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Study Guide

for

...And the Earth
Did Not Devour
Him

by Tomás Rivera



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

Meet Tomás Rivera



I saw a lot of suffering and much isolation of the people. Yet they lived through the whole thing, perhaps because they had no choice. I saw a lot of heroic people and I wanted to capture their feelings.

—Tomás Rivera, interview with Juan Bruce-Novoa

If it is true that authors write best about that which they know, then it is no surprise that Tomás Rivera wrote so well about migrant farm workers. When Rivera was a boy, he and his parents, who had immigrated to Texas from Mexico, traveled north every year to pick crops in the Midwest. Rivera knew firsthand the difficulties that these workers faced and the nobility and courage with which they faced their difficulties.

Rivera was born in Crystal City, Texas, in 1935. Although his family's need to travel from place to place made it difficult for him to attend school, his parents made his education a priority. By the time Rivera graduated from high school, he was fluent in both English and Spanish. Rivera went on to attend college, earning a bachelor's degree in English, a master's degree in education administration, and a doctorate in romance languages and literature.

After teaching English and Spanish for several years, Rivera became a university administrator. Education was extremely important to Rivera, particularly the education of Hispanic Americans. He wrote, "A high quality education provided at

all levels for the hispanic communities will ensure stronger individuals, and in turn, a stronger community."

In 1979 Rivera was appointed chancellor of the University of California, Riverside. He was the university's first Chicano (Mexican American) chancellor and its youngest administrator.

In addition to his role as a university administrator, Rivera played an important role in the development of Chicano literature. He offered encouragement to Chicano authors and promoted Chicano literature and culture as areas of study in the college curriculum.

Rivera is most remembered, however, as an author. Although some people found it remarkable that the son of migrant farm workers would go on to write and publish stories, Rivera himself did not. As he explained in an article in *Atisbos: Journal of Chicano Research*, storytelling was important to the migrant workers with whom he grew up. He wrote:

There was always someone [in the camps] who knew the old traditional stories. . . . Then there were always those who acted out movies, told about different parts of the world and about Aladdin and his magic lamp. An oral literature was, in that way, developed in the migrant camps. People find refuge not only in the Church or with their brothers but also by sitting in a circle, listening, telling stories and, through words, escaping to other worlds as well as inventing them.

Rivera's body of work was relatively small—one incomplete novel in addition to . . . *And the Earth Did Not Devour Him*, several short stories, poems, and literary essays. Though he wrote little, he wrote extraordinarily well, and his works are still read and enjoyed today. Armed with a powerful memory and an expert eye to detail, Rivera preserved his own past in his stories. At the same time, he preserved the past of other migrant farm workers.

Rivera died of a heart attack at the age of forty-eight. His was a short life by any standard but one that left its mark. He continues to be revered as a founding father of modern Chicano literature.

Introducing the Novel

Tierra [. . . And the Earth Did Not Devour Him] is a novel about sorrow and sadness. This is true. But Rivera is not saying that all Chicanos live in an unfortunate world. The novel is also about a special kind of childhood—the childhood of the artist. Tierra is about a child’s delicate feelings, about a child’s waning innocence, about people’s dreams and hopes, and about gentle transformations of the heart and soul.

—Eliud Martínez in “Tomás Rivera: Witness and Storyteller”

Although brief and seemingly simple, Tomás Rivera’s . . . *And the Earth Did Not Devour Him* is regarded as a ground-breaking work. The novel demands that readers make connections between the stories and come to their own conclusions about the identity and relationships of the characters and the meaning of nameless people’s actions. As professor of Chicano studies Eliud Martínez explains:

Rivera points no accusing fingers, does not judge or indict; the incidents or his characters’ stories speak for themselves. The reader draws his own conclusions. Subjectivity of selection of scenes, stories, overheard conversations, however, permit the author to comment, to lament, to express compassion, in order to touch the reader’s emotions and feelings.

In the novel, Rivera tries to give voice to migrant workers like the ones he grew up with. His goal is to reveal their hopes, dreams, frustrations, and deprivations as they suffer, pray, celebrate, and remember.

. . . *And the Earth Did Not Devour Him* consists of twenty-seven episodes. Twelve of these are titled stories. Thirteen of the episodes are brief, untitled anecdotes, or short stories, that make a point. The remaining two episodes are introductory and concluding narratives that frame the novel and help unify it. Each anecdote is related by subject or theme to the story that comes before or after it. Some characters appear in more than one story; others do not. Some characters are identified; many remain nameless.

Rather than having a traditional plot with rising action, climax, and resolution, the novel presents the fragmented memories of a young boy. Some of the stories and anecdotes are told by the boy, some by a third-person narrator, and still others through the use of dialogue.

Rivera’s storytelling technique has been called “fragmented” because he presents incomplete or isolated bits of information. This method allows him to cover a large range of experiences without the normal constraints of a chronologically ordered series of events. The structure of the novel seeks to mimic the way in which memory works and to present the feelings of disorientation—of feeling lost—experienced by many of the migrant workers as they struggle to make sense of a culture that is sometimes very different from their own. Together, the anecdotes and stories vividly depict a community’s struggle against incredible odds.

THE TIME AND PLACE

. . . *And the Earth Did Not Devour Him* takes place during the late 1940’s and early 1950’s, a time when many Mexicans came to the United States to work.

During World War II, many Americans enlisted in the armed forces, and so there was an increased demand for workers within the American labor force. The bracero (“manual labor”) program, negotiated by the United States and Mexico in 1942, made short-term employment available to Mexicans in job areas that were previously closed to them. Over the next five years, more than 250,000 Mexican farm workers temporarily entered the United States to help harvest crops such as sugar beets, cotton, corn, and onions. Once the harvest season was over, the braceros returned to Mexico. At the same time, however, hundreds of thousands of other Mexican Americans—often whole families—illegally entered the United States by swimming or walking across borders into Texas, Arizona, and California.

Many of these farm workers were cruelly exploited, enduring long hours of back-breaking

work, poor food, and substandard housing in the camps in which they lived. Children worked in the fields beside their parents in an effort to increase the combined earnings of the family. Those who were too young to pick fruits and vegetables were left with elderly family members or had to fend for themselves while their parents were at work. The parents had little choice in the matter. Few children attended school, and their health often suffered because of poor nutrition, inadequate health care, and environmental hazards. Wages of thirty cents an hour were common; however, these wages

were significantly higher than those earned in Mexico for the same type of labor.

In 1954 the Eisenhower administration launched a program to try to restrain the flow of undocumented immigrants from Mexico. Over the course of the next three years, the government sent approximately 3.7 million allegedly illegal migrants back to Mexico. Often civil rights were ignored and families broken up. Authorities did not always distinguish among illegal aliens, braceros, and Mexican American citizens, and thousands of citizens were deported.

Did You Know?

Around the time that Rivera wrote . . . *And the Earth Did Not Devour Him* (1967–1968), other Chicano writers and artists were also finding expression for their ideas and opinions. As a matter of fact, production of art and literature was so great at this time that these years came to be known as a Chicano renaissance, or *El Movimiento* (The Movement). According to *The Hispanic-American Almanac*, Chicano literature written during “the decade of the 1960s was characterized by a questioning of all the commonly accepted truths in . . . society, foremost of which was the question of equality.” Politically charged, *El Movimiento* was particularly concerned with civil rights, the farm labor struggle, and the Vietnam War.

Mexican American poets were among the first writers to gain prominence in the movement. Because of the nature of verse, they could easily recite their poetry before groups of students and workers. They wrote in both

English and Spanish, hoping to reach the widest possible audience.

One of the most significant pieces of literature produced at this time was written by an ex-boxer from Colorado, Rodolfo “Corky” González. His poem *I Am Joaquín/Yo Soy Joaquín* was passed hand to hand, read at rallies, and performed in the street. The poem speaks of the struggles of Mexican Americans and calls on them to maintain their unique identity and heritage. It also inspired an interest in Chicano literature at the grassroots level. New works by Chicano writers and artists flourished in the years that followed.

Rivera himself played an important role in *El Movimiento*, promoting Chicano authors and contributing to the development of a Chicano literature. His novel . . . *And the Earth Did Not Devour Him* became a landmark in the Mexican American community’s search for identity.

Before You Read

. . . *And the Earth Did Not Devour Him*
from *The Lost Year to A Silvery Night*

FOCUS ACTIVITY

Suppose you woke up one morning and could not remember what had taken place during the last year of your life. How would you feel? What would you do?

Quickwrite

Imagine what the effects of such a loss of memory might be like. Record your thoughts and feelings about losing a year. Use the questions above to help you get started.

Setting a Purpose

Read to find out about a boy's "lost year."

BACKGROUND

Did You Know?

Between 300,000 and 400,000 Mexican Americans served in the U.S. Armed Forces during World War II, a number far higher than their proportion of the draft-age population. Mexican Americans won seventeen Congressional Medals of Honor, the highest United States military decoration. Countless others received Distinguished Service Medals and Silver Stars for their acts of bravery. Mexican Americans also earned distinguished military records during the Korean War of the early 1950s. (During this war, the United States supported South Korea's battle against North Korean invaders. North Korea was aided by the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics and Communist China.)

In spite of their accomplishments on the battlefield, Mexican American soldiers continued to face discrimination and prejudice when they returned home. Some chapters of the American Legion refused to allow Chicanos to become members, and, like other Chicanos, many veterans were barred from Anglo restaurants, stores, and schools. In an effort to help end discrimination, Dr. Hector Garcia founded the GI Forum. The group continues to provide services to Chicanos and other Hispanics who have served in the U.S. armed forces.

Conflict

Conflict is the struggle between two opposing forces, characters, or emotions. Even in a novel that lacks a distinct plot structure, conflict is still present. Conflict energizes fiction; without it, there would be no story. Conflict is likely to occur when obstacles prevent a character from attaining something that he or she needs or desires. For example, a character may need food and water to survive, or a character may need to confront someone in order to attain his or her goals. These examples illustrate external conflict. External conflict generally falls into three basic categories: person against person, person against nature, and person against society. An internal conflict exists within the mind of a character who is torn between opposing feelings or goals. Often an external conflict triggers an internal conflict within a character's heart and mind.

VOCABULARY PREVIEW

beseech [bi sēch'] v. to address a serious request to

implore [im plôr'] v. to beg

homage [hom'ij] n. special honor or respect expressed publicly

palpitating [pal'pə tāt'ing] v. beating very quickly

Active Reading

. . . And the Earth Did Not Devour Him
 from *The Lost Year to A Silvery Night*

Because this novel has an unusual structure, you may at first have more questions than you have answers. Fill in this organizer during and after your reading to keep track of events and characters.

What I KNOW (facts and inferences about plot, characters, theme)	What I WANT to Know (questions that arise during reading)	What I LEARNED (conclusions drawn after reading and discussing)
a boy's confusion between being awake and asleep	Where are these events taking place?	in a Mexican American community of migrant workers

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Responding

. . . And the Earth Did Not Devour Him
from *The Lost Year to A Silvery Night*

Personal Response

Which story did you find the most powerful? Why?

Analyzing Literature

Recall and Interpret

1. Describe the feelings of the boy in “The Lost Year.” How does the last line of the story help introduce the stories that follow?

2. For what does the mother in “A Prayer” ask? How does the story connect with the anecdote that precedes it?

3. In “The Children Couldn’t Wait,” why does the boss insist that the workers wait to drink water? In your opinion, was the death an accident? Explain.

4. Why is the narrator of “It’s That It Hurts” expelled from school? In your opinion, what is the “it” that hurts the narrator?

5. Describe the couple with whom the boy in “Hand in His Pocket” lives. In your opinion, what causes the boy to slip his hand in his pocket whenever he sees a stranger?

Responding

. . . And the Earth Did Not Devour Him

from *The Lost Year to A Silvery Night*

Analyzing Literature (*continued*)

Evaluate and Connect

6. Briefly describe at least one of the incidents in which a character is discriminated against. How does the character respond? In your opinion is the response believable? Explain.

7. After reading the stories, what do you think might be troubling the boy in “The Lost Year”? What may have caused him to lose his memory? Are his feelings similar to those you described in the **Focus Activity**? Explain.

Literature and Writing

Analyze Plot

Each of the brief anecdotes in the novel helps prepare readers for the story that follows or explains a story that preceded it. In a paragraph or two, explain how the incident described in “It was an hour before . . .” might motivate the actions of the boy in “A Silvery Night.”

Extending Your Response

Literature Groups

To better understand what the characters in the novel feel, take a closer look at the conflicts that they experience. With your group, reread this first section story by story. Identify what the conflicts are and whether they are internal or external. If a conflict is external, decide into which of the three categories it falls. If it is internal, determine what external factors cause it. Present your findings to others in your class.

Performing

With a small group of your classmates, choose one of the stories in which the characters experience discrimination, such as “The Children Couldn’t Wait” or “It’s That It Hurts.” Together, reread the story aloud and discuss the kind of discrimination that is illustrated. Then rewrite the story so that the conflict is solved fairly and prejudice is eliminated. You may add whatever new details are necessary to make the conflict and its resolution practical and believable.

Practice your new scene, and perform it for the class. Finally, lead a discussion about the attitudes and behaviors that are necessary to eliminate discrimination.

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Save your work for your portfolio.

Before You Read

. . . *And the Earth Did Not Devour Him*

from “One afternoon a minister . . .” to “A little before six . . .”

FOCUS ACTIVITY

Recall a time when you felt powerless, as if you were not capable of having an impact on someone or something.

Journal

Think about a time when your age, inexperience, or some other factor made you unable to command a situation in a way you would have liked. Write about the situation, what made you powerless, and how it felt.

Setting a Purpose

Read to discover why a young boy feels powerless.

BACKGROUND

Did You Know?

During the 1940s and 1950s, immigrants from Spain, Portugal, and from anywhere below the southern border of the United States were referred to simply as *Spanish*, regardless of their place of birth. As more people came to the United States from Mexico, Central America, Cuba, and other countries, a new term was added to describe the ancestry of these immigrants. *Hispanic* was widely used during the 1960s, but it was improperly applied to define the entire Spanish-speaking population as a race and culture. Furthermore, the term was coined by mainstream Americans. The use of the term *Hispanic* by the dominant American culture resulted in the stereotyping of a widely diverse group of people. During the civil rights movement of the 1960s and early 1970s, young Mexican Americans began calling themselves *Chicanos*. In the 1980s, the term *Hispanic* reappeared to refer to any person living in the United States who is of Spanish ancestry. More recently, *Latino* has become a term of choice for many Mexican Americans, Cuban Americans, and Puerto Ricans living on the the mainland.

Irony

The awareness—by the author, a character, or the reader—of a contrast or discrepancy between appearance and reality is called **irony**. Situational irony occurs when what actually happens is the opposite of what is expected or appropriate. For example, in “Hand in His Pocket,” it is ironic that Don Hilario and Doña Bonifacia are well liked and even respected in the community, when in reality they are murderers who force the boy to take part in their criminal activities. Dramatic irony occurs when readers know more about a situation or character in a story than the characters do. An example is found in the anecdote following “A Prayer.” One of the characters says that he hears Utah is “somewhere close to Japan.” The reader presumably knows that Utah is nowhere near Japan. Look for examples of irony as you read the next stories in . . . *And the Earth Did Not Devour Him*.

VOCABULARY PREVIEW

clamoring [klam'ər ɪŋ] *v.* making a sustained outcry

sacrilege [sək'rə lij] *n.* destruction or misuse of something sacred

scapularies [skap'yə lər ēz] *n.* squares of cloth joined by shoulder tapes, often worn to show religious devotion

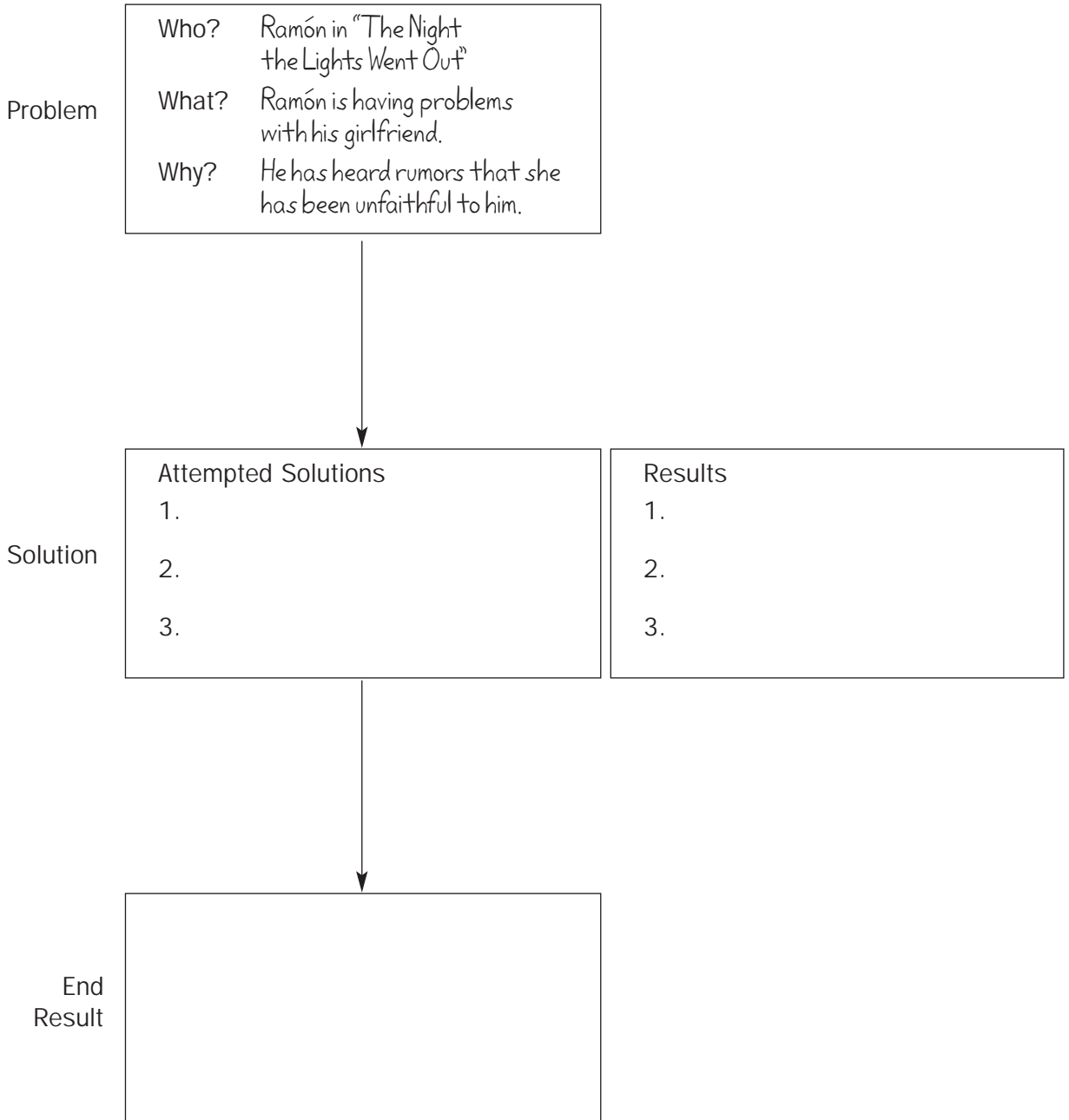
venial [vē'nē əl] *adj.* easily excused or forgiven, as in a *venial sin*

Active Reading

. . . And the Earth Did Not Devour Him

from "One afternoon a minister . . ." to "A little before six . . ."

Defining a problem and evaluating its solutions are as helpful in understanding fiction as they are in solving real-life conflicts. As you read this section, fill out this problem/solution graphic organizer for one of the problems, or conflicts, a character or character's experience. Use as many boxes as you need.



Responding

. . . And the Earth Did Not Devour Him

from "One afternoon a minister . . ." to "A little before six . . ."

Personal Response

If you could talk to the author, what questions would you ask him? Why would you ask these questions in particular?

Analyzing Literature

Recall and Interpret

1. What events cause the the boy in the story "*. . . And the Earth Did Not Devour Him*" to suffer a crisis of faith? How does the boy resolve this crisis?

2. What does the narrator of "First Communion" decide to confess? Why is he so eager to make a confession?

3. Why is the teacher surprised when the child tears a button off what may be his only shirt? In your opinion, why does the child make the sacrifice?

4. What causes the fire that kills the children in "The Little Burnt Victims"? What is ironic about the fact that the boxing glove survives the fire intact?

Responding

. . . And the Earth Did Not Devour Him

from "One afternoon a minister . . ." to "A little before six . . ."

Analyzing Literature (*continued*)

Evaluate and Connect

5. Evaluate Rivera's use of dialogue in "The Night the Lights Went Out." In your opinion, would the story be improved if it were told by a single narrator? Explain.

6. How might the boy in the story ". . . And the Earth Did Not Devour Him" answer the question in the **Focus Activity**? How does this answer compare with yours?

Literature and Writing

Write a Eulogy

A eulogy is a speech or a piece of writing that praises someone who has died. Choose one of the migrant workers who died in this section, such as the aunt or uncle who died of tuberculosis, the burned children, Ramón, or one of the sixteen accident victims, and write an address that honors him or her. Include details from the novel, but feel free to complete the eulogy using your imagination.

Extending Your Response

Literature Groups

With your literature group, examine each story and anecdote in this section. When you encounter an example of irony, identify the type of irony that is used—situational or dramatic—and discuss the message that the author might be conveying through its use. Share your responses with others in your class.

Health Connection

The migrant workers are fearful of getting sunstroke. What exactly is this medical condition? What are the symptoms? the long-term effects? How can it be prevented? Find the answers to these questions on the Internet or in library resources. Then present the answers in an oral report to your class.



Save your work for your portfolio.

Before You Read

. . . *And the Earth Did Not Devour Him*
from *The Night Before Christmas* to *Under the House*

FOCUS ACTIVITY

What are the advantages of looking forward to the future and making future plans? What disadvantages might there be in focusing on the future instead of the present?

Chart It

With a small group of classmates, discuss why people often concentrate on the future rather than on the present. Copy the chart and make a list of all the positive and negative factors you can think of.

	Positive Factors	Negative Factors
Focusing on the PRESENT		
Focusing on the FUTURE		

Setting a Purpose

Read to discover what the characters hope their futures hold.

BACKGROUND

Did You Know?

In Mexico, January 6 is Three Kings Day. This religious holiday is typically celebrated with church services, gift giving, and special treats such as *rosocas*—sweet breads decorated with red and green candies. In the nativity story of the New Testament, three kings bearing gifts travel to Bethlehem to pay homage to the infant Jesus. During their visit, the kings have a dream in which they are warned not to reveal Jesus's location to King Herod, who secretly plans to kill the infant. The three kings keep the infant's location a secret, thus protecting Jesus from harm.

The Barrios

Early in the twentieth century, Mexican immigrants to the United States established their own urban communities, called barrios. There, the immigrants spoke their native language and preserved many of the traditions of Mexican life. The immigrants built churches and schools, founded social clubs, and opened stores and restaurants that catered to Mexican tastes. Among the oldest barrios are those in Los Angeles, El Paso, and San Antonio.

VOCABULARY PREVIEW

appease [ə pēz'] v. to satisfy, to relieve, to soothe

barrage [bə rāzh'] n. overwhelming outpouring, as of words

composure [kəm pō'zhər] n. calm state of mind

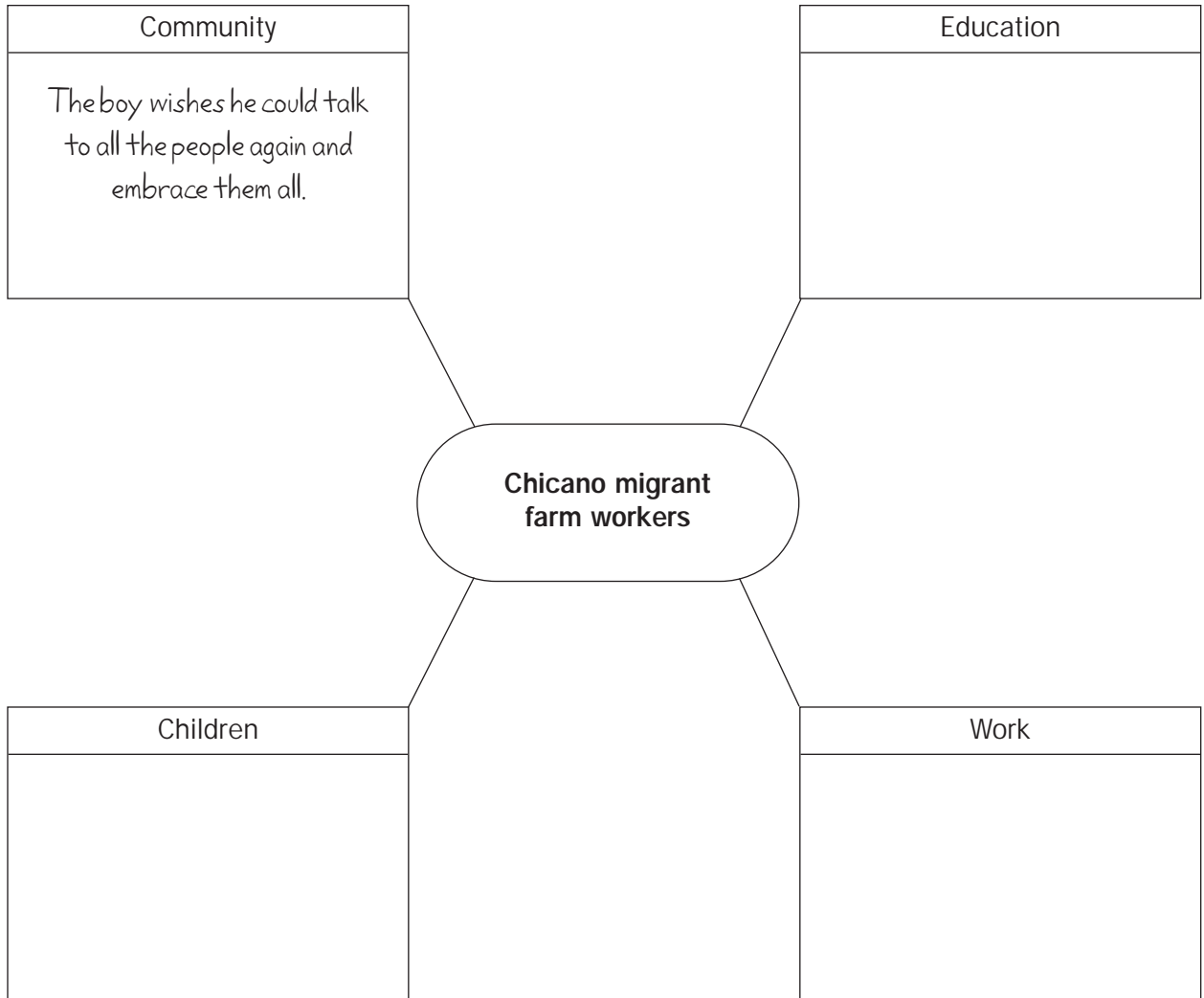
discourse [dis'kôrs] n. verbal expression in speech or writing

swindle [swind'əl] v. to cheat

Active Reading

... And the Earth Did Not Devour Him from *The Night Before Christmas* to *Under the House*

The organizer below will help you think about the main ideas, or themes, that are developed in the novel. As you read the final stories and anecdotes, take notes on the subject headings of the boxes below. (You may add boxes if you wish.) When you are finished taking notes, ask yourself, Where else in the novel are these subjects explored? What point or points might the author be making about each of these subjects?



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Responding

. . . *And the Earth Did Not Devour Him*
from *The Night Before Christmas* to *Under the House*

Personal Response

What image, story, or anecdote stands out most in your mind? Explain why it affected you.

Analyzing Literature

Recall and Interpret

1. Sum up what happens to Doña Maria in *Kress*. Why is it so important to her to buy Christmas presents for her children?

2. What is ironic about the priest blessing the cars for five dollars?

3. How and why are the migrant workers taken advantage of by the portrait salespeople?

Responding

. . . And the Earth Did Not Devour Him

from *The Night Before Christmas* to *Under the House*

Analyzing Literature (*continued*)

Evaluate and Connect

4. In an interview, Tomás Rivera said that he wanted to portray the “suffering and the strength and the beauty . . . [of] the migrant worker[s], the people I had known best.” In your opinion, does he succeed? Explain why or why not.

5. Do the workers in “When We Arrive” tend to live in the present or the future? Which of the advantages that you listed during the **Focus Activity** might apply to the workers? Which disadvantages might apply?

Literature and Writing

Understanding Structure

The italicized middle portion of “Under the House” consists of fragments of thought and conversation that relate to earlier episodes. Working with a partner, match each fragment with its story or anecdote. Then, on your own, write a paragraph explaining how “Under the House” helps tie together the stories in the novel.

Extending Your Response

Literature Groups

In your group, select one of the subjects explored in the **Active Reading** activity and trace its development throughout the novel. Look for stories and anecdotes that explore the subject through the use of dialogue, conflict, irony, or description. Together, decide what points the novel makes about the subject. Share your conclusions with the rest of the class.

Learning for Life

Imagine that you work for a 1950s government agency concerned about improving the health and welfare of Chicano migrant farm workers. Based on details in the novel, write a brief report about what life is like for the workers. In your report, be sure to include recommendations for how to improve conditions.



Save your work for your portfolio.

from Voices from the Fields

S. Beth Atkin

Before You Read

Focus Question

What were your hopes five years ago? What are they today? Do you think they will be different five years from now?

Background

In a series of revealing interviews, photojournalist S. Beth Atkin examines the lives of the children of migrant farmworkers. The children discuss a variety of topics ranging from education to discrimination.

Responding to the Reading

1. In your opinion, why do migrant workers continue to work in the fields despite the hazardous conditions?

2. What are the hopes and dreams of the three children interviewed? Are these the same hopes and dreams that you have? Explain.

3. **Making Connections** Compare the lives of the children interviewed to the lives of the children in . . . *And the Earth Did Not Devour Him*. In what ways are they similar? different?

Speaking and Listening

Based on what you have read about the children, write a monologue from the perspective of a young person who works in the fields. Include details about what the character's life is like and about his or her hopes and dreams. Share your monologue with the class.

Christmas

Langston Hughes

Before You Read

Focus Question

What would you do if you found the perfect gift for someone but were unable to afford it?

Background

Writer Langston Hughes was considered the “Poet Laureate of Harlem” during the Harlem Renaissance in the 1920s. Besides poetry, Hughes wrote short stories and plays and worked as a journalist. Much of his writing, including this story, is sprinkled with dialect and focuses on what it was like to be African American in the 1920s and 1930s. Like the characters in . . . *And the Earth Did Not Devour Him*, the characters in “Christmas” struggle with the hardships of poverty.

Responding to the Reading

1. How does Sandy feel about the presents he gets? Why does he say, “I like my sled what you-all gave me, but I don’t want no old book from Tempy!”?

2. How does Sandy’s grandmother demonstrate the spirit of giving? Cite examples. How would you describe her character?

3. What does the phrase “poverty of spirit” mean to you? Which character from the story demonstrated poverty of spirit?

4. Why does Sandy feel he needs an excuse to cry?

5. **Making Connections** How do the adults in “Christmas” and in . . . *And the Earth Did Not Devour Him* deal with their poverty at Christmastime? Discuss similarities you see between the families. In your opinion, do the children understand how their poverty affects their Christmas?

Learning for Life

Suppose you are an advice columnist for a local newspaper. Write a column that gives concrete, practical advice to families who do not have much money to spend on holiday gifts.

Children for Hire

Verena Dobnik and Ted Anthony

Before You Read

Focus Question

How would you describe the perfect job?

Background

Despite federal laws that protect their rights, many children are forced to work at low-paying jobs under less-than-perfect conditions. *Rocky Mountain News* reporters Verena Dobnik and Ted Anthony investigate the cost of a lost childhood.

Responding to the Reading

1. According to the article, why are the children forced to work? Do you think the law should allow this? Why or why not?

2. In your opinion, why might businesses and farms use child labor?

3. The article states, "Farmers used to own slaves. Now they rent them." Explain this statement.

4. **Making Connections** Compare the working conditions of the children in this article with the working conditions of the children in . . . *And the Earth Did Not Devour Him*.

Learning for Life

List conditions that you would note if you were to file a complaint with the United States Department of Labor concerning these young workers. Suggest areas that need improvement and possible ways to accomplish these improvements.

First Confession

Frank O'Connor

Before You Read

Focus Question

There are all kinds of confessions—confessions of guilt, of sin, of fear, or of love. Psychologists believe that most humans have a need to confess. Do you agree? Why or why not?

Background

Frank O'Connor was a noted Irish author. His story "First Confession" is about a boy's first confession in church.

Responding to the Reading

1. The tone of a work reflects the author's attitude toward the subject of the work. For example, an author might display a serious attitude toward a subject or treat it with irony or humor. In your opinion, what is the tone of this story?

2. Did you expect the priest to react the way he did to Jackie's confession? In your opinion, why did the priest react this way?

3. **Making Connections** Compare and contrast Jackie's experience at his first confession with the experience of the boy in . . . *And the Earth Did Not Devour Him*. How does each character feel before the confession? What happens to change how each character feels?

Group Debate

Make a list of fictional or nonfictional characters who you know have confessed to something. List the effects that these confessions had on their lives. Were the effects good or bad? In your literature group, debate the usefulness of confessions.

Aria: A Memoir of a Bilingual Childhood

Richard Rodriguez

Before You Read

Focus Question

What obstacles might you face if you were learning English as a second language?

Background

Richard Rodriguez was born in 1944 in San Francisco. He is best known as the author of *Hunger for Memory*, his memoirs of what it was like growing up in the United States. Like the boy in . . . *And the Earth Did Not Devour Him*, Rodriguez was comfortable speaking Spanish but had to learn to live in an English-speaking culture.

Responding to the Reading

1. Why did Rodriguez see Spanish as the language of intimacy and private life?

2. What, according to the author, is the deep truth regarding language and intimacy?

3. Why does Rodriguez think it is a “convenient” mistake to credit to language what one should credit to family? How does this belief relate to Rodriguez’s life?

4. What is Rodriguez’s initial opinion about the English-speaking community? How does his opinion change?

5. **Making Connections** What is the Rodriguez family’s relationship to the English-speaking Anglos in their community? In your opinion, how is that relationship similar to or different from the relationship between Anglos and Chicanos in . . . *And the Earth Did Not Devour Him*?

Analyzing Quotations

Rodriguez believes that bilingual education is wrong. Write a brief essay defending or criticizing bilingual education. Cite reasons for your position.

TEST: . . . *And the Earth Did Not Devour Him*

Recall and Interpret (40 points total; 5 points each)

Write the letter of the best answer.

- _____ 1. The central character of the novel is a
 a. wise old farm worker. c. sympathetic landowner.
 b. angry civil rights activist. d. confused young boy.
- _____ 2. Which of the following incidents in the novel is NOT caused by poor living conditions or working conditions?
 a. a father suffering sunstroke c. the death of children in a fire
 b. a young man's electrocution d. the shooting of a thirsty child
- _____ 3. Which of the following sentences best describes the workers' attitude toward educating their children?
 a. Education is good but unaffordable. c. Education leads to a better life.
 b. Learning Anglo ways will destroy the family. d. Work comes first.
- _____ 4. Which of the following discriminatory practices does NOT occur in the novel?
 a. A restaurant refuses to seat Chicanos. c. A woman is accused of stealing.
 b. A barber refuses to give a boy a haircut. d. A school unfairly expels a student.
- _____ 5. The workers in the novel respond to discrimination by
 a. turning the other cheek. c. complaining to the police.
 b. organizing protests. d. asking their priest for help.
- _____ 6. In "Hand in His Pocket" and "The Portrait," the workers are cheated by
 a. farm owners. c. government officials.
 b. other Chicanos. d. illegal aliens.
- _____ 7. The mothers in the novel are best described as
 a. negligent and uncaring. c. religious and family-oriented.
 b. independent and career-oriented. d. strict and unyielding.
- _____ 8. The boy in "Under the House" realizes that he
 a. has lost his sanity. c. is powerless.
 b. can escape work by hiding. d. remembers the past.

Evaluate and Connect (60 points total; 30 points each)

Answer two of the following essay questions on a separate sheet of paper.

1. Round characters gain insight from their experiences; flat characters do not. In your opinion, is the main character of the novel round or flat? Support your opinion with evidence from the novel.
2. What do you think Tomás Rivera was trying to say in this novel? In your opinion, is he successful in transmitting his message? Explain your answer, using evidence from the novel to support your ideas.
3. How do the first and last stories help tie the other stories together and unify the novel? Give examples from the novel to support your answer.