would lose it. He died in a faraway place.” **K**

Again Grandpa was still and I felt his grief around me.

“My son,” he went on after clearing his throat, “had only a daughter and it  
 260 is not proper for her to know of these things.”

He unbuttoned his shirt, pulled out the leather pouch, and lifted it over his head. He held it in his hand, turning it over and over as if memorizing how it looked.

“In the bag,” he said as he opened it and removed two objects, “is the broken shell of the iron kettle, a pebble from the butte, and a piece of the sacred sage.” He held the pouch upside down and dust drifted down.

“After the bag is yours you must put a piece of prairie sage within and never open it again until you pass it on to your son.” He replaced the pebble and the piece of iron and tied the bag.

270 I stood up, somehow knowing I should. Grandpa slowly rose from the bed and stood upright in front of me holding the bag before my face. I closed my eyes and waited for him to slip it over my head. But he spoke.

“No, you need not wear it.” He placed the soft leather bag in my right hand and closed my other hand over it. “It would not be right to wear it in this time and place where no one will understand. Put it safely away until you are again on the reservation. Wear it then, when you replace the sacred sage.”

Grandpa turned and sat again on the bed. Wearily he leaned his head against the pillow. “Go,” he said. “I will sleep now.”

“Thank you, Grandpa,” I said softly and left with the bag in my hands.

280 That night Mom and Dad took Grandpa to the hospital. Two weeks later I stood alone on the lonely prairie of the reservation and put the sacred sage in my medicine bag.  **L**

**K CENTRAL CHARACTER**

What is Martin learning about his heritage?

**L CENTRAL CHARACTER**

What does Martin’s return to the reservation suggest about his attitude toward his heritage?

# Who Are You Today, María?

Judith Ortiz Cofer

**A**buela<sup>1</sup> knocks on my bedroom door. She has come to my room this morning to watch me choose my outfit for Who You Are Day at school. This is a day when we are allowed to dress in clothes that we think tell the world who we really are. (Within reason, our principal warned—no extremes will be tolerated. I hope that her definition of the word *extreme* is the same as my friend Whoopee's. Nothing that she will put on this morning has ever been seen on this planet, much less at school.)

Abuela makes herself comfortable on my bed as I put on my costume of myself made up of pieces of my life. I thought about my Who You Are Day outfit a lot. Mr. Golden told us in English class to think about our choices: are you going to walk around as a joke or as a poem? I have a suspicion that our teachers have allowed us this chance to dress up as ourselves for a reason. Our school is already a united nations, a carnival, and a parade all at once. There are students from dozens of different countries, and we do not always get along. Most of us are too shy to talk to others outside our little circles, and so misunderstandings come up. The principal has tried almost everything. The Who You Are Day is another of her crazy ideas to get us to communicate. In each of my classes, the teacher said, let us know something about what has made you who you are by what you wear to school tomorrow. It all sounds like a **conspiracy** to me. But I like dressing up so I do not complain like the boys have been doing. Most of them hate the idea! **M**

Abuela looks at my choices hanging on the door and shakes her head, smiling, like she did when we went to see *Cats*. It is a smile that says, I do not understand, but if it is important to María, I will bear it the best I can. She is elegant even at 7:00 A.M. in her embroidered silk robe and red velvet slippers. She has wrapped a shawl over her shoulders because she is always cold in our *cueva*,<sup>2</sup> as she calls the apartment. The shawl was handmade by her mother and it is Abuela's most prized possession. As a little girl, I liked to put it over

## Analyze Visuals ▶

Based on the **details** in this painting, what impression do you get of the girl?

### conspiracy

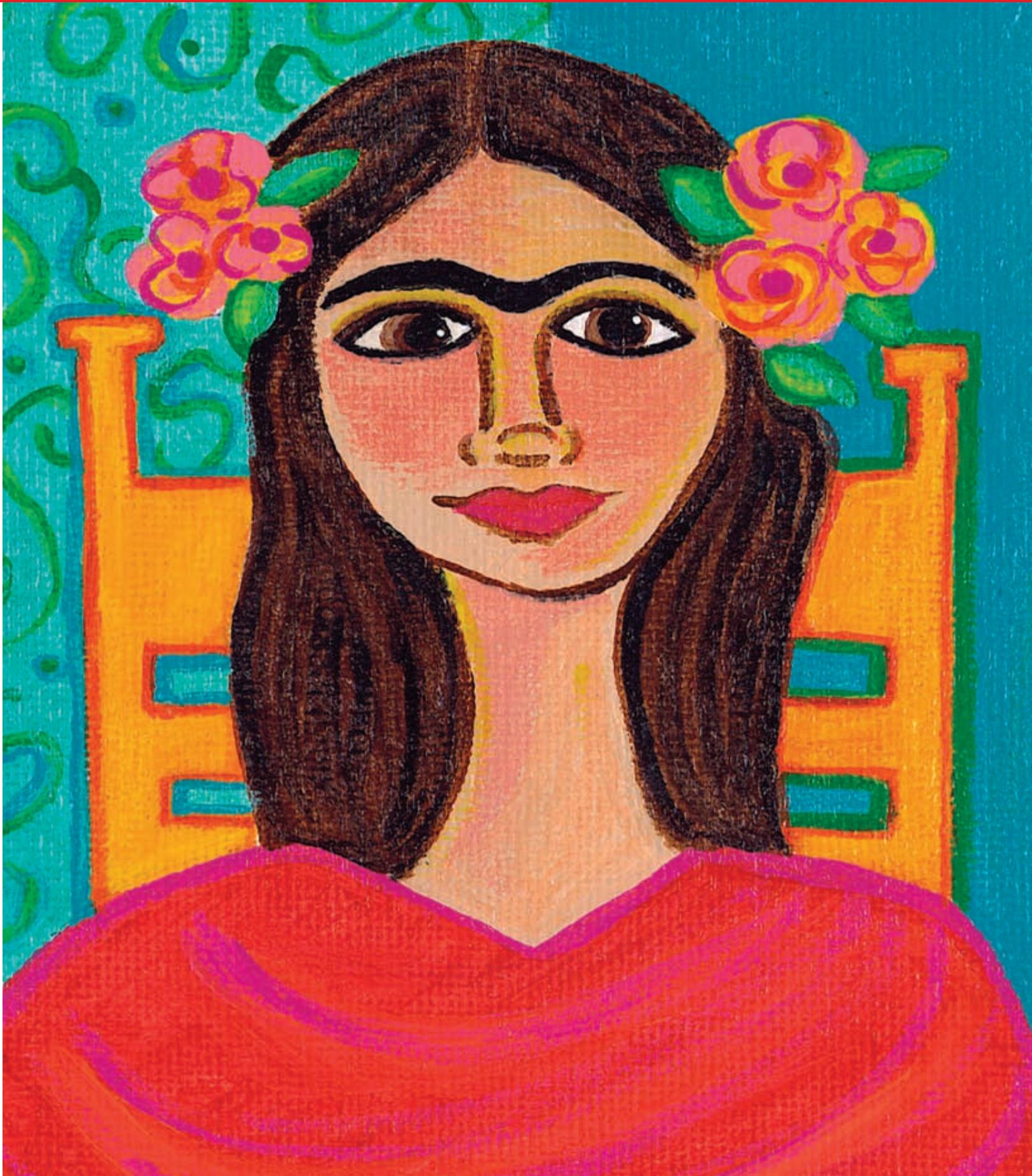
(kən-spīr'ə-sē) *n.* an agreement to perform together an illegal or wrongful act

### **M** CENTRAL CHARACTER

What can you **infer** about the community in which María lives?

1. **Abuela** (ä-bwä'lä) *Spanish:* grandmother.

2. **cueva** (kwä'vä) *Spanish:* cave.



my head because the pattern of sequins made a night sky full of stars and  
30 because it smelled like Abuela. **N**

Abuela sips from her cup of café con leche<sup>3</sup> as she watches me.

I feel a little strange about being in my underwear in front of her and go  
in my closet with my choices, which are:

My mother's red skirt that she wore when she had a part in a musical play  
on the Island. I have played dress-up with it since I was five years old, but it  
finally fits me perfectly. It is the kind of skirt that opens like an umbrella when  
you turn in circles.

A top I sewed together from an old sari<sup>4</sup> Uma's mother was going to throw  
away. It is turquoise blue with silver edges.

40 And finally, over my sari, I will wear my father's sharkskin<sup>5</sup> suit jacket—it's  
big on me but I can roll up the sleeves. It is what he likes to wear when he  
sings at rent parties. Under the light, it changes colors and seems to come alive  
as the design shifts and moves. Papi says it is great for dancing; you don't even  
need a partner.

And finally, tall platform shoes we found buried deep in Whoopee's closet,  
circa 1974, she told me. Whoopee collects antique shoes to go with her science  
fiction outfits. It is a fashion statement; she will tell anyone who asks. No one  
knows what the statement means, and that is just fine with Whoopee.

When I part the clothes in my closet and come out like an actor in a play,  
50 Abuela's eyes open wide. Before she can say anything, I point to each piece of  
my outfit and say a name: Mami, Papi, Uma, and Whoopee.

Abuela's face changes as she begins to understand the meaning of my  
fashion statement.

*"Ahora sé quién eres, María, y quién puedes ser, si quieres. Ven acá, mi amor."*

Abuela says that she knows who I am and who I may be if I choose.

I have heard those words before but I don't remember when or where. Abuela  
embraces me and kisses my face several times. This is a Puerto Rican thing.  
It goes on for a while. I close my eyes to wait it out and I suddenly inhale a  
familiar scent. When I open my eyes, I see a starry sky. Abuela has put her

60 shawl over my head.

*"Algo mío para tu día de ser quien eres, mi hija,"* she tells me. *Something of  
mine for your day of being who you are.* She is letting me borrow her mother's  
beautiful shawl! **O**

All day at school, I feel elegant. Whenever anyone tries to make fun of my  
costume, I think of the words my grandmother quoted to me: *I know who you  
are and who you may be if you choose.* And when I go into Mr. Golden's class  
and his eyes ask me, *Who are you today, María?* I will say by the way I walk in,  
head held high, that today I am a poem. **W**

### **N** CENTRAL CHARACTER

What can you infer about María's relationship with her grandmother?

### **O** CENTRAL CHARACTER

Reread lines 55–63. What is María's attitude toward her grandmother's Puerto Rican customs and clothing?

3. **café con leche** (kă-fă kŏn lĕch'ă) *Spanish*: coffee with milk.

4. **sari** (să'rĕ): a traditional Indian women's garment.

5. **sharkskin**: a synthetic fabric with a smooth, shiny surface.

## Comprehension

- Recall** In “The Medicine Bag,” why does Martin’s grandfather come to visit?
- Recall** What does the medicine bag contain?
- Represent** Create a sketch of María in her Who You Are Day outfit. Make sure your sketch reflects the details in the selection.

### COMMON CORE

**RL 1** Cite textual evidence to support inferences drawn from the text. **RL 3** Analyze how dialogue or incidents in a story reveal aspects of character.

## Text Analysis

- Make Inferences** In “The Medicine Bag,” how do Martin’s mother, father, and sister each feel about Grandpa? Cite details from the story to support your answer.
- Draw Conclusions About a Central Character** How are Martin’s feelings about his grandfather and his Sioux heritage affected by the kind of neighborhood he lives in?
- Interpret Ideas** In “Who Are You Today, María?” what do you think María’s English teacher means in line 11 when he asks, “are you going to walk around as a joke or as a poem”?
- Compare and Contrast Characters** Compare Martin’s relationship with Grandpa to María’s relationship with Abuela. Which relationship creates more conflict within the central character? Explain.
- Analyze Theme** What message about identity does each story contain?

## Comparing Characters

- Set a Purpose for Reading** Now that you’ve read both stories, finish filling in your chart. Then add the final question and answer it, too.

	<i>Martin</i>	<i>María</i>
<i>How does his or her environment affect him or her?</i>		
<i>What is his or her relationship with grandparent like?</i>		
<i>What is his or her attitude toward cultural heritage?</i>		
<i>Does the character change in any way? Explain.</i>		

### What shows others **WHO** we are?

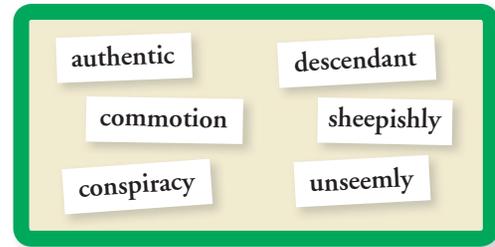
How has reading these two selections influenced your ideas about your own identity?

# Vocabulary in Context

## ▲ VOCABULARY PRACTICE

For each item, choose the word that differs most in meaning from the other words. Refer to a dictionary if you need help.

1. (a) uprising, (b) commotion, (c) calmness, (d) racket
2. (a) unseemly, (b) crude, (c) rude, (d) proper
3. (a) phony, (b) factual, (c) real, (d) authentic
4. (a) heir, (b) descendant, (c) parent, (d) child
5. (a) shyly, (b) self-consciously, (c) sheepishly, (d) boldly
6. (a) conspiracy, (b) loyalty, (c) plot, (d) trickery



## ACADEMIC VOCABULARY IN WRITING

- appropriate
- assess
- intelligence
- motive
- role

What is Joe Iron Shell's **motive** for coming to visit Martin's family in Iowa? Write a paragraph in response to this question, using at least one of the Academic Vocabulary words.

## VOCABULARY STRATEGY: ANALOGIES

An **analogy** is a relationship between pairs of words. To complete an analogy, identify the relationship between the words in the first pair. The second pair of words must relate to each other in the same way. For example, if the first pair describes a function, the second pair should also describe a function. If the first pair of words describes an object, the second pair should describe an object, too.

Analogies are often written as follows—pen : paper :: chalk : blackboard. If the analogy is read aloud, you would say, “pen **is to** paper as chalk **is to** blackboard.”

**PRACTICE** Choose a word from the box to complete each analogy.

hard      slice      slippery      fasten

1. pebble : smooth :: oil : \_\_\_\_\_
2. scissors : cut :: stapler : \_\_\_\_\_
3. kitten : soft :: baseball : \_\_\_\_\_
4. wrench : tighten :: knife : \_\_\_\_\_

## COMMON CORE

**L 5b** Use the relationship between particular words to better understand each of the words.

**L 6** Acquire and use accurately academic words; gather vocabulary knowledge when considering a word important to comprehension and expression.

Interactive Vocabulary **THINK** central

Go to [thinkcentral.com](http://thinkcentral.com).

KEYWORD: HML8-260

## Writing for Assessment

### 1. READ THE PROMPT

In writing assessments, you will often be asked to compare and contrast main characters from different selections.

In four or five paragraphs, compare and contrast the main characters in “The Medicine Bag” and “Who Are You Today, María?” Consider the environments they came from, their relationships with their grandparents, and their attitudes toward their cultural heritage. In your conclusion, explain whether the characters change in any important ways. Support your response with details from the two stories.

#### ◀ STRATEGIES IN ACTION

1. I need to discuss the *similarities and differences* between the two characters.
2. I need to *give examples* to show how the characters' environments, relationships, and heritage are *alike or different*.
3. In the conclusion, I need to *describe* whether the characters change, and if so, how.

### 2. PLAN YOUR WRITING

Review the chart you filled out on page 259. Use the chart to help you identify the characters' similarities and differences. Then think about how you will set up the body of your essay.

- Do you want to compare the characters' environments in one paragraph, relationships with their grandparents in the next paragraph, and attitudes toward their cultural heritage in a third paragraph?
- Do you want to describe the characters in separate paragraphs and then discuss their similarities and differences in a third paragraph?

Once you have decided on an organization, create an outline.

Then write a thesis statement that describes the main idea or purpose of your essay.



### 3. DRAFT YOUR RESPONSE

**Introduction** Provide the titles and authors of both selections as well as a sentence telling what each is about. Include your thesis statement.

**Body** Discuss characters' similarities and differences, using your outline as a guide. Support your ideas with evidence from the text.

**Conclusion** Remind readers of your thesis statement. End by noting whether either character changed in any important way.

**Revision** Make sure your essay answers the question in the writing prompt.