Reading Model

Objectives

Students will analyze details and understand literary devices that affect an author's style.

Preteach

Read with a Purpose Ask students to use their prior knowledge to predict what kinds of advice a mother might give to her child. Have students record their ideas in their **Reader/Writer Notebooks**. As students read, they can compare the advice that appears in the story to their predictions.

Direct Teach

Guided Practice

? Reading Focus

What does this detail reveal about the narrator's mother? ***Possible response:*** *Her mother regrets the way her life turned out.*

? Literary Focus

What could the wooden spoon symbolize in this paragraph? ***Possible response:*** *It could symbolize motherhood or nurturing.*

SKILLS FOCUS pp. 372–375

Literary Skills
- Analyze tone.

Reading Skills
- Analyze story details.

Vocabulary Skills
- Use academic vocabulary appropriately.

SKILLS IN ACTION

Reading Model

SHORT STORY

Build Background

The mother in the following story refers to the tragic opera *Madama Butterfly* by Giacomo Puccini. In the opera, a U.S. naval officer stationed in Japan marries a young Japanese woman, Butterfly, and then returns to the United States. She waits faithfully for him, with their child, for years. After he returns to Japan with an American wife, Butterfly commits suicide.

Read with a Purpose Read to discover a mother's advice.

A SMART COOKIE

from The House on Mango Street

by **Sandra Cisneros**



Reading Focus

Analyzing Details Notice how Cisneros doesn't use quotation marks to set off dialogue. This aspect of Cisneros's style makes the story seem less formal and more intimate.

I could've been somebody, you know? my mother says and sighs. She has lived in this city her whole life. She can speak two languages. She can sing an opera. She knows how to fix a TV. But she doesn't know which subway train to take to get downtown. I hold her hand very tight while we wait for the right train to arrive.

She used to draw when she had time. Now she draws with a needle and thread, little knotted rosebuds, tulips made of silk thread. Someday she would like to go to the ballet. Someday she would like to see a play. She borrows opera records from the public library and sings with velvety lungs powerful as morning glories.

Literary Focus

Symbol Madame Butterfly can be seen as a symbol for women who are overly dependent on men and cannot take care of themselves.

Dialect Read this paragraph aloud to hear the mother's voice and dialect.

Today while cooking oatmeal she is Madame Butterfly until she sighs and points the wooden spoon at me. I could've been somebody, you know? Esperanza, you go to school. Study hard. That Madame Butterfly was a fool. She stirs the oatmeal. Look

Selection Readability	
Easily Accessible Accessible Challenging	familiar context, accessible vocabulary, common theme
Lexile	**480**

Selection Summary

Esperanza's mother has many abilities—and many limitations. She encourages Esperanza to take care of herself and finish school. Esperanza's mother regrets quitting school because she was ashamed of her clothing.



Analyzing Visuals **Viewing and Interpreting** What quote from the story would you choose to go with this photo? Why?

at my comadres.[1] She means Izaura whose husband left and Yolanda whose husband is dead. Got to take care all your own, she says shaking her head.

Then out of nowhere:

Shame is a bad thing, you know. It keeps you down. You want to know why I quit school? Because I didn't have nice clothes. No clothes, but I had brains.

Yup, she says disgusted, stirring again. I was a smart cookie then.

1. **comadres** (koh MAH drays): Spanish for "close female friends" (literally, a child's mother and godmother).

Literary Focus

Irony The last sentence of the story is an example of verbal irony: The mother says the opposite of what she means.

Read with a Purpose What advice does Esperanza's mother give her? Why does she give her this advice?

Guided Practice

? Literary Focus

This sentence repeats the story's title. Do you think that Cisneros intends for the title to be taken ironically or literally? Why? ***Possible responses:*** *Cisneros probably intends for the title to be taken literally. Throughout the story, the mother seems to be a "smart cookie," despite her limited education. The mother recognizes her own mistakes and sees similarities between her life and the opera* Madame Butterfly. *On the other hand, it may be ironic since the mother quit school.*

Read with a Purpose Ask students what Esperanza's mother has learned about life that she passes on to her daughter. ***Possible responses:*** *Her mother recognizes that she should have stayed in school. An education means that a woman can take care of herself and her children.*

Analyzing Visuals

Viewing and Interpreting: *"I could've been somebody, you know?" The woman's expression seems to indicate that she is giving advice to the girl in the picture.*

Differentiating Instruction

English-Language Learners/ Readers Gaining Proficiency

To help students understand the selection, introduce them to the following examples of figurative language. Then, paraphrase the sentences in the story in which each appears.

- **a smart cookie**—(idiom) an intelligent person. "I was an intelligent person then."
- **to be somebody**—(idiom) to become a successful person. "I could have been a successful person, you know? my mother says and sighs."
- **velvety lungs**—(metaphor) a pleasant singing voice.

Give students this statement that explains how the phrases relate to the meaning of the selection: *Esperanza's mother believes that she could have been somebody if she had been a smart cookie when she was younger. On the other hand, Esperanza admires her mother's talents, such as her singing. Esperanza enjoys the sound of her mother's velvety lungs, as powerful as morning glories.*

You may wish to play the **Holt Audio Library** of this selection before the activity.

Review

Guided Practice

More About the Writer

During her childhood, **Sandra Cisneros's** family moved often. This unsettled time may have led Cisneros to turn to writing. She has said, "Because we moved so much, and always in neighborhoods that appeared like France after World War II—empty lots and burned out buildings—I retreated inside myself."

Think About the Writer

Have students discuss how Cisneros's childhood may have influenced "Smart Cookie."

For Independent Reading

- Students who enjoyed Cisneros's portrayal of family relationships may also enjoy Lensey Namioka's *April and the Dragon Lady,* a story about a young girl and her strong-willed grandmother.
- Students may enjoy reading more short sketches narrated by Esperanza from *The House on Mango Street*.

MEET THE WRITER

Sandra Cisneros

(1954–)

A Daughter's Independence

Like Esperanza, Sandra Cisneros grew up in a Mexican American family in Chicago. The only daughter in a family of seven children, she often felt as if she had "seven fathers." Her father expected her to take on a traditional female role in adult life. Instead, she chose an artist's path, developing a voice that speaks for generations of Mexican American women.

Her Own Style

Cisneros is known for her strong, precise, and colorful style. She often bases her stories on her own experiences and family history. Her bicultural upbringing also heavily influences her style. Cisneros often includes Spanish with her English prose. She writes:

> "I know how much of a role Spanish plays, even when I write in English. If you take [*The House on*] *Mango Street* and translate it, it's Spanish. The syntax, the sensibility, the diminutives, the way of looking at inanimate objects. . . . Incorporating the Spanish, for me, allows me to create new expressions in English. . . ."

Think About the Writer What qualities do you think enabled Cisneros to follow her own path?



Resources

Collection 4 Resources, Literary and Academic Vocabulary Skill Builder, p. 5

PowerNotes, interactive lesson presentations with activities

Teacher One Stop™, on-level lesson plans and all print resources

WordSharp: An Interactive Vocabulary Tutor, more practice with Academic Language

Academic Vocabulary

Writing About Style

Tell students they will encounter Academic Vocabulary words in standardized test questions and writing prompts. Have students use "Smart Cookie" to answer the following questions.

- How did the loss of their husbands **impact** the women in the story? ***Possible response:*** *Losing their husbands forced the women to learn to take care of themselves.*

Learn It Online

Writers' Lives offers more information on the life of the author as well as Holt's interactive resources pertaining to the author. Preview at **go.hrw.com.**

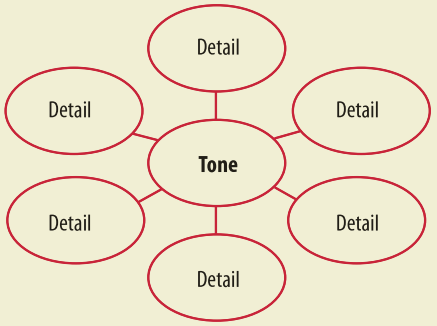
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SKILLS IN ACTION

Wrap Up

Into Action: Analyzing Details to Determine Tone

Review "A Smart Cookie," and look for details that set the story's tone. Write the details in the outer circles of a detail map like the one below. In the inner circle, write the word or words that describe the tone.



Talk About . . .

1. With a partner, discuss how Cisneros's word choice, figures of speech, and use of irony form her style. Try to use each Academic Vocabulary word listed at the right at least once in your discussion.

Write About . . .

Use the underlined Academic Vocabulary words in your answers to the following questions about "A Smart Cookie."

2. What impact does the idiom *smart cookie* have on the story's message? Who is a smart cookie?
3. Which details from the text give you the impression that Cisneros values education?
4. What is distinctive about the experiences of Esperanza's mother?
5. How does Cisneros establish tone?

Writing Focus

Think as a Reader/Writer

In Collection 4, the Writing Focus activities on the Preparing to Read pages will guide you in observing each writer's unique style. On the Applying Your Skills pages, you will have opportunities to develop similar characteristics in your own writing.

Academic Vocabulary for Collection 4

Talking and Writing About Style

Academic Vocabulary is the language you use to write and talk about literature. Use these words to discuss the short stories you read in this collection. The words are underlined throughout the collection.

distinctive (dihs TIHNGK tihv) *adj.*: special; different from others. *A distinctive style, not one that is bland or clichéd, is an indication of a fine writer.*

establish (ehs TAB lihsh) *v.*: bring about; set up. *Writers establish their own styles by using language in a way that is unique to their own work.*

impact (IHM pakt) *n.*: strong or forceful effect. *A writer's word choice has a critical impact on the story's tone and mood.*

impression (ihm PREHSH uhn) *n.*: idea or notion. *I got the impression the story was serious because of the author's tone.*

Your Turn

Copy these Academic Vocabulary words into your *Reader/Writer Notebook,* and circle any terms you use rarely. Challenge yourself to use those words as you respond to the stories in this collection.

Independent Practice

Into Action: Analyzing Details to Determine Tone

Tell students that they can recognize details because they are very specific descriptions.

Talk About . . .

Possible responses:

1. *Model for students how to use Academic Vocabulary. For example, say, "In the story, I get the impression that Esperanza's mother is very talented. Cisneros uses the distinctive metaphor of velvety lungs, establishing the impact of the mother's singing voice."*

Write About . . .

Possible responses:

2. *The impact is ironic. Esperanza's mother is a smart cookie, although she does not think so.*
3. *The impression comes from the fact that the mother regrets quitting school; she does not want Esperanza to do the same thing.*
4. *It is distinctive that she can speak two languages, sing an opera, fix a TV, and draw, but she can't figure out the subway system.*
5. *She establishes tone through the informal, conversational style.*

Writing Focus

The Think as a Reader/Writer activities in the collection focus on the reading-writing relationship. Use the activities to help students explore the writer's craft in their own writing.

- How does Cisneros's **distinctive** use of dialogue make an **impression** on the reader? ***Possible response:*** *The dialogue in the story gives the reader a strong sense of the mother's voice and personality.*
- How does Cisneros **establish** the setting in "Smart Cookie"? ***Possible response:*** *She tells the reader that the mother is "cooking oatmeal" and using a "wooden spoon," which establishes the setting as a kitchen.*

SKILLS FOCUS p. 375

Literary Skills
- Analyze tone.

Reading Skills
- Analyze story details.

Vocabulary Skills
- Use academic vocabulary appropriately.