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Study Guide

for

Winter Thunder
and
The Christmas
of the
Phonograph
Records

by Mari Sandoz



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New York, New York Columbus, Ohio Woodland Hills, California Peoria, Illinois

Meet Mari Sandoz



People without a history are like the wind on the buffalo grass.

—from *Mari Sandoz Looks at the Old West*, a 1959 television series

Prairie girl Mari Sandoz was a true child of the plains. Born in 1896 into a family of Swiss homesteaders, she grew up in northwest Nebraska. Her father, Jules Ami Sandoz, was a tyrant with a violent temper. Although educated himself, he would not send Sandoz to school until forced to by the local authorities.

At first, school was difficult for Sandoz. She spoke English poorly and with a thick accent, having grown up in a German-speaking household. Her cheap clothing also set her apart from other students. After she learned to read, however, school became a pleasure. Sandoz devoured the works of Joseph Conrad, Thomas Hardy, and William Shakespeare.

When she was eleven, she entered a short story contest run by a local newspaper. To her surprise, she won. When she shared the news with her family, she probably expected happy congratulations. Instead, her father disapproved, since he considered fiction “a pack of lies.” He was so angry that he locked Sandoz in the cellar as punishment.

Trouble and Change The author’s life was difficult in other ways. Farming and ranching on the prairie required hard work by everyone, even the

children. Furthermore, it could be dangerous, as Sandoz knew firsthand:

By the time I was ten I could bake up a 49-pound sack of flour, but would let the bread sour and the baby cry if there was anything to read. When I was nearly fourteen my brother and I had to dig our cattle out of the snowdrift of a May blizzard, and by night I was snowblind, totally blind for around six weeks. Then I discovered I had only one eye left.

Sandoz left school after the eighth grade. A neighbor told her that she could become a teacher just by passing an exam. Despite her nervousness, she took the test and passed it. She taught in rural schools for several years and then moved to Lincoln, the state capital, to attend college.

Writing Career While attending the University of Nebraska, Mari Sandoz held several jobs. More importantly, she began to write, receiving favorable notices for her first articles. In 1928 she visited her father, who was dying. He asked her to write his life story, and she agreed. She spent years researching, writing, and revising the biography, which she called *Old Jules*. After the book was rejected fourteen times, Sandoz became so discouraged that she burned all of her manuscripts and announced the end of her writing career.

Sandoz returned to the Sand Hills region, where her family lived, to rest and start a new life. Soon afterwards, however, she received an offer to return to Lincoln and become a researcher. The visit to the Sand Hills and the new job restored her spirits. She decided to submit *Old Jules* to a writing contest sponsored by the Atlantic Press. Since the book had been rejected so often, Sandoz was surprised as well as delighted to learn that she had won. In addition to the \$5,000 prize, she received publicity and encouragement. This changed her life and allowed her to continue writing, teaching, and lecturing.

Mari Sandoz’s work was sometimes criticized for its plain style and harsh realism, but these qualities were intended to reflect the subjects with which she was familiar. Sandoz died in 1966, honored for her writing and for her preservation of regional history.

Introducing the Works

Winter Thunder

Written with biting realism and deep human insight, it is a record of courage well worth preserving.

—from a review in the *New York Herald Tribune*, 1954

BACKGROUND

Although much of Mari Sandoz's work is called fiction, her fiction is based heavily on fact. Often, she used real locations and characters in her stories. In *Winter Thunder*, she dramatized an experience of her niece, Celia Sandoz. The author had thought about Celia's ordeal for so long that she was able to write the story in two months.

In 1949 a terrible blizzard hit the Midwest. Celia, a rural teacher in the Sand Hills, was riding a school bus with her students when the storm struck. In the howling wind, the bus overturned. Fortunately, Celia and her charges managed to find a nearby shack. They were stranded there for more than three weeks.

Mari Sandoz knew how dangerous blizzards could be. After all, she had been frequently outside in them as a child and consequently lost her vision in one eye. She had seen animals freeze to death and probably heard stories of people who perished. She was also familiar with the area where the bus accident occurred. Her imagi-

nation led her to wonder what might have happened if the bus had overturned and no shack had stood nearby.

Sandoz is known for her long works, but she also took a great interest in the novella form. She admired classic novellas such as *Ethan Frome*, *The Heart of Darkness*, and *The Old Man and the Sea*. According to a biographer, Sandoz believed that a "good, true, artistic novelette . . . dealt with a kind of isolation." "The Lost School Bus," as *Winter Thunder* was first called, focuses on the experience of isolation.

THE TIME AND PLACE

The story takes place on the Great Plains of Nebraska in the middle of the twentieth century. Few people outside of the state realize how unusual the region is. First of all, it contains the largest sand dune area in the United States—twenty thousand square miles of sand hills. Despite all the sand, this area is no desert; water lies beneath the soil and in low-lying lakes and streams.

The climate is severe. In summertime, the heat may rise to over 115° F. In winter, the temperature has been known to fall as low -47° F. Furthermore, the weather often changes suddenly. As the saying goes, "If you don't like it now, wait five minutes and it will change."

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Did You Know?

In January 1949 a particularly memorable storm struck Nebraska. Despite precautions, large numbers of livestock died, and many people were isolated for days. Heavy drifting snow not only blocked the roads but also

downed telephone lines. That was the storm in which Sandoz's niece was stranded. Some residents were old enough to remember the blizzard of 1888, which had killed many people.

CRITICS CORNER

She knows the Great Plains country and loves it—not as a tourist but as a native, well aware of its drawbacks and dangers.

—from a review of a Sandoz book in the *New York Times*, 1954

The Christmas of the Phonograph Records

With few exceptions, Sandoz wrote to please herself and considered the market later.

—Scott L. Greenwell in *Western American Literature*

BACKGROUND

Some of the details in this brief recollection originally appeared in Mari Sandoz's first published

book, *Old Jules*, a biography of her father. Toward the end of her life, she reworked the recollection, adding details to the original form. The book was published in 1966 after the author's death.

THE TIME AND PLACE

The story takes place in 1910, before Sandoz's family moved to the Sand Hills. At the time, the family was in debt, so Jules's decision to buy a phonograph seemed particularly extravagant.

Did You Know?

The inspiration for the phonograph came to its inventor, Thomas Edison, by accident. He had been working on a telephone transmitter, which used a vibrating needle to transmit sound, when the needle stuck him in the finger. Edison got the idea of recording the action of the needle. In less than a month, he had created the phonograph, or sound writer. His first recording was "Mary Had a Little Lamb."

To make the recording, Edison recited into a mouthpiece, setting in motion a thin iron diaphragm. The motion then passed to a sty-

lus, or vibrating needle, which recorded the motion by scratching a groove into tin foil. The foil was wrapped around a cylinder that was started by a hand crank. Later, wax was used instead of tin. To play back a recording, a device called a reproducer replaced the mouth piece. The reproducer converted the motion of the stylus against the groove of the record back in to sound. The sound was then amplified by a horn attached to the reproducer. It was this type of phonograph that the Sandoz family had.

CRITICS CORNER

She wanted to stress without stating too baldly that people rather than events were important, and the solid people, not the violent ones, conquered the wilderness.

—Helen Winter Stauffer in *Mari Sandoz: Story Catcher of the Plains*

Before You Read

Winter Thunder Pages 9–24

FOCUS ACTIVITY

How well do you think you could handle a winter emergency?

List It!

What equipment would you want to have if you were living in a snowy, cold region of the country? Work with a group to brainstorm a list of items you would want.

Setting a Purpose

Read to find out what happens when a teacher and her students are stranded in a blizzard.

BACKGROUND

Did You Know?

The two major risks for people trapped in a snowstorm are frostbite and hypothermia. Frostbite is damage to body tissue caused by the freezing of the fluid between cells, which dries out the cells. If the damage is severe, the tissue dies. Hypothermia is a dangerously low body temperature. If the temperature drops too low, a person can fall into a coma and die. Because children lose body heat faster than adults do, children are more likely to develop hypothermia.

Exposition

The term *exposition* refers to the introduction of a story's characters, setting, and conflict. In longer works of fiction, an author might take several chapters to present such information. Sandoz presents it within the first few pages of her novella.

VOCABULARY PREVIEW

discernible [dɪ sur' nə bəl] *adj.* recognizable (p. 1)

floundering [floun' d(ə) ring] *v.* moving clumsily or with difficulty (p. 4)

obliterated [ə blit' e rā' tid] *v.* removed from existence; wiped out (p. 1)

ominous [ɒm' ə nəs] *adj.* menacing; threatening (p. 4)

precariously [pri kār' ē əs lē] *adv.* with dangerous uncertainty (p. 1)

primly [prim' lē] *adv.* stiffly formal (p. 3)

queue [kū] *n.* a line of people (p. 4)

wallowed [wɒl' ɔd] *v.* rolled awkwardly (p. 7)

Active Reading

Winter Thunder Pages 9–24

The first few pages of this novella introduce the setting, the characters, and the conflict. As you read, jot down details about the setting and the characters. At the end of this section, decide what the main conflict is and describe it in the space below.

SETTING	CHARACTERS	MAIN CONFLICT
Lone Tree district		

Responding

Winter Thunder Pages 9–24

Personal Response

What questions were raised in your mind as you finished reading this section?

Analyzing Literature

Recall and Interpret

1. What happens to the school bus? Which factors may have contributed to this event?

2. What supplies does the group have with it. In your opinion, which of these supplies is most important to its survival? Explain.

3. What landmark does the group see? How does this sighting help the group?

4. What event in the past does Lecia think of as she leads her students? How does this recollection affect her decisions?

5. How do Lecia and Chuck create a shelter? What is their most pressing concern after they create it?

Responding

Winter Thunder Pages 9–24

Analyzing Literature (*continued*)

Evaluate and Connect

6. Do the characters seem realistic to you? Why or why not?

7. What experience in your own life does this opening section of the novella remind you of?

Literature and Writing

Character Analysis

Write a paragraph analyzing one of the characters in the novella. Support your statements with evidence from the text, such as the character's words and actions and the narrator's comments. Predict how this character will behave as the crisis continues.

Extending Your Response

Literature Groups

Do you think that Lecia should allow Chuck to go off on his own to find help? Discuss this question in your group. Consider the needs of the younger children and the likelihood that Chuck will be able to reach an occupied house. When you are finished, compare your conclusion with that of other groups to see how closely you agree.

Learning for Life

Review the list you made for the **Focus Activity** on page 16. Imagine that you are in charge of outfitting school buses with emergency supplies for the winter. Based on your own knowledge and what you have read so far in the novella, which supplies would you place on every bus? Remember that space for supplies is limited. Write a brief proposal, explaining the importance of each item you choose.



Save your work for your portfolio.

Before You Read

Winter Thunder Pages 25–50

FOCUS ACTIVITY

What type of natural disaster do you fear most?

Quickwrite

Explain why you are particularly afraid of this type of disaster. How do you think you would react if you experienced it?

Setting a Purpose

Read to find out how each of the characters reacts to being stranded in the blizzard.

BACKGROUND

Did You Know?

Jules Sandoz, the author's father, was friends with Native Americans who lived near his home. As a child, Mari used to play with Sioux children and listen to stories told by Cheyennes. At a time when many other settlers feared and avoided Native Americans, Mari Sandoz was learning about their culture. As you read this story, look for details about Native American customs and survival techniques.

Description

In literature **description** is writing that creates a clear image of an appearance, a feeling, or an action. Good descriptive writing appeals to the senses through imagery. Sensory details help readers feel as if they are part of the scene and not merely hearing about it. As you read this section of *Winter Thunder*, notice how carefully the author describes the people, setting, and actions.

VOCABULARY PREVIEW

admonitory [ad mon'ə tōr'ē] *adj.* warning (p. 11)

consternation [kon'stər nā'shən] *n.* dismay (p. 13)

discomfiture [dis kum'fi chər] *n.* embarrassment (p. 20)

eventuality [i vən'chōō al'ə tē] *n.* possible outcome (p. 22)

exasperation [ig zas'pə rā'shən] *n.* annoyance; irritation (p. 10)

festering [fes't(ə) ring] *n.* formation of pus (p. 21)

fortitude [fōr'tə tōōd] *n.* strength of mind that allows someone to endure hardships or pain (p. 20)

gangrene [gang'grēn'] *n.* death of soft tissue (p. 16)

incomprehensible [in'kom pri hen'sə bəl] *adj.* impossible to understand (p. 12)

listless [list'lis] *adj.* uninterested; unmoving (p. 24)

Active Reading

Winter Thunder Pages 25–50

The characters in this story face many problems. As you read, use this chart to record the problems. Then note what the characters do in response to each problem.

PROBLEMS	ACTION IN RESPONSE
<p>Food is limited.</p>	<p>Lecia divides and freezes part.</p>

Responding

Winter Thunder Pages 25–50

Personal Response

What images or incidents from this section of the story linger in your mind? Describe them briefly.

Analyzing Literature

Recall and Interpret

1. What decisions does Lecia make regarding food? Why do her decisions cause conflict with some of the children?

2. How does Maggie react to her injury? Why might she have reacted this way?

3. Why didn't Lecia marry Dale and go on her honeymoon instead of continuing to teach at the school? What does this decision suggest about her character?

4. What does Lecia do with the children in the daytime? In your opinion, what is her reason for doing this?

5. What do Chuck and Eddie tell Lecia on the fourth day? How does Lecia react to this news.

Responding

Winter Thunder Pages 25–50

Analyzing Literature (*continued*)

Evaluate and Connect

6. Which character undergoes the most change in this section? Explain.

7. When you begin to lose hope, what can help you regain it?

Literature and Writing

Evaluate Leadership

In your opinion, is Lecia an effective leader? If you think that she is, identify which qualities help her maintain control of the group. If you think that she is ineffective, tell what you would have done differently. Use details from the story to support your opinion.

Extending Your Response

Literature Groups

Which of the characters seems least admirable to you? Discuss this question in your group, using evidence from the story to support your opinion. When you are finished, take a vote. Share the results of your vote with other groups to see if they came to the same conclusion.

Creative Writing

In the **Focus Activity** on page 20, you were asked to discuss the type of disaster you feared most. Write a scene in which you are a character who is trying to survive such a disaster. Use sensory details to create a vivid impression of the setting, the dangers you face, and your feelings.



Save your work for your portfolio.

Before You Read

Winter Thunder Pages 51–60

FOCUS ACTIVITY

What does the word *courage* mean to you?

Web It!

Create a word web with *courage* in the center circle. In the outer circles, list actions and qualities that you associate with courage. You may also include the names of people you consider especially courageous.

BACKGROUND

Did You Know?

When Mari Sandoz was a child, she and her family were trapped indoors during a snowstorm. It was so cold that they had to wear several layers of clothes while in their house. Finally, they tunneled through the snow to a fence and pulled down the fence posts, which they chopped up and used as firewood. To avoid becoming lost in the storm, those who left the house attached themselves to a long rope.

Characterization

There are two basic ways to reveal a character's personality. In **direct characterization**, the author makes a direct statement about the character. For example, the author might describe a character as brave or selfish. In **indirect characterization**, the author suggests traits through a character's words, actions, or appearance, as well as through the reactions of the other characters to the character being portrayed. In *Winter Thunder*, Bill shows selfishness when he eats lunch while others are putting the shelter together, but his later actions reveal that he has learned to be considerate.

VOCABULARY PREVIEW

appalled [ə pōld'] *adj.* horrified; dismayed (p. 25)

bedraggled [bi drag'əld] *adj.* soiled (p. 30)

chilblains [chil'blānz'] *n.* swollen sores caused by cold (p. 27)

condescending [kon'di sen'ding] *adj.* superior in attitude (p. 25)

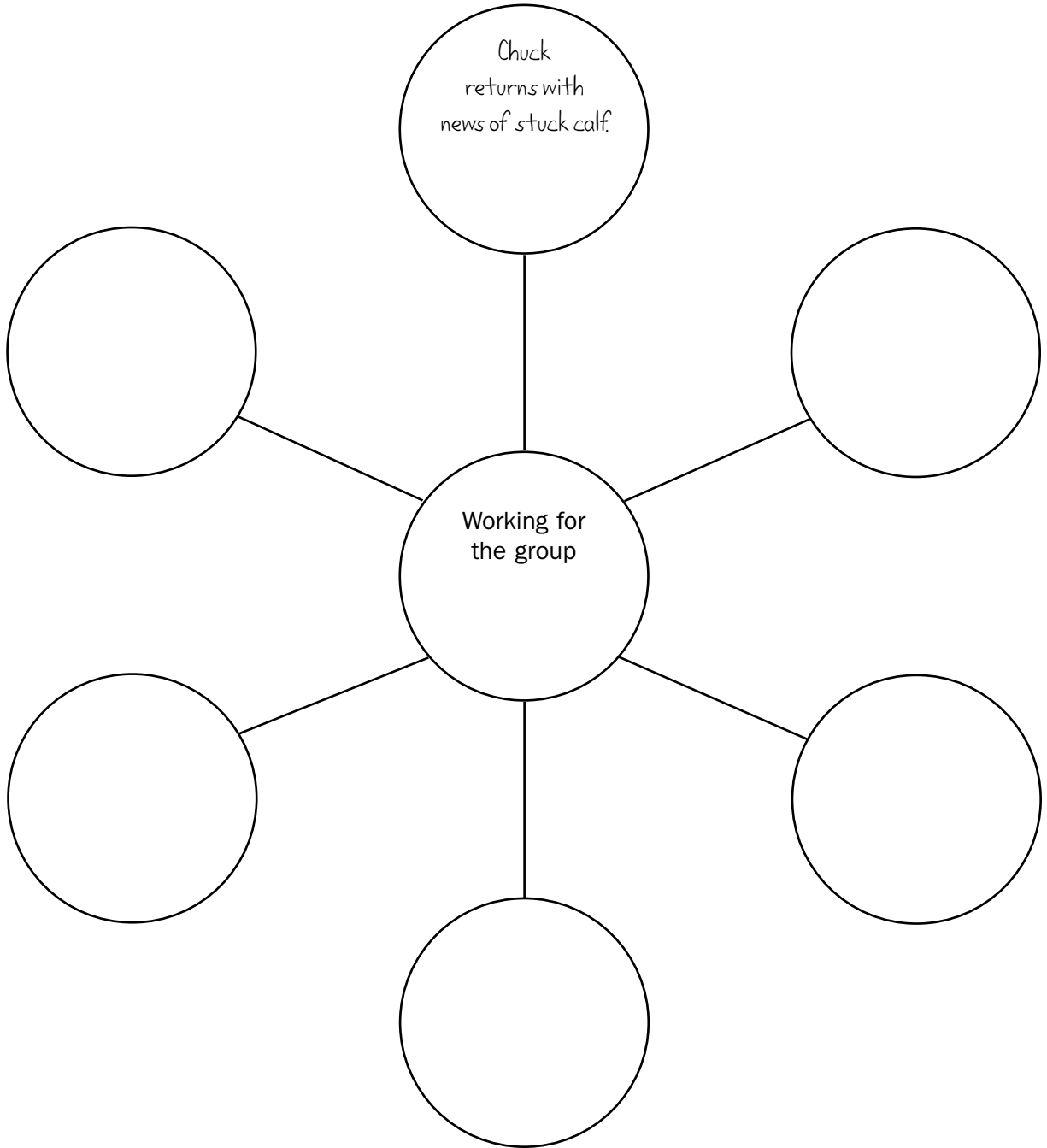
gravity [grav'ə tē] *n.* seriousness (p. 27)

smudge [smuj] *n.* slow-burning, smoky fire (p. 29)

Active Reading

Winter Thunder Pages 51–60

One theme in this novella is the importance of individuals working together for the good of the group. As you read, use this cluster diagram to record details that illustrate the theme.



Responding

Winter Thunder Pages 51–60

Personal Response

What insights did you gain from reading *Winter Thunder*?

Analyzing Literature

Recall and Interpret

1. Why does Chuck return to the group after he leaves to find help? How does his return affect Lecia?

2. What happens when Chuck and Bill leave the shelter together? What factors hamper their efforts?

3. How does Lecia get meat from the calf? Why does she give only small pieces of it to the children?

4. What does Bill fear will happen to Maggie? Why can't he bring himself to ask Lecia about this fear?

5. How is the group finally rescued? What do the doctor's comments suggest about Lecia?

Responding

Winter Thunder Pages 51–60

Analyzing Literature (*continued*)

Evaluate and Connect

6. Do you think that Sandoz ended the novella at a good point, or do you think that she should have provided more information about what happens to the characters? Explain.

7. In the **Focus Activity** on page 24, you were asked to explore your own views about courage. In your opinion, is courage something people are born with, or can it be developed through experience? In your response, refer to examples from the novella.

Literature and Writing

Analyzing Theme

According to Helen Stauffer, Sandoz believed that a child “must learn a sense of responsibility if he is to be a responsible adult.” How is the theme of responsibility developed in the novella? Write one or two paragraphs in response to this question. You may focus on a particular character or discuss the group as a whole.

Extending Your Response

Literature Groups

Do you think that Sandoz’s main purpose in writing this novella was to provide a suspenseful story or to convey important ideas about human nature? Discuss this question in your group. When you are finished, share your conclusions with the class.

Internet Connection

Use the Internet to find out more about search and rescue teams, like the one you read about here. Many Web sites for such teams have information about winter survival as well as safety tips for travelers.



Save your work for your portfolio.

Before You Read

The Christmas of the Phonograph Records

FOCUS ACTIVITY

Think of a particularly memorable day that you spent at home.

Journal

Write a description of the day in your journal. Use sensory details to make your recollection vivid.

BACKGROUND

Did You Know?

In the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, life was generally hard for women on the prairie. Their days and nights were occupied with endless chores. Since firewood was often scarce, women had to collect dried grass or animal droppings to fuel their stoves and fireplaces. Water for cooking and cleaning had to be hauled into the home in buckets. Food preparation involved many difficult tasks, such as grinding corn and plucking chickens. Before cars, radios, and telephones became widely available, women were isolated from each other because their houses stood far apart.

Memoir

A **memoir** is a nonfiction narrative that tells about a particular period in the writer's life. Memoirs, like autobiographies, are usually written from the first-person point of view. A memoir often emphasizes the writer's thoughts and feelings, relationships with other people, or the impact of significant historical events on his or her life.

VOCABULARY PREVIEW

addled [ad'əld] *adj.* confused (p. 40)

compounded [kom poun'dəd] *v.* added to (p. 36)

excelsior [ik sel'sē ə] *n.* curled wood shavings used for packing fragile things (p. 34)

extravagance [iks trav'ə gəns] *n.* unreasonably high expense (p. 33)

inheritance [in her'ət əns] *n.* money or possessions given from one generation to the next (p. 35)

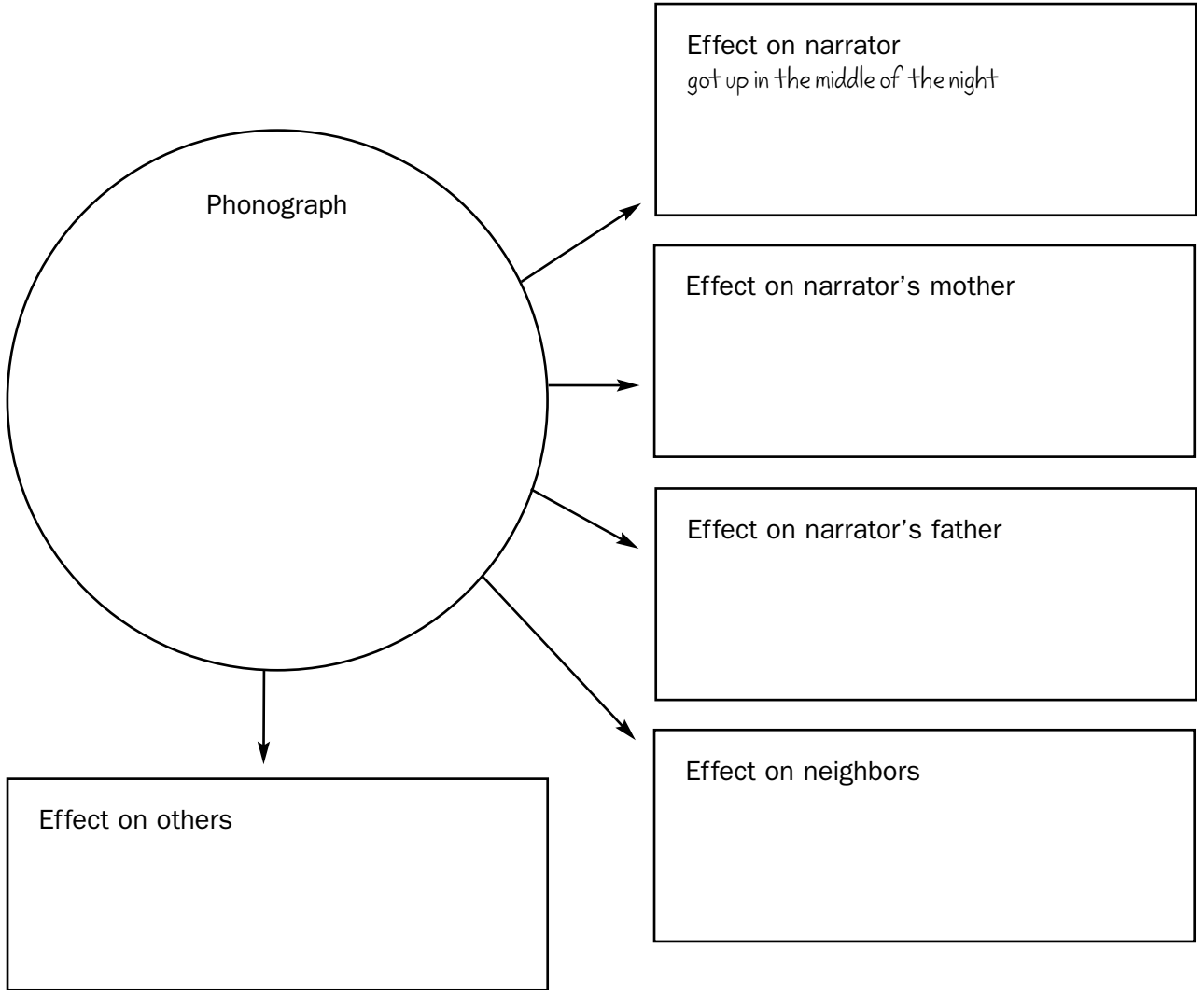
kalsomined [kal'sə mīnd] *adj.* (also spelled calcimined) whitewashed; painted with a white mixture (p. 35)

nostalgic [nos tal'jɪk] *adj.* suggestive of places or people in one's past (p. 41)

Active Reading

The Christmas of the Phonograph Records

The phonograph and records have an effect on everyone in this recollection. As you read, jot down details that show these effects.



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Responding

The Christmas of the Phonograph Records

Personal Response

What scene or details in this memoir made the strongest impression on you? Why?

Analyzing Literature

Recall and Interpret

1. Who comes to visit the Sandoz household after the phonograph arrives? What do the visits suggest about the area in which the Sandozes live?

2. Why does Mother become angry with Old Jules? What does this encounter suggest about their relationship?

3. How does Mother's attitude toward the phonograph change during the first evening? What does the narrator come to realize as she observes Mother?

4. What does Old Jules do when his worst enemy shows up at the house? What might have influenced his decision?

5. What incident does the narrator describe at the end of the selection? Why might Sandoz have decided to include this incident?

Responding

The Christmas of the Phonograph Records

Analyzing Literature (continued)

Evaluate and Connect

6. Why might the author have chosen to include so many details about food and chores in her memoir?

7. Which technological innovation has had the strongest effect on your own life? Explain.

Literature and Writing

Drawing Conclusions

Compare Sandoz's memoir with the description you wrote for the **Focus Activity** on page 28. What does this comparison suggest about the ways in which American families have changed during the past century? Which details in Sandoz's account did you find most surprising? Write one or two paragraphs in response to these questions.

Extending Your Response

Literature Groups

When Solomon criticizes Jules for buying a phonograph instead of shoes, Jules shouts, "Frozen feet heal! What you put in the mind lasts!" Do you agree with his decision? Discuss this question in your group. When you are finished, share the group's conclusions with the class.

Music Connection

Old Jules orders records that appeal to a wide variety of tastes. Go to a library and find a recording of one musical selection mentioned in the memoir. In your opinion, is the piece dated or would many of today's listeners consider it interesting? Describe the piece to the class.



Save your work for your portfolio.

Robert Frost
Langston Hughes

Dust of Snow *and* April Rain Song

Before You Read

Focus Question

What kind of weather most strongly affects your mood? Explain.

Background

Robert Frost and Langston Hughes are two of the most beloved American poets of the twentieth century. Many of Frost's poems are set in the landscape of rural New England. Hughes's poems often have urban settings.

Responding to the Reading

1. What changes the mood of the speaker in "Dust of Snow"? Why might this incident have such an effect on the speaker?

2. What words and phrases are repeated in "April Rain Song"? What is the effect of the repetition?

3. In what ways are these two poems similar? What important differences do you see between them?

4. How would you describe the tone of each poem?

5. **Making Connections** In *Winter Thunder*, Lecia has unexpected encounters with animals. Compare her reactions to the animals with the reaction of the speaker to the crow in "Dust of Snow."

Art Connection

Illustrate one or both of these poems with a drawing or collage. Select one or more images from the text and decide how best to capture them on paper. Before you begin, consider the colors you will use.

**Ruth Wallace-
Brodeur**

Snowflake Bentley

Before You Read

Focus Question

Would you want to spend your whole life perfecting one skill, or would you rather practice many skills? Give your reasons.

Background

For much of his life, Wilson Alwyn Bentley was not appreciated by family members, neighbors, or the scientific community. His father believed that he should stick to farming; few neighbors attended his free lectures; and only toward the end of his life did he receive any recognition from the American Meteorological Society.

Responding to the Reading

1. How did Bentley feel about snow? What contributed to these feelings, do you think?

2. What technique did Bentley develop to capture the design of snowflakes? Why was it difficult to achieve?

3. In your opinion, was Snowflake Bentley more of an artist or more of a scientist? Give reasons for your answer.

4. After Bentley's death, the following statement appeared in his hometown newspaper: "He saw something in the snowflakes which other men failed to see, not because they could not see, but because they had not the patience and the understanding to look." Give details from the selection to support or disprove this statement.

5. **Making Connections** From what you know about the storm in *Winter Thunder*, would Bentley have considered it a "good" storm or not? Give your reasons.

Internet Connection

Use the Internet to find out more about Wilson Alwyn Bentley and to see more samples of his work.

**Toni Kim
French**

They Still Make Country Schoolteachers

Before You Read

Focus Question

What makes people love or hate their job?

Background

In one-room schoolhouses, a teacher might have students who range in age from five to fifteen. Such schools used to be common in small towns and rural areas. Most have been replaced by consolidated schools.

Responding to the Reading

1. What is the weather like on the day chronicled in this selection? How does the teacher react to this weather?

2. What are some of the ways that the teacher manages to teach children of different ages and grade levels?

3. How does Alex get extra attention from the teacher? What conclusions can you draw about this student?

4. What might have been the author's purpose in writing this selection?

5. **Making Connections** Compare and contrast the teacher in this selection with Lecia in *Winter Thunder*.

Listening and Speaking

Interview someone much older than you about his or her experiences in school. Find out how those experiences resemble and differ from your own.

**Nicholasa
Mohr**

A New Window Display

Before You Read

Focus Question

What activities do you enjoy sharing with your friends?

Background

Funeral and mourning customs vary greatly. Some families play soft music, while others have loud, joyful celebrations honoring the person who died. In some cultures, the body is buried quickly in a closed coffin. In others, the body is preserved and placed where friends and family can view it.

Responding to the Reading

1. What do the children do when they see a new window display at the funeral home? What attitude do they seem to have toward such displays?

2. How do the children feel about Little Ray? Which of his qualities have inspired this feeling?

3. What forces Little Ray to stay home from school? Why do his parents want to send him back to Puerto Rico?

4. How do the children react to Little Ray's display at the funeral home? Are they **static characters**, or have they changed over the course of the story?

5. **Making Connections** How does the situation of the children in this selection compare with that of the children portrayed in *Winter Thunder*?

Creative Writing

Imagine that you are one of the children in the group. Write a journal entry about an episode in the selection, such as the morning you and your friends first saw Little Ray's display at the funeral home.

**Isaac Bashevis
Singer**

A Hanukkah Eve in Warsaw

Before You Read

Focus Question

Think of a time when you got lost as a child. How did your parents or guardians react when they found you?

Background

Hanukkah is an eight-day Jewish holiday that takes place in midwinter. It is also called the Festival of Lights, because candles are lit each night of the holiday and placed in a holder called a menorah.

Children usually receive small gifts, including a kind of top called a dreidel.

Responding to the Reading

1. How does the narrator feel about being escorted to school? How does this feeling affect events in the story?

2. How does the narrator get lost on his way home? Why do you think he tells lies to the man who tries to help him?

3. What plan does the narrator have when he visits Shosha? What does her response to his plan suggest to you about their “unspoken love affair”?

4. Which adjectives would you use to describe the narrator? What predictions would you make about him?

5. **Making Connections** Compare the ways winter holidays are celebrated in this selection and in “The Christmas of the Phonograph Records.”

Creative Writing

Write a poem or song that describes a holiday celebration. Include specific details about the setting and your response to it.