

Week 2



COMUNIDADES LATINAS
UNIDAS EN SERVICIO



**Why do we tell
stories?**





Questions to consider



Why read fiction?



What can short stories
teach us?



How do authors use literary
devices (language) to
create meaning?

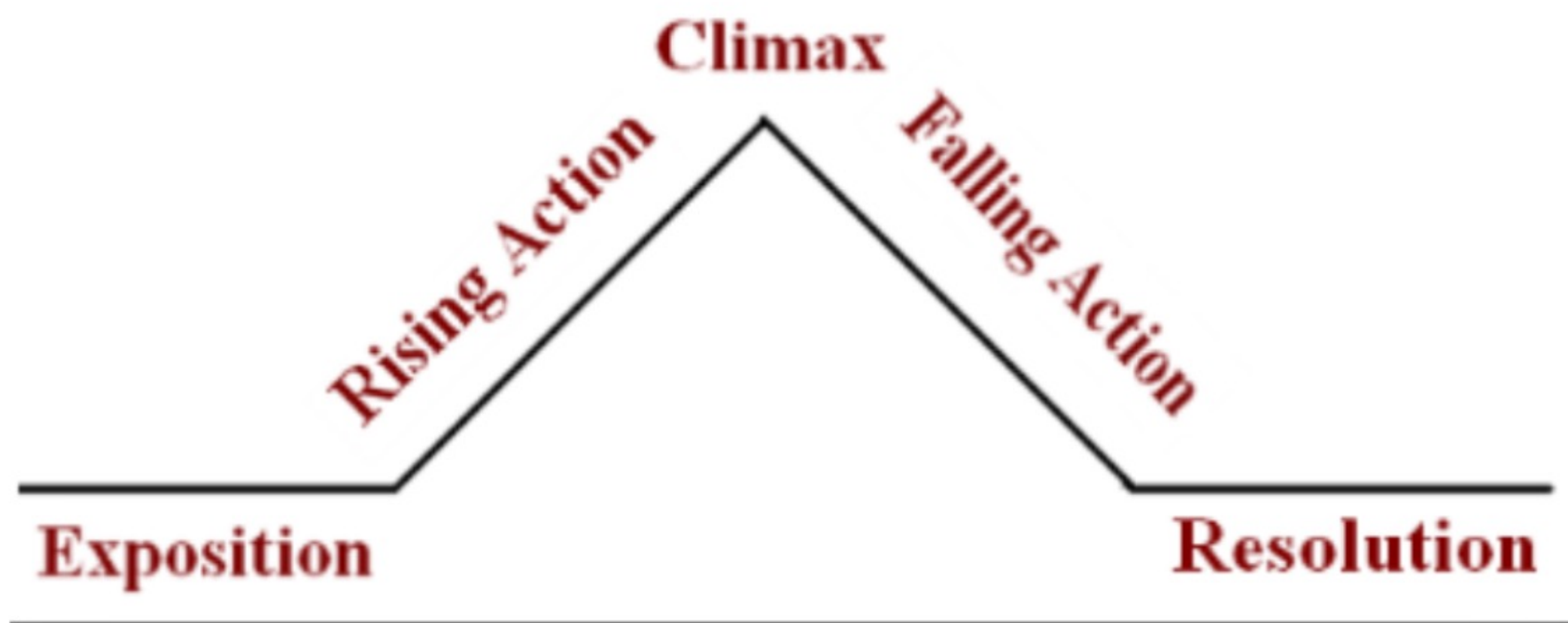
Tips for reading short stories

Before

- ☐ **Look at the story's title.** What might this story be about?
- ☐ **Use and develop your background knowledge about this subject.** If the title is "The Lesson," (by Toni Cade Bambara) ask yourself what kind of lessons there are, what lessons you have learned, and so on.
- ☐ **Establish a purpose for reading this story.** "Because my teacher told me to" is one obvious purpose, but not a very useful one. Try to come up with your own question, one based perhaps on the title or an idea you recently discussed in class. How about, "Why do we always have to learn the hard way?" if the story is titled "The Lesson"? Of course, you should also be sure you know what you are expected to do and learn from this story; this will help you determine what is important while you read the story.

During

- ☐ **Identify the main characters.** By “main” I mean those characters that make the story happen or to whom important things happen. Get to know what they are like by asking such questions as “What does this character want more than anything else—and *why?*”
- ☐ **Identify the plot or the situation.** The plot is what happens. Some writers prefer to put their characters in a situation.
- ☐ **Pay attention to the setting.** Setting refers not only to where the story takes place, but also to when it happens. It also includes details like tone and mood. What does the story sound like: a sad violin playing all by itself or a whole band charging down the road? Does the story have a lonely feeling — or a scary feeling, as if any minute something will happen?
- ☐ **Consider the story’s point of view.** Think about why the author chose to tell the story through this person’s point of view instead of a different character; why in the past instead of the present; in the first instead of the third person.



Reading & Writing Through Short Stories

- ☐ **Pay attention to the author's use of time.** Some short story writers will make ten years pass by simply beginning the next paragraph, "Ten years later..." Look for any words that signal time passed. Sometimes writers will also use extra space between paragraphs to signal the passing of time.
- ☐ **Find the crucial moment.** Every short story has some conflict, some tension or element of suspense in it. Eventually something has to give. This is the moment when the character or the story suddenly changes direction. A character, for example, feels or acts differently than before.
- ☐ **Remember why you are reading this story.** Go back to the question you asked when you began reading. Double-check the assignment, too. These will help you read more closely and better evaluate which details are important when you read. You might also find your original purpose is no longer a good one; what is the question you are now trying to answer as you read the story?

After

- ☐ **Read first to understand...then to analyze.** When you finish the story, check to be sure you understand what happened. Ask: WHO did WHAT to WHOM? If you can answer these questions correctly, move on to the next level: WHY? Why, for example, did the character in the story lie?
- ☐ **Return to the title.** Go back to the title and think about how it relates to the story now that you have read it. What does the title refer to? Does the title have more than one possible meaning?

Figurative language

What is figurative language?



A diagram illustrating three types of figurative language. Three blue ovals are arranged in a triangular pattern. The top-left oval contains the word 'SIMILE', the bottom-center oval contains 'METAPHOR', and the top-right oval contains 'PERSONIFICATION'. The text is in white, bold, uppercase letters.

SIMILE

METAPHOR

PERSONIFICATION

SIMILE

A comparison of two things that usually are not considered similar, using “like” or “as”

EXAMPLE:

- Friends are like chocolate cake.

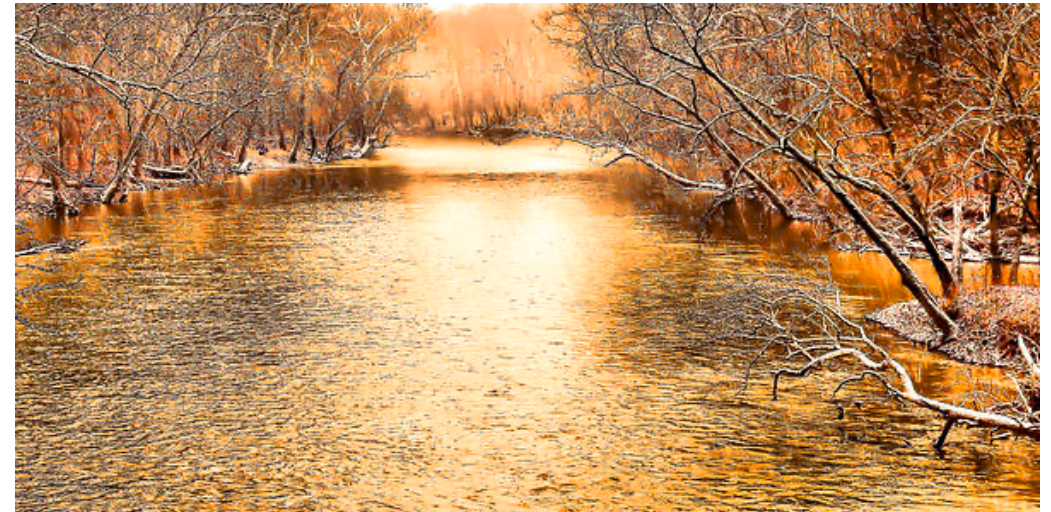


METAPHOR

A comparison of two things that usually are not considered similar that states one **is** the other (not using “like” or “as”)

EXAMPLE:

- Her hair was a flowing golden river.



PERSONIFICATION

A figurative statement that gives human-like characteristics to things or animals.

EXAMPLE:

- I heard the last piece of pie calling my name.



‘Eleven’

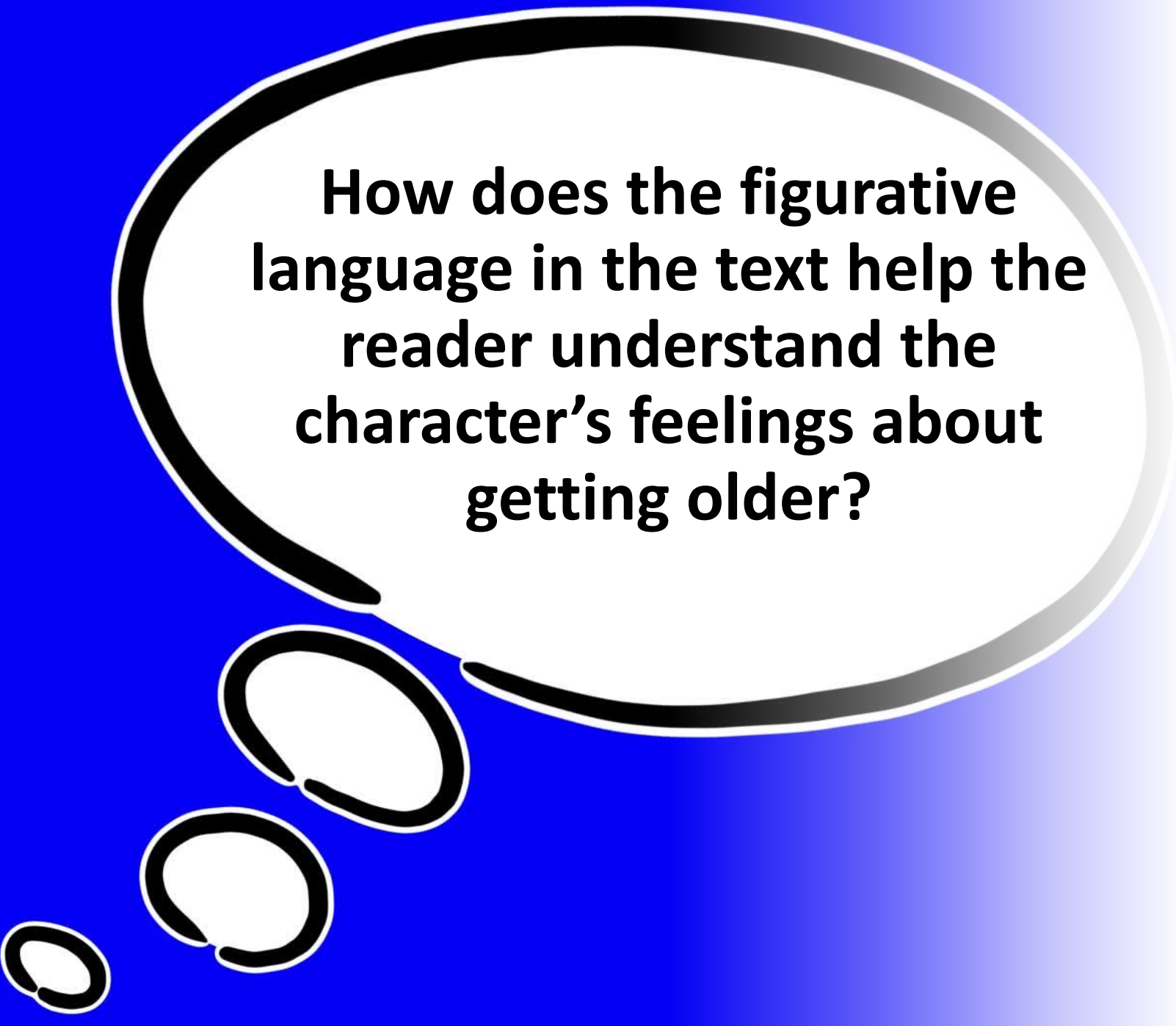
by Sandra Cisneros

(1991)



SANDRA CISNEROS

Sandra Cisneros was born and raised on December 20th, 1954, in Chicago, Illinois, with six extra brothers, which often made her feel isolated. Most of her childhood, consisted in moving from house to house in the poor Chicago South Side neighbourhood, and the constant migration between Mexico and the USA, which made her feel like if she was straddling two countries, but not belonging to either culture. In 1976, she received her Bachelor's degree in English Writing in the Chicago Loyola University. Besides, she enrolled in a Creative Writing Program in the University of Iowa, and won a Master in 1978. Furthermore, she received a scholarship from National Endowment for the Arts, in 1982, which permitted her to stay studying in Vence, France. All in all, thanks of all these issues during her life, now, we know how she became the fantastic writer, novelist and poet she is today.



**How does the figurative
language in the text help the
reader understand the
character's feelings about
getting older?**

- Cisneros writes *“the way you grow old is kind of like an onion or like the rings inside a tree trunk or like my little wooden dolls that fit one inside the other, each year inside the next one.”*
- All three have layers numbered like years and are part of the whole identity. This is especially true of the tree with the rings representing how an outside source can affect the growth and development of each individual ring/year and how the rings underneath affect and build upon the outer layers and years.

In the story's opening sentence, Rachel, the protagonist, starts off by saying, "What they don't understand about birthdays and what they never tell you is that when you're eleven, you're also ten, and nine, and eight, and seven, and six, and five, and four, and three, and two, and one."

Who is "they" in the above sentence? Who is "you"? Why don't they "understand" and "never tell" what is true about birthdays? What is true about birthdays, according to Rachel?



- Rachel describes the disappointment she faces upon waking up on the morning of her birthday. She states, “You open your eyes and everything’s just like yesterday, only it’s today.”
- What might she have expected to feel upon opening her eyes?

- What does Rachel mean when she says she feels like she is still ten “underneath the year that makes [her] eleven”?
- Rachel explains what it is like to have all these ages “underneath” her skin by describing how on certain days, she can behave and feel like a much younger Rachel. She notices that her mother also still “feels” these other parts of herself, such as the part of her mother who is “[feeling] three” when “she’s sad and needs to cry.” What does this insight about her mother’s inner three-year-old tell you about Rachel’s sensitivity and intelligence?

➤ Rachel's voice is similar to that of a young girl. Looking at the first two paragraphs, what words does Rachel use that show you she is not an adult? Next, look at some of the sentences in these paragraphs. Many begin with the conjunction "and." How does Cisneros use this type of syntax to make Rachel's voice sound authentic?

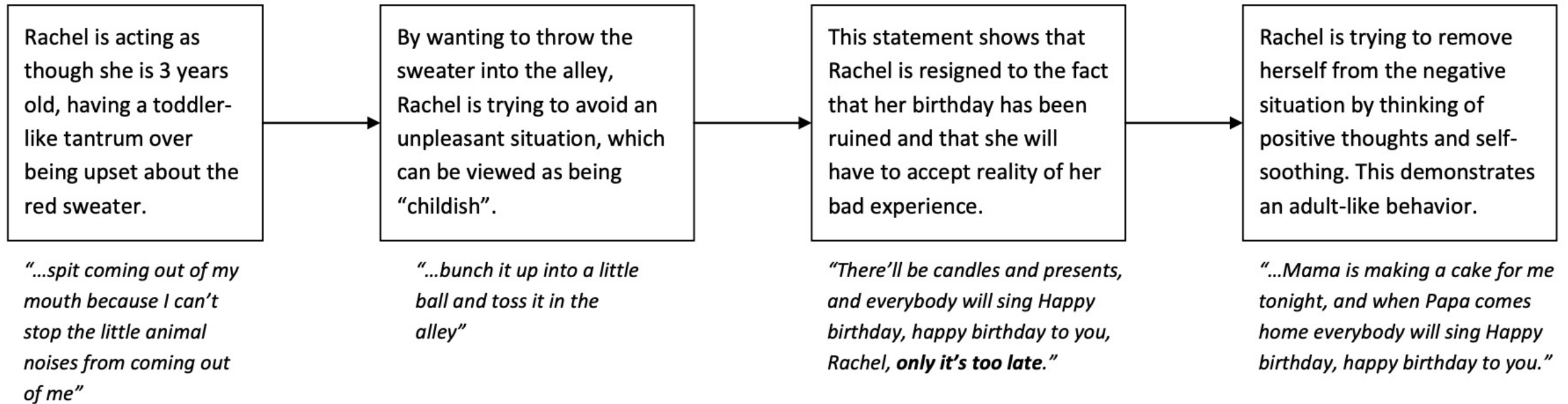
- In the third paragraph, Rachel sets up a series of similes that are both simple and complex in their comparison to growing up. Explain the meaning of each simile. What do these similes suggest about Rachel's perceptiveness?
- When Rachel talks about her age, or past ages, she uses the verb "feel" to explain what it is like *being* a certain age. She states, "And you don't *feel* smart eleven, not until you're almost twelve." What is the difference between being eleven and feeling eleven?

Writing Prompt



In the short story, “Eleven”, by Sandra Cisneros, in what ways do Rachel’s reactions demonstrate her multiple “years” of her eleven year-old self? Write one-two paragraphs summarizing the ways that Rachel responds. Try to include textual evidence to support your interpretation of the age that her actions demonstrate.

Example flow map of age maturity



Homework: PLATO

Active Assignments



Week 2

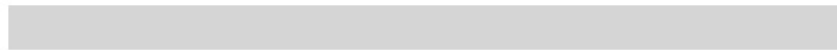
To begin, select an activity from All Activities

[Select New Activity](#) 



All Activities

Completion: 0/5 (0%)



No Due Date

Thank you for coming to class!

Remember:

- GED: Mondays (Writing Lab) and Tuesdays – 10am-12pm
- English – Wednesday, Thursday - 10am and/or 6pm
- Computer class: Friday - 10am