

Then from five thousand throats and more there rose a lusty⁷ yell;
It rumbled through the valley, it rattled in the dell;
It pounded on the mountain and recoiled upon the flat,
[20] For Casey, mighty Casey, was advancing to the bat.

There was ease in Casey's manner as he stepped into his place;
There was pride in Casey's bearing and a smile lit Casey's face.
And when, responding to the cheers, he lightly doffed⁸ his hat,
No stranger in the crowd could doubt 'twas Casey at the bat.

[25] Ten thousand eyes were on him as he rubbed his hands with dirt;
Five thousand tongues applauded when he wiped them on his shirt;
Then while the writhing⁹ pitcher ground the ball into his hip,
Defiance flashed in Casey's eye, a sneer curled Casey's lip.

And now the leather-covered sphere came hurtling through the air,
[30] And Casey stood a-watching it in haughty¹⁰ grandeur¹¹ there.
Close by the sturdy batsman the ball unheeded sped—
"That ain't my style," said Casey. "Strike one!" the umpire said.

From the benches, black with people, there went up a muffled roar,
Like the beating of the storm-waves on a stern and distant shore;
[35] "Kill him! Kill the umpire!" shouted someone on the stand;
And it's likely they'd have killed him had not Casey raised his hand.

With a smile of Christian charity great Casey's visage¹² shone;
He stilled the rising tumult;¹³ he bade the game go on;
He signaled to the pitcher, and once more the dun¹⁴ sphere flew;
[40] But Casey still ignored it and the umpire said, "Strike two!"

"Fraud!" cried the maddened thousands, and echo answered "Fraud!"
But one scornful look from Casey and the audience was awed.
They saw his face grow stern and cold, they saw his muscles strain,
And they knew that Casey wouldn't let that ball go by again.

[45] The sneer is gone from Casey's lip, his teeth are clenched in hate,
He pounds with cruel violence his bat upon the plate;
And now the pitcher holds the ball, and now he lets it go,
And now the air is shattered by the force of Casey's blow.

7. **Lusty** (*adjective*): hearty, full of vigor

8. to remove (an article of clothing)

9. **Writhe** (*verb*): to twist or squirm

10. **Haughty** (*adjective*): arrogantly superior; smug or self-important

11. **Grandeur** (*noun*): splendor and magnificence, especially of appearance or style

12. **Visage** (*noun*): a person's facial expression

13. **Tumult** (*noun*): a loud clamor or noise, especially one caused by a large mass of people

14. of a dull grayish-brown color

Name: _____ Class: _____

Casey at the Bat

By Ernest Lawrence Thayer
1888

Ernest Lawrence Thayer (1863-1940) was an American writer and poet, best known for the following poem, which is considered a classic in sports-related literature. As you read, take notes on how the author develops the mood of the poem.

[1] The outlook wasn't brilliant for the Mudville nine¹
that day:
The score stood four to two, with but one inning
more to play,
And then when Cooney died at first, and Barrows
did the same,
A pall-like² silence fell upon the patrons of the
game.



"Baseball" by Paul Lim is licensed under CC BY-ND 2.0

[5] A straggling few got up to go in deep despair. The
rest
Clung to the hope which springs eternal in the
human breast;
They thought, "If only Casey could but get a
whack at that— --
We'd put up even money now, with Casey at the bat."

But Flynn preceded³ Casey, as did also Jimmy Blake,
[10] And the former was a hoodoo,⁴ while the latter was a cake;⁵
So upon that stricken multitude grim melancholy sat,
For there seemed but little chance of Casey getting to the bat.

But Flynn let drive a single, to the wonderment of all,
And Blake, the much despised,⁶ tore the cover off the ball;
[15] And when the dust had lifted, and men saw what had occurred,
There was Jimmy safe at second and Flynn a-hugging third.

1. The "Mudville Nine" refers to a fictional baseball team in a town called Mudville.
2. relating to a gloom or dreary fog
3. **Precede** (*verb*): to come before
4. The term "hoodoo" is meant to imply that this player was a jinx, or bad luck. Originally the poem referred to Flynn as a "lulu," or unskilled player.
5. The term "cake" is meant to imply that this player was also of weak or questionable skill, possibly more concerned with appearances than practice.
6. Here, the accent above the e is called a "grave accent" and is used to signify that the poet intends for the vowel to be pronounced, so as to maintain a certain meter.

5. How does paragraph 14 contribute to the development of ideas in the article? [RI.5]

Text-Dependent Questions

Directions: For the following questions, choose the best answer or respond in complete sentences.

1. Which of the following best identifies the central idea of the article? [RI.2]
 - A. A homeless high school student is motivated to help support her fellow students get scholarships for college.
 - B. The best way to succeed in school is to study hard in and out of the classroom.
 - C. Scholarships should be given to homeless high school students who excel both in and out of the classroom.
 - D. A high school student perseveres through the difficulties of homelessness and is awarded a full college scholarship.

2. Part A: What does the word “reluctantly” most closely mean as it is used in paragraph 2? [RI.4]
 - A. unenthusiastically
 - B. patiently
 - C. surprisingly
 - D. angrily

3. PART B: Which of the following phrases from the text best supports the answer to Part A? [RI.1]
 - A. “The shelter houses up to 300 adults and 500 children” (Paragraph 2)
 - B. “I wouldn’t say it’s my favorite place.” (Paragraph 3)
 - C. “she would often wake up in the middle of the night” (Paragraph 4)
 - D. “Melson says she didn’t keep her homelessness a secret from classmates” (Paragraph 4)

4. Which statement best describes Rashema Melson’s plans for college? [RI.3]
 - A. Melson wishes that she could go to college, but she is instead planning on staying at home to support her family.
 - B. Melson is attending a college that is far from home because she wants to try to forget about her rough childhood.
 - C. Melson wants to go to college so that she can start a homeless shelter that is more helpful than the one where she lived.
 - D. Melson is attending college with a scholarship and already has plans about what to do after graduating.

"Along the way, we stumbled and we started struggling as a family," she says.

- [10] When those struggles began, she considered quitting sports and getting a job. But her coaches and teachers convinced her otherwise.

"They were just like, 'Don't worry, you're doing the best you can — keep it up, just do what you have to do,'" she says. "They were always there for me. They took a lot of stress from my mind."

But she says she still worries about what will happen to her family after she heads off to college in the fall, even if the campus is just a few miles away. She's hopeful her younger brother, who's 14 years old and a talented athlete, will continue to find a haven in sports.

In the meantime, she has advice for other homeless kids: Don't let your situation define you.

"I would just say keep your head up because you never know what's going to happen," she says. "You just have to have hope and faith and don't let it change who you are. Don't become ashamed and don't be embarrassed. And just know who you are inside. Just because you live in a shelter — that's not who you are, that's just where you reside at for the moment."

- [15] She says it's the best advice she can give; it's what she tells herself.

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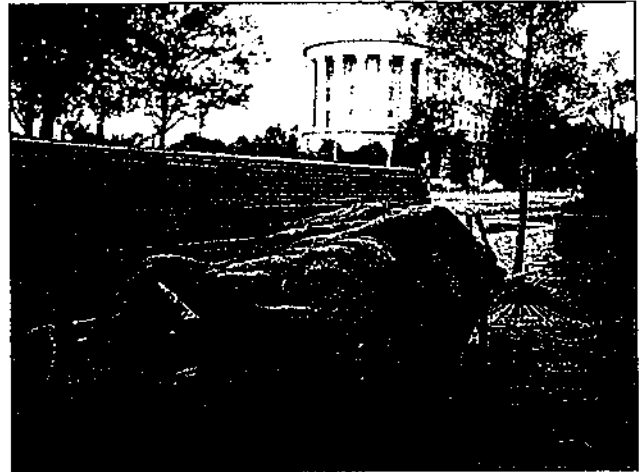
Name: _____ Class: _____

At The Head of Her Class, and Homeless

By NPR Staff
2014

In June 2014, NPR published this story about Rashema Melson. At the time, Melson was a homeless high school senior at Anacostia High School in Washington, D.C. She is now a student at Georgetown University. As you read, identify what obstacles Nelson faced and how she overcame them.

- [1] On Wednesday, Rashema Melson will graduate at the top of her class as the valedictorian of Anacostia High School in Washington, D.C. She's headed to Georgetown University this fall on a full scholarship. Melson has excelled at her homework — but for the past six years, she hasn't had a home to do that work in. She currently lives in the D.C. General Homeless Shelter along with her mother and two brothers. The shelter houses up to 300 adults and 500 children and has come under scrutiny for its poor conditions.



"Sleeping #4" by Devin Smith is licensed under CC BY 2.0.

Melson, 18, tells NPR's Audie Cornish that after school, a typical night involves reluctantly heading back to the shelter around 9:30 p.m.

"I try to stay out as late as possible," she says. "I wouldn't say it's my favorite place."

Among the many frustrations of shelter life are long security checks and noise. Because of the second, she would often wake up in the middle of the night just to do her homework in peace. Melson says she didn't keep her homelessness a secret from classmates — but didn't offer up the information either.

- [5] "I don't like sharing with kids because they start to pity you or they start to look at you in a different way," she says. "And I feel like, 'Hey, I'm just like the rest of you. I come in to get an education.'"

Even Melson isn't sure how she's managed to successfully juggle school (a 4.0 GPA), athletics (cross-country, track, volleyball) and homelessness. "I just know when I have a goal, I try not to let anything get in the way," she says.

That goal, even before becoming homeless, has been to graduate from medical school and become a forensic pathologist.¹ She says her father's murder when she was a baby inspired her to pursue the career.

But it's never been easy.

1. A forensic pathologist is a person that determines the cause of a person's death by examining their corpse.

Text-Dependent Questions

Directions: For the following questions, choose the best answer or respond in complete sentences.

1. PART A: Which statement best identifies the central idea of the text?
 - A. All forms of censorship identified in the article are violations of human rights and have no benefits.
 - B. The censorship discussed in the article is only employed when necessary and for the benefit of the public.
 - C. The article presents a complicated debate, in which censoring content is neither clearly right or wrong.
 - D. It would be great to live in a world where information didn't need to be censored, but that's simply impossible.

2. PART B: Which detail best supports the answer to Part A?
 - A. "Censorship is an extremely controversial issue, and each country usually has its own reasons for passing these laws." (Paragraph 2)
 - B. "Governments can censor anything," (Paragraph 2)
 - C. "a government wants to protect its citizens" (Paragraph 3)
 - D. "Censorship does have some benefits." (Paragraph 11)

3. PART A: In the context of the passage, what does "controversial" mean as it is used in paragraph 2?
 - A. Likely to cause disagreement
 - B. Inspiring anger
 - C. Agreeable
 - D. Certain of something

4. PART B: Which statement from the text best supports the answer to Part A?
 - A. "It is very common for families to have rules about what can or cannot be said at home," (Paragraph 1)
 - B. "Governments can censor anything, including spoken words, public or private written communication, communication via the internet, art, movies and entertainment, news media, and even advertising." (Paragraph 2)
 - C. "there are a few core reasons why a government would want to restrict communication." (Paragraph 2)
 - D. "the United States cannot censor hate speech" (Paragraph 3)

Pros and Cons

Censorship does have some benefits. It can protect people from slander⁶ or violent threats. It can strengthen national security by keeping information away from enemies. Some people believe it can make a society more unified or moral. Others support it because it can benefit certain groups in a country, such as the main political party or the main religion (although this is often at the expense of others).

However, there are also many downsides to these kinds of restrictions of communication. The government's decision about what to censor can be random or unfair. Censorship also limits individual freedom to speak openly, and protest things that are not right. Suppressing⁷ opposing views can also hold back social progress and restrict people's ability to learn more about the world and other people.

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6. **Slander** (*verb*): intentionally making a false accusation against someone in order to hurt their reputation
7. **Suppress** (*verb*): to end or stop (something) by force

- [5] The United States practiced military censorship frequently in World War I and World War II. When a soldier sent a letter to his family, the government would first look through it and black out any words that might give away where he was, what he was doing, and any future plans he had heard. Similarly, the government monitored journalists and newscasters to make sure they did not give away any important information that might be useful to the enemy.

Political Censorship

Political censorship is when someone in power restricts others from voicing opposing ideas. A political leader or party might do this to maintain their top position and keep the public from learning about ways they might be wrong.

For example, the Communist Party in the Soviet Union³ during the late 1900s enforced severe political censorship. Inspectors from the party monitored journalists, writers, and artists to ensure they said nothing negative about the party or the Soviet Union itself. Weather reporters were not even allowed to predict that it might be raining on a holiday!

Religious Censorship

This type of censorship occurs when the dominant religion in a country does not allow people from other religions to share their beliefs. Usually when this is the case, the dominant religion is tied to the government in some way, which gives them the power to enforce these rules. They do this to maintain the unity and power of their religion in society, and to keep their own power intact.

One famous example of religious censorship happened right around 1600, when Galileo Galilei⁴ proved that the sun does not revolve around the earth, but that the earth revolves around the sun. This was directly against the beliefs of the Roman Catholic Church at the time, and the Church worked hard to prevent him from spreading his discovery. They eventually forced him to lie and say he had been wrong about the whole thing, and he was sentenced to live out the rest of his life confined⁵ to his home.

Corporate Censorship

- [10] Corporate censorship is when a company warns its employees not to say anything that might put the company in a negative light. This kind of censorship is a little different from the others, because it usually does not involve the government or any laws; instead, it might be the company's own policy that employees feel they must follow so they don't lose their job. For example, about 40% of reporters say they sometimes avoid writing a newsworthy story because it might say something bad about the company that owns their newspaper.

3. The founding and ruling political party of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics until 1991

4. An Italian astronomer, physicist, engineer, and mathematician responsible for several scientific discoveries throughout the 17th century

5. **Confine** (*verb*): to limit or restrict, often in a place

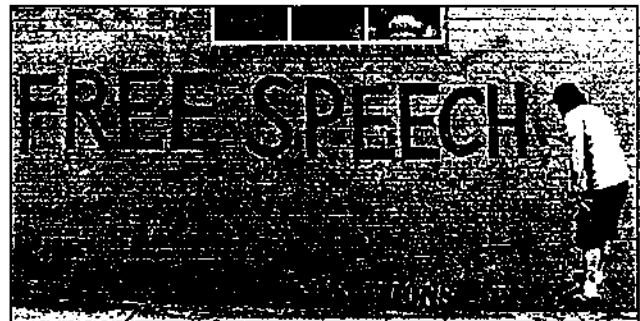
Name: _____ Class: _____

Censorship: For the People, or for Controlling the People?

By Jessica McBirney
2016

Censorship has, and continues to be, a highly debated topic. Some people believe that in order to secure the safety of citizens, information should be closely censored. However, many other people believe that this is a violation of Americans' rights. In this piece, Jessica McBirney identifies different forms of censorship, as well as its benefits and disadvantages. As you read, pay close attention to the different types of censorship and consider the pros and cons of each.

- [1] Have you ever been told not to say something? It is very common for families to have rules about what can or cannot be said at home, but as it turns out, governments do the very same thing. When a government passes a law restricting what people or organizations can say, it is called censorship.



"Newtown Mural" by Miredforlego is licensed under CC BY-NC 2.0

Governments can censor anything, including spoken words, public or private written communication, communication via the internet, art, movies and entertainment, news media, and even advertising. Censorship is an extremely controversial issue, and each country usually has its own reasons for passing these laws. However, there are a few core reasons why a government would want to restrict communication.

Types of Censorship

Moral Censorship

Moral censorship occurs when a government wants to protect its citizens from something it considers morally wrong or deplorable.¹ For example, while the United States cannot censor hate speech because it is protected as "free speech" under the First Amendment, it can censor threatening language that could provoke violence. The government also requires television companies to "bleep" bad words from TV shows so the audience does not hear them.

Military Censorship

This type of censorship occurs when the government eliminates words from letters and newscasts about the military's location or strategy during a war. This is to prevent enemies from intercepting² any information that lets them know what the military is up to.

1. **Deplorable** (*adjective*): deserving strong disapproval or even punishment
2. **Intercept** (*verb*): to stop and take someone or something that is going from one place to another place before that person or thing gets there

5. How does the author support the idea that Martin Luther King, Jr. significantly contributed to African Americans' rights?

Text-Dependent Questions

Directions: For the following questions, choose the best answer or respond in complete sentences.

1. PART A: Which statements identifies the central idea of the text?
 - A. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s commitment to nonviolent protest resulted in many achievements for African Americans during the Civil Rights Movement.
 - B. Despite Martin Luther King, Jr.'s passion for nonviolent protest, nonviolent protests were not enough to achieve what activists desired during the Civil Rights Movement.
 - C. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s opinions and dreams were not widely accepted during his time.
 - D. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s fight for equal rights for African Americans was supported by the government, both nationally and locally.

2. PART B: Which detail from the text best supports the answer to Part A?
 - A. "Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. was at the same time one of the most beloved and one of the most hated men of his time." (Paragraph 2)
 - B. "Since the end of World War II, there had been 60 unsolved bombings of African American churches and homes." (Paragraph 4)
 - C. "Finally, President Johnson ordered the National Guard to protect the demonstrators from attack, and King was able to complete the long march from Selma to the state capital of Montgomery." (Paragraph 6)
 - D. "In 1964, he won the Nobel Peace Prize and was described as 'the first person in the Western world to have shown us that a struggle can be waged without violence.'" (Paragraph 8)

3. PART A: How does paragraph 3 contribute to the development of ideas in the text?
 - A. It proves how intelligent Martin Luther King Jr. was from a young age.
 - B. It shows how many world leaders ended up impacting the Civil Rights Movement.
 - C. It shows how Martin Luther King Jr.'s upbringing contributed to his commitment to activism and religious leadership.
 - D. It shows that Martin Luther King, Jr.'s beliefs were not his own, but that his ideas were largely borrowed from other lesser-known leaders.

4. PART B: Which quote from paragraph 3 best supports the answer to Part A?
 - A. "King was raised in an activist family. His father was deeply influenced by Marcus Garvey's Back to Africa Movement in the 1920s."
 - B. "As a student, King excelled. He easily moved through grade levels and entered Morehouse College, his father's alma mater, at the age of fifteen."
 - C. "While he was pursuing his doctorate at Boston University, he met and married Coretta Scott."
 - D. "After receiving his Ph.D. in 1955, King accepted an appointment to the Dexter Street Baptist Church in Montgomery, Alabama."

After his organization of the bus boycott, King formed the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, which dedicated itself to the advancement of rights for African Americans. In April 1963, King organized a protest in Birmingham, Alabama, a city King called "the most thoroughly segregated⁸ city in the United States." Since the end of World War II, there had been 60 unsolved bombings of African American churches and homes.

- [5] Boycotts, sit-ins and marches were conducted. When Bull Connor, head of the Birmingham police department, used fire hoses and dogs on the demonstrators, millions saw the images on television. King was arrested. But support came from around the nation and the world for King and his family. Later in 1963, he delivered his famous "I Have a Dream" speech to thousands in Washington, D.C.

After the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964,⁹ King turned his efforts to registering African American voters in the South. In 1965, he led a march in Selma, Alabama, to increase the percentage of African American voters in Alabama. Again, King was arrested. Again, the marchers faced attacks by the police. Tear gas, cattle prods, and billy clubs¹⁰ fell on the peaceful demonstrators. Public opinion weighed predominantly¹¹ on the side of King and the protesters. Finally, President Johnson ordered the National Guard to protect the demonstrators from attack, and King was able to complete the long march from Selma to the state capital of Montgomery. The action in Selma led to the passage of the Voting Rights Act of 1965.¹²

Early in the morning of April 4, 1968, King was shot by James Earl Ray. Spontaneous violence spread through urban areas as mourners unleashed their rage at the loss of their leader. Rioting burst forth in many American cities.

But the world never forgot his contributions. Time magazine had named him "Man of the Year" in 1963. In 1964, he won the Nobel Peace Prize and was described as "the first person in the Western world to have shown us that a struggle can be waged without violence." In 1977, he was posthumously¹³ awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom,¹⁴ the highest award a civilian American can earn. In the 1980s, his birthday became a national holiday, creating an annual opportunity for Americans to reflect on the two values he dedicated his life to advancing: equality and nonviolence.

"Martin Luther King, Jr." by USHistory.org (2016) is licensed under CC BY 4.0.

8. separated based on race, ethnicity, religion, etc.: referring to the historical segregation of black and white people in the U.S.
9. The Civil Rights Act of 1964 outlawed discrimination based on race, color, religion, sex, or national origin.
10. another name for a baton used by law enforcement
11. **Predominantly** (*adverb*): for the most part, mainly
12. a law in the United States that prohibits racial discrimination in voting
13. following death, often awarded or published after death
14. The Presidential Medal of Freedom is awarded to individuals who have made exceptional contributions to the security or national interest of the United States.

Name: _____ Class: _____

Martin Luther King, Jr.

By USHistory.org
2016

Martin Luther King, Jr. was an integral part of the Civil Rights Movement, a social movement in the United States that worked to end racial segregation and discrimination against African Americans. King's contributions to this movement continue to be felt today and inspire others to combat inequality through nonviolence. As you read, identify the tools and strategies that Dr. King used to help bring about positive changes in America.

- [1] As the leader of the nonviolent Civil Rights Movement of the 1950s and 1960s, Martin Luther King, Jr. traversed¹ the country in his quest for freedom. His involvement in the movement began during the bus boycotts² of 1955 and was ended by an assassin's bullet in 1968.



"Martin Luther King Jr St Paul Campus U MN" by Minnesota Historical Society is licensed under CC BY-SA 2.0

As the unquestioned leader of the peaceful Civil Rights Movement in the 1960s, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. was at the same time one of the most beloved and one of the most hated men of his time. From his involvement in the Montgomery bus boycott in 1955 until his untimely death in 1968, King's message of change through peaceful means added to the movement's numbers and gave it its moral strength. The legacy of Martin Luther King, Jr. is embodied³ in these two simple words: equality and nonviolence.

King was raised in an activist family. His father was deeply influenced by Marcus Garvey's⁴ Back to Africa Movement⁵ in the 1920s. His mother was the daughter of one of Atlanta's most influential African American ministers. As a student, King excelled. He easily moved through grade levels and entered Morehouse College, his father's alma mater,⁶ at the age of fifteen. Next, he attended Crozer Theological Seminary, where he received a Bachelor of Divinity⁷ degree. While he was pursuing his doctorate at Boston University, he met and married Coretta Scott. After receiving his Ph.D. in 1955, King accepted an appointment to the Dexter Street Baptist Church in Montgomery, Alabama.

1. **Traverse (verb):** to travel across or through
2. **Boycott (noun):** an act of refusing to use, buy, or deal with a person, organization, or country as a form of protest
3. **Embody (verb):** to represent (something) in a clear and obvious way
4. Marcus Mosiah Garvey was a Jamaican political leader, journalist, and public speaker.
5. The "Back to Africa Movement" in America was a movement that encouraged those of African descent to return to the African homeland of their ancestors.
6. "Alma mater" refers to the school, college, or university that someone attended.
7. Divinity is the formal study of religion, religious practices, and religious beliefs

Text-Dependent Questions

Directions: For the following questions, choose the best answer or respond in complete sentences.

1. PART A: Which of the following describes the theme of the short story?
 - A. Competing against friends can permanently alter a friendship.
 - B. Some friendships can't be damaged, not even by the strain of competition.
 - C. Competitions can drive people to act as they normally wouldn't.
 - D. The violent nature of sports can make it difficult to remain friends with competitors.

2. PART B: Which detail from the text best supports the answer to Part A?
 - A. "I just think it's cooler if we split right here. After the fight, we can get it together again like nothing ever happened." (Paragraph 30)
 - B. "When Felix finally left the theater, he had figured out how to psych himself for tomorrow's fight. It was Felix the Champion vs. Antonio the Challenger." (Paragraph 42)
 - C. "If Felix had any small doubt about their friendship affecting their fight, it was being neatly dispelled." (Paragraph 69)
 - D. "The sounds of their blows were loud in contrast to the silence of a crowd gone completely mute. The referee was stunned by their savagery." (Paragraph 95)

3. PART A: How do Antonio and Felix act around each other after they find out they will be fighting?
 - A. They grow suspicious of each other, afraid that one will cheat the other out of a win.
 - B. They decide to treat each other as purely competitors for the time being.
 - C. They are excited for each other, as they know they are both deserving of the win.
 - D. They show off their skills, hoping to scare the other one and keep them from competing.

4. PART B: Which quote from the text best supports the answer to Part A?
 - A. "They fooled around with a few jabs at the air, slapped skin, and then took off, running lightly along the dirty East River's edge." (Paragraph 8)
 - B. "Antonio then beat the air with a barrage of body blows and short devastating lefts with an overhead jaw-breaking right." (Paragraph 9)
 - C. "In fact, since we found out it was going to be me and you, I've been awake at night, pulling punches on you, trying not to hurt you." (Paragraph 16)
 - D. "When we get into the ring, it's gotta be like we never met. We gotta be like two heavy strangers that want the same thing and only one can have it." (Paragraph 22)

5. How does paragraph 45 contribute to readers' understanding of Antonio's perspective?
 - A. It shows that Antonio is willing to beat Felix no matter what it takes.
 - B. It expresses how confident Antonio feels in his ability to beat Felix.
 - C. It reveals that Antonio is worried about his friendship with Felix.
 - D. It reveals that Antonio is confident in the strength of his friendship with Felix.

They looked around and then rushed toward each other. A cry of alarm surged through Tompkins Square Park. Was this a fight to the death instead of a boxing match?

The fear soon gave way to wave upon wave of cheering as the two amigos embraced.

[100] No matter what the decision, they knew they would always be champions to each other.

BONG! BONG! BONG! "Ladies and Gentlemen. Señores and Señoras. The winner and representative to the Golden Gloves Tournament of Champions is..."

The announcer turned to point to the winner and found himself alone. Arm in arm the champions had already left the ring.

"Amigo Brothers" from Stories from El Barrio by Piri Thomas. Copyright © 1978 by the Piri Thomas Estate. Reprinted by permission of Graymalkin Media, LLC. All rights reserved.

Rights to the body. Lefts to the head. Neither fighter was giving an inch. Suddenly a short right caught Antonio squarely on the chin. His long legs turned to jelly and his arms flailed out desperately. Felix, grunting like a bull, threw wild punches from every direction. Antonio, groggy, bobbed and weaved, evading most of the blows. Suddenly his head cleared. His left flashed out hard and straight, catching Felix on the bridge of his nose.

Felix lashed back with a haymaker,²³ right off the ghetto streets. At the same instant, his eye caught another left hook from Antonio. Felix swung out, trying to clear the pain. Only the frenzied screaming of those along ringside let him know that he had dropped Antonio. Fighting off the growing haze, Antonio struggled to his feet, got up, ducked, and threw a smashing right that dropped Felix flat on his back.

Felix got up as fast as he could in his own corner, groggy but still game. He didn't even hear the count. In a fog, he heard the roaring of the crowd, who seemed to have gone insane. His head cleared to hear the bell sound at the end of the round. He was glad. His trainer sat him down on the stool.

In his corner, Antonio was doing what all fighters do when they are hurt. They sit and smile at everyone.

- [90] The referee signaled the ring doctor to check the fighters out. He did so and then gave his OK. The cold-water sponges brought clarity to both amigo brothers. They were rubbed until their circulation ran free.

Bong! Round three — the final round. Up to now it had been tic-tac-toe, pretty much even. But everyone knew there could be no draw and that this round would decide the winner.

This time, to Felix's surprise, it was Antonio who came out fast, charging across the ring. Felix braced himself but couldn't ward off the barrage of punches. Antonio drove Felix hard against the ropes.

The crowd ate it up. Thus far the two had fought with mucho corazón.²⁴ Felix tapped his gloves and commenced²⁵ his attack anew. Antonio, throwing boxer's caution to the winds, jumped in to meet him.

Both pounded away. Neither gave an inch and neither fell to the canvas. Felix's left eye was tightly closed. Claret-red²⁶ blood poured from Antonio's nose. They fought toe-to-toe.

- [95] The sounds of their blows were loud in contrast to the silence of a crowd gone completely mute. The referee was stunned by their savagery.

Bong! Bong! Bong! The bell sounded over and over again. Felix and Antonio were past hearing. Their blows continued to pound on each other like hailstones.

Finally the referee and the two trainers pried Felix and Antonio apart. Cold water was poured over them to bring them back to their senses.

23. a forceful blow

24. Spanish for "a lot of heart"

25. **Commence** (*verb*): to begin

26. a deep purplish-red color

Bong! Both amigos froze a punch well on its way, sending up a roar of approval for good sportsmanship.

Felix walked briskly back to his corner. His right ear had not stopped ringing. Antonio gracefully danced his way toward his stool none the worse, except for glowing glove burns showing angry red against the whiteness of his midribs.

"Watch that right, Tony." His trainer talked into his ear. "Remember Felix always goes to the body. He'll want you to drop your hands for his overhand left or right. Got it?"

- [75] Antonio nodded, spraying water out between his teeth. He felt better as his sore midsection was being firmly rubbed.

Felix's corner was also busy.

"You gotta get in there, fella." Felix's trainer poured water over his curly Afro locks. "Get in there or he's gonna chop you up from way back."

Bong! Bong! Round two. Felix was off his stool and rushed Antonio like a bull, sending a hard right to his head. Beads of water exploded from Antonio's long hair.

Antonio, hurt, sent back a blurring barrage of lefts and rights that only meant pain to Felix, who returned with a short left to the head followed by a looping right to the body. Antonio countered with his own flurry, forcing Felix to give ground. But not for long.

- [80] Felix bobbed and weaved, bobbed and weaved, occasionally punching his two gloves together.

Antonio waited for the rush that was sure to come. Felix closed in and feinted²¹ with his left shoulder and threw a right instead. Lights suddenly exploded inside Felix's head as Antonio slipped the blow and hit him with a pistonlike left, catching him flush on the point of his chin.

Bedlam²² broke loose as Felix's legs momentarily buckled. He fought off a series of rights and lefts and came back with a strong right that taught Antonio respect.

Antonio danced in carefully. He knew Felix had the habit of playing possum when hurt, to sucker an opponent within reach of the powerful bombs he carried in each fist.

A right to the head slowed Antonio's pretty dancing. He answered with his own left at Felix's right eye that began puffing up within three seconds.

- [85] Antonio, a bit too eager, moved in too close, and Felix had him entangled into a rip-roaring, punching toe-to-toe slugfest that brought the whole Tompkins Square Park screaming to its feet.

21. to make a deceptive or distracting movement

22. **Bedlam** (*noun*): a scene of uproar and confusion

Antonio tried to be cool, but even as the roar was in its first birth, he turned slowly to meet Felix's eyes looking directly into his. Felix nodded his head and Antonio responded. And both as one, just as quickly, turned away to face his own corner.

[60] Bong — bong — bong. The roar turned to stillness.

"Ladies and Gentlemen, Señores y Señoras."

The announcer spoke slowly, pleased at his bilingual efforts.

"Now the moment we have all been waiting for — the main event between two fine young Puerto Rican fighters, products of our Lower East Side."

"Loisaida,"¹⁷ called out a member of the audience.

[65] "In this corner, weighing 134 pounds, Felix Vargas. And in this corner, weighing 133 pounds, Antonio Cruz. The winner will represent the Boys' Club in the tournament of champions, the Golden Gloves. There will be no draw. May the best man win."

The cheering of the crowd shook the window panes of the old buildings surrounding Tompkins Square Park. At the center of the ring, the referee was giving instructions to the youngsters.

"Keep your punches up. No low blows. No punching on the back of the head. Keep your heads up. Understand? Let's have a clean fight. Now shake hands and come out fighting."

Both youngsters touched gloves and nodded. They turned and danced quickly to their corners. Their head towels and dressing gowns were lifted neatly from their shoulders by their trainers' nimble¹⁸ fingers. Antonio crossed himself.¹⁹ Felix did the same.

BONG! BONG! ROUND ONE. Felix and Antonio turned and faced each other squarely in a fighting pose. Felix wasted no time. He came in fast, head low, half-hunched toward his right shoulder, and lashed out with a straight left. He missed a right cross as Antonio slipped the punch and countered with one-two-three lefts that snapped Felix's head back, sending a mild shock coursing through him. If Felix had any small doubt about their friendship affecting their fight, it was being neatly dispelled.²⁰

[70] Antonio danced, a joy to behold. His left hand was like a piston pumping jabs one right after another with seeming ease. Felix bobbed and weaved and never stopped boring in. He knew that at long range he was at a disadvantage. Antonio had too much reach on him. Only by coming in close could Felix hope to achieve the dreamed-of knockout.

Antonio knew the dynamite that was stored in his amigo brother's fist. He ducked a short right and missed a left hook. Felix trapped him against the ropes just long enough to pour some punishing rights and lefts to Antonio's hard midsection. Antonio slipped away from Felix, crashing two lefts to his head, which set Felix's right ear to ringing.

17. a term derived from Puerto Rican Spanish meaning "Lower East Side"

18. **Nimble** (*adjective*): quick and light in movement or action

19. a ritual blessing made by members of some branches of Christianity

20. **Dispel** (*verb*): to make something go away or end

The fight had created great interest in the neighborhood. Antonio and Felix were well liked and respected. Each had his own loyal following. Betting fever was high and ranged from a bottle of Coke to cold hard cash on the line.

Antonio's fans bet with unbridled¹⁵ faith in his boxing skills. On the other side, Felix's admirers bet on his dynamite-packed fists.

Felix had returned to his apartment early in the morning of August 7th and stayed there, hoping to avoid seeing Antonio. He turned the radio on to salsa music sounds and then tried to read while waiting for word from his manager.

- [50] The fight was scheduled to take place in Tompkins Square Park. It had been decided that the gymnasium of the Boys' Club was not large enough to hold all the people who were sure to attend. In Tompkins Square Park, everyone who wanted could view the fight, whether from ringside or window fire escapes or tenement rooftops.

The morning of the fight Tompkins Square was a beehive of activity with numerous workers setting up the ring, the seats, and the guest speakers' stand. The scheduled bouts began shortly after noon and the park had begun filling up even earlier.

The local junior high school across from Tompkins Square Park served as the dressing room for all the fighters. Each was given a separate classroom with desk tops, covered with mats, serving as resting tables. Antonio thought he caught a glimpse of Felix waving to him from a room at the far end of the corridor. He waved back just in case it had been him.

The fighters changed from their street clothes into fighting gear. Antonio wore white trunks, black socks, and black shoes. Felix wore sky-blue trunks, red socks, and white boxing shoes. They had dressing gowns to match their fighting trunks with their names neatly stitched on the back.

The loudspeakers blared into the open windows of the school. There were speeches by dignitaries,¹⁶ community leaders, and great boxers of yesteryear. Some were well prepared; some improvised on the spot. They all carried the same message of great pleasure and honor at being part of such a historic event. This great day was in the tradition of champions emerging from the streets of the Lower East Side.

- [55] Interwoven with the speeches were the sounds of the other boxing events. After the sixth bout, Felix was much relieved when his trainer, Charlie, said, "Time change. Quick knockout. This is it. We're on."

Waiting time was over. Felix was escorted from the classroom by a dozen fans in white T-shirts with the word FELIX across their fronts.

Antonio was escorted down a different stairwell and guided through a roped-off path.

As the two climbed into the ring, the crowd exploded with a roar. Antonio and Felix both bowed gracefully and then raised their arms in acknowledgment.

15. **Unbridled** (*adjective*): not held back or controlled

16. a person who holds a high rank or office

The evening before the big fight, Tony made his way to the roof of his tenement. In the quiet early dark, he peered over the ledge. Six stories below, the lights of the city blinked and the sounds of cars mingled with the curses and the laughter of children in the street. He tried not to think of Felix, feeling he had succeeded in psyching his mind. But only in the ring would he really know. To spare Felix hurt, he would have to knock him out, early and quick.

Up in the South Bronx, Felix decided to take in a movie in an effort to keep Antonio's face away from his fists. The flick was *The Champion* with Kirk Douglas, the third time Felix was seeing it.

The champion was getting beaten, his face being pounded into raw, wet hamburger. His eyes were cut, jagged, bleeding, one eye swollen, the other almost shut. He was saved only by the sound of the bell.

Felix became the champ and Tony the challenger.

- [40] The movie audience was going out of its head, roaring in blood lust at the butchery going on. The champ hunched his shoulders, grunting and sniffing red blood back into his broken nose. The challenger, confident that he had the championship in the bag, threw a left. The champ countered with a dynamite right that exploded into the challenger's brains.

Felix's right arm felt the shock. Antonio's face, superimposed¹³ on the screen, was shattered and split apart by the awesome force of the killer blow. Felix saw himself in the ring, blasting Antonio against the ropes. The champ had to be forcibly restrained. The challenger was allowed to crumble slowly to the canvas, a broken bloody mess.

When Felix finally left the theater, he had figured out how to psych himself for tomorrow's fight. It was Felix the Champion vs. Antonio the Challenger.

He walked up some dark streets, deserted except for small pockets of wary-looking kids wearing gang colors. Despite the fact that he was Puerto Rican like them, they eyed him as a stranger to their turf. Felix did a fast shuffle, bobbing and weaving, while letting loose a torrent of blows that would demolish whatever got in its way. It seemed to impress the brothers, who went about their own business.

Finding no takers, Felix decided to split to his aunt's. Walking the streets had not relaxed him; neither had the fight flick. All it had done was to stir him up. He let himself quietly into his Aunt Lucy's apartment and went straight to bed, falling into a fitful sleep with sounds of the gong for Round One.

- [45] Antonio was passing some heavy time on his rooftop. How would the fight tomorrow affect his relationship with Felix? After all, fighting was like any other profession. Friendship had nothing to do with it. A gnawing doubt crept in. He cut negative thinking real quick by doing some speedy fancy dance steps, bobbing and weaving like mercury.¹⁴ The night air was blurred with perpetual motions of left hooks and right crosses. Felix, his amigo brother, was not going to be Felix at all in the ring. Just an opponent with another face. Antonio went to sleep, hearing the opening bell for the first round. Like his friend in the South Bronx, he prayed for victory via a quick clean knockout in the first round.

Large posters plastered all over the walls of local shops announced the fight between Antonio Cruz and Felix Vargas as the main bout.

13. to place or lay one thing over another

14. a heavy silvery-white metal that is liquid at ordinary temperatures

[20] Felix finished it for him. "Brother. Tony, let's promise something right here. OK?"

"If it's fair, hermano,⁸ I'm for it." Antonio admired the courage of a tugboat pulling a barge five times its welter-weight⁹ size.

"It's fair, Tony. When we get into the ring, it's gotta be like we never met. We gotta be like two heavy strangers that want the same thing and only one can have it. You understand, don't cha?"

"Sí, I know." Tony smiled. "No pulling punches. We go all the way."

"Yeah, that's right. Listen, Tony. Don't you think it's a good idea if we don't see each other until the day of the fight? I'm going to stay with my Aunt Lucy in the Bronx. I can use Gleason's Gym for working out. My manager says he got some sparring partners with more or less your style."

[25] Tony scratched his nose pensively.¹⁰ "Yeah, it would be better for our heads." He held out his hand, palm upward. "Deal?"

"Deal." Felix lightly slapped open skin.

"Ready for some more running?" Tony asked lamely.

"Naw, bro. Let's cut it here. You go on. I kinda like to get things together in my head."

"You ain't worried, are you?" Tony asked.

[30] "No way, man." Felix laughed out loud. "I got too much smarts for that. I just think it's cooler if we split right here. After the fight, we can get it together again like nothing ever happened."

The amigo brothers were not ashamed to hug each other tightly.

"Guess you're right. Watch yourself, Felix. I hear there's some pretty heavy dudes up in the Bronx. Suavecito,¹¹ OK?"

"OK. You watch yourself too, sabe?"¹²

Tony jogged away. Felix watched his friend disappear from view, throwing rights and lefts. Both fighters had a lot of psyching up to do before the big fight.

[35] The days in training passed much too slowly. Although they kept out of each other's way, they were aware of each other's progress via the ghetto grapevine.

8. Spanish for "brother"

9. a weight in boxing in the range between 140 and 147 pounds

10. **Pensive** (*adjective*): engaged in deep or serious thought

11. a Puerto Rican Spanish slang term for "cool"

12. Spanish for "you know"

Now, after a series of elimination bouts, they had been informed that they were to meet each other in the division finals that were scheduled for the seventh of August, two weeks away — the winner to represent the Boys' Club in the Golden Gloves Championship Tournament.

The two boys continued to run together along the East River Drive. But even when joking with each other, they both sensed a wall rising between them.

One morning less than a week before their bout, they met as usual for their daily workout. They fooled around with a few jabs at the air, slapped skin, and then took off, running lightly along the dirty East River's edge.

Antonio glanced at Felix, who kept his eyes purposely straight ahead, pausing from time to time to do some fancy leg work while throwing one-twos followed by uppercuts to an imaginary jaw. Antonio then beat the air with a barrage⁴ of body blows and short devastating lefts with an overhead jaw-breaking right.

[10] After a mile or so, Felix puffed and said, "Let's stop a while, bro. I think we both got something to say to each other."

Antonio nodded. It was not natural to be acting as though nothing unusual was happening when two ace-boon⁵ buddies were going to be blasting each other within a few short days.

They rested their elbows on the railing separating them from the river. Antonio wiped his face with his short towel. The sunrise was now creating day.

Felix leaned heavily on the river's railing and stared across to the shores of Brooklyn. Finally, he broke the silence.

"Man. I don't know how to come out with it."

[15] Antonio helped. "It's about our fight, right?"

"Yeah, right." Felix's eyes squinted at the rising orange sun. "I've been thinking about it too, panin.⁶ In fact, since we found out it was going to be me and you, I've been awake at night, pulling punches on you, trying not to hurt you."

"Same here. It ain't natural not to think about the fight. I mean, we both are cheverote⁷ fighters and we both want to win. But only one of us can win. There ain't no draws in the eliminations."

Felix tapped Antonio gently on the shoulder. "I don't mean to sound like I'm bragging, bro. But I wanna win, fair and square."

Antonio nodded quietly. "Yeah. We both know that in the ring the better man wins. Friend or no friend, brother or no..."

4. a concentrated outpouring of blows

5. a term meaning "very good friends"

6. a Puerto Rican Spanish slang term meaning "buddy"

7. a Puerto Rican Spanish slang term for "the greatest"

Name: _____ Class: _____

Amigo Brothers

By Piri Thomas
1978

Piri Thomas (1928-2011) was a writer and poet, best known for his memoir Down These Mean Streets. Thomas was born to a Puerto Rican mother and Cuban father. During his childhood, Thomas lived in East Harlem, which became known as "Spanish Harlem." In this short story, two best friends become competitors when they must fight each other in a boxing match. As you read, take notes on what the two friends feel after they find out they will be fighting each other.

- [1] Antonio Cruz and Felix Vargas were both seventeen years old. They were so together in friendship that they felt themselves to be brothers. They had known each other since childhood, growing up on the Lower East Side of Manhattan in the same tenement¹ building on Fifth Street between Avenue A and Avenue B.



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Antonio was fair, lean, and lanky, while Felix was dark, short, and husky. Antonio's hair was always falling over his eyes, while Felix wore his black hair in a natural Afro style.

Each youngster had a dream of someday becoming lightweight champion of the world.

Every chance they had, the boys worked out, sometimes at the Boys' Club on 10th Street and Avenue A and sometimes at the pro's gym on 14th Street. Early morning sunrises would find them running along the East River Drive, wrapped in sweat shirts, short towels around their necks, and handkerchiefs Apache style around their foreheads.

While some youngsters were into street negatives, Antonio and Felix slept, ate, rapped, and dreamt positive. Between them, they had a collection of Fight magazines second to none, plus a scrapbook filled with torn tickets to every boxing match they had ever attended, and some clippings of their own. If asked a question about any given fighter, they would immediately zip out from their memory banks divisions, weights, records of fights, knockouts, technical knockouts, and draws or losses.

- [5] Each had fought many bouts² representing their community and had won two gold-plated medals plus a silver and bronze medallion. The difference was in their style. Antonio's lean form and long reach made him the better boxer, while Felix's short and muscular frame made him the better slugger.³ Whenever they had met in the ring for sparring sessions, it had always been hot and heavy.

1. a large building that has apartments for rent
2. a wrestling or boxing match
3. a person who throws hard punches

MR. DOYLE

7th-GRADE LANGUAGE ARTS

Directions: Read each passage and answer the questions. These passages can also be accessed and complete online at commonlit.org for those who have Internet access.

If a student has forgotten his or her username and/or password and would like to do the work online, email me at shawn.dovle@db.k12.oh.us and I will forward it. Any other questions, feel free to email me. If you need to speak to me, email me your phone number and I will give you a call.

I miss you guys and hope everyone is staying healthy!