

from *My Friend's Got This Problem, Mr. Candler*  
Mel Glenn

*Mr. Candler—or “Mr. C.,” as students prefer to call him—is a special type of listener, even for a high school guidance counselor. His door is always open, and so are his mind and his ears.*

**Anthony Ricci**

My father dreamed of football  
While he worked on the boats in the bay.  
My mother said when I was born  
He put a football in my crib instead of a teddy bear.  
And when he wasn't workin'  
He was tossin' me a football,  
    over and over again.  
His love was measured in yards thrown and catches received.  
All his life on the boats,  
And what's he got to show for it?  
A bad back and scarred hands  
And a son who plays football for the varsity.  
Well, last week I got hurt in a game.  
It was a cheap shot.  
The ref had blown the play dead  
And then this Huge Number 58 piled on me.  
I heard something in my knee snap.  
The linebacker ended my pro dreams, Mr. Candler.  
He also broke my father's heart.  
I'd like to go out on the boat with my old man, soon,  
Put my arm around him and tell him  
The years we spent together were not in vain.

*Mr. Candler is walking into the library when he spots a new student, Ramona, sitting alone.*

*He asks her to come to his office so they can talk during period 4...*

**Ramona Castillo**

When the soldiers came in the middle of the night  
There was no moon watching over  
Our little house in Central America.  
My parents hid me under the bed  
And gave me a towel to chew on  
So that I would not cry out.

It was the last time I saw them.  
The next morning relatives found me  
Still under the bed, still clutching the towel.  
We waited for days, but there was no word.  
Finally my relatives sent me to an uncle here,  
To start a new life, to outrun the tragedy.  
I did not like my new land or language.  
I felt embarrassed by my own accent.  
Then, about a year ago, a nice teacher,  
Mr. Loomis,  
Showed me how to take photographs,  
Showed me how to speak with film and f-stops.  
I try to shoot many pictures of children smiling,  
To capture in their bright, glowing faces  
A childhood stolen from me  
In the middle of a moonless night,  
Five years ago in time, but  
Yesterday in my heart and in my memory.

*Just after the period 5 bell rings, Mr. Candler bumps into Gloria in a stairwell. She's  
breathless and looks anxious...*

### **Gloria Simonetti**

Mr. Candler, where are you going?  
You can't go to lunch now.  
You gotta help me find it.  
I've looked everywhere,  
My last period class, my locker, the stairs,  
Even the sink in the bathroom.  
I can't calm down  
Until I find my "number one" charm.  
It was just on my neck,  
On a gold chain.  
Yes, I've checked the lost and found.  
They never find anything.  
My grandfather gave me that charm  
When I was six years old.  
I've always worn it.  
I never take it off.  
It was the last present I got from my grandfather  
Before he died.  
Please, Mr. Candler, you just gotta help me  
find that charm.