

PREVIEW
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A row of yellow school lockers, viewed from a slightly elevated angle. The lockers are arranged in a grid pattern with horizontal and vertical lines. The doors are closed, and the overall color is a bright yellow.

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SEVENTH GRADE
Short Story by Gary Soto

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Gary Soto

Gary Soto is a Mexican-American author, most recognized for his collections of poetry and young adult literature.

- He has published novels, memoirs, a play, and several children's books.
- Soto highlights the struggles of young Mexican-Americans in his work—often using personal experiences.
- He addresses difficult circumstances that pertain to young adults and reflect coming of age issues.



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Gary Soto

- Gary Soto was born and raised in Fresno, California (1952).
- His father died in a factory accident when Soto was only five years old.
- Soto worked young in order to help his family make ends meet. He worked in fields harvesting crops, he picked grapes in the vineyards, and he chopped cotton and beets.
- In high school, Soto became very interested in writing poetry, and studied English and creative writing at college.
- He earned a Master's of Fine Arts Degree from UC Irvine in 1976.
- Soto made a name for himself when he published his first collection of poetry, *The Elements of San Joaquin* (1977).
- Many would argue Soto's most popular poem is "Oranges" published in 1985.
- His popular novels include: *Baseball in April*, *Buried Onions*, and *Too Many Tamales*.
- Some of his short stories include: "The Jacket," "La Bamba," "Mother and Daughter," and "Seventh Grade."



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catechism PREVIEW
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- noun
- formal classes in religious instruction

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raza-style

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- adjective
- describes a friendly gesture that Mexican-Americans use to greet each other

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saludo de vato
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- noun
- Spanish greeting between guy friends

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ese

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• noun

- (Spanish) a slang term used to address a man, as in “hey, man”

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scowl PREVIEW
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• verb
• to frown in an angry or bad-tempered way

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quiver PREVIEW
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• verb
• to shake with a light, rapid movement

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ferocity PREVIEW
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- noun
- fierceness; extreme intensity

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conviction

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• noun

- the state or appearance of being convinced; a very strong belief or opinion

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linger PREVIEW
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• verb
• to continue to stay; delay leaving

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portly

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- adjective
- describes stout or heavy

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bonjour PREVIEW
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- interjection
- (French) hello or good day

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sheepishly PREVIEW
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- adverb
- in a shy or embarrassed way

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Tres bien. Parlez-vous français?

• French meaning: “Very well. Do you speak French?”

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Le bateau est sur l'eau.

• French meaning: “The boat is on the water.”

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Name:
"Seventh Grade" by Gary Soto

Date:

Short Story Pyramid

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Main Character's Name (Protagonist)

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Two words describing the protagonist

Three words that describe the setting

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Four words that describe the main conflict or event

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Five words describing the resolution of the event or theme

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Example Answers:

Short Story Pyramid

Victor

Main Character's Name (Protagonist)

Bold Determined

Two words describing the protagonist

Fresno School Hot

Three words that describe the setting

Eager Lie Crush Impress

Four words that describe the main conflict or event

Embarrassing Genuine Gratitude Excitement Tutor

Five words describing the resolution of the event or theme

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Name:

Date:

Before Reading

In the space below, write down **FIVE** words that you associate with seventh grade,
or any words that you feel best describe seventh grade.

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1)

2)

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3)

4)

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5)

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Name:

Date:

"Seventh Grade" by Gary Soto
Vocabulary and Terms

Word	Part of Speech	Definition
catechism	noun	
raza-style	adjective	
a saludo de vato	noun	
ese	noun	
scowl	verb	
quiver	verb	
ferocity	noun	
conviction	noun	
linger	verb	
portly	adj	
bonjour	interjection	
sheepishly	adverb	
Tres bien. Parlez-vous francais?	French phrase	
Le bateau est sur l'eau.	French phrase	

Name:

Date:

“Seventh Grade” by Gary Soto
Reading Comprehension Questions

1. What background information do you learn about Victor in the opening paragraph?

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2. What is the main reason Victor wants to take French?

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3. How are Michael and Victor similar and how are they different?

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4. Summarize how you know that Victor likes Teresa. What qualities does she have that Victor likes?

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5. What motivates Victor to raise his hand in French class?

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6. What details in the story make it clear that Victor feels humiliated?

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7. How does Victor's teacher respond to Victor's lie after class is over? What does it say about Mr. Bueller's personality?

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8. How do Mr. Bueller's actions affect the plot?

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9. How has Victor's life changed by the end of the day?

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10. What is the theme of this story?

Name:

Date:

“Seventh Grade” by Gary Soto
Discussion Questions

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1. What is your opinion of Teresa? Support your answer with evidence from the story.

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2. Why do people feel the need to create false impressions of themselves?

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3. What negative impacts might come from Victor’s little lie? Are all lies harmful? Explain.

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4. How does the author depict seventh grade in the story? Is it an accurate portrayal of today's world?

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5. What are others ways Mr. Bueller could have reacted to Victor? How would the story be different?

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6. What advice would you give Victor about the way he tries to impress Teresa and their friendship moving forward?

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7. Name a time you were eager to impress someone, whether it be a coach, parent, teacher, friend, etc. How did your experience go?

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“Seventh Grade” by Gary Soto – Suggested Lesson Procedure

1. Facilitate the before reading activity called “Five Words/Three Words” (very easy).

To complete “Five Words/Three Words,” you will ask students to INDEPENDENTLY list five words that come to mind when they think of SEVENTH GRADE. After 2 minutes, direct students to then get in groups of 3 or 4 to share and discuss their words. Then, ask each group to collectively select the best THREE words which they must share and explain to the entire class.

2. Review the vocabulary terms and author’s background with students using the Powerpoint presentation. Students should copy the definitions into their graphic organizers. (OR you could direct students to look up the definitions independently.)

3. Read the short story “Seventh Grade” by Gary Soto as a class (this takes about 14 minutes without stopping). You could also have students listen to the audio version. Here is a link I found: [Audio Seventh Grade Short Story](#).

4. Assign the reading comprehension questions. Students may complete this independently or in pairs.

5. Have students work in groups of 2-3 to complete the discussion questions.

6. Assign students the after reading “Story Pyramid” worksheet to summarize the story.

Note to teachers: Due to copyright law, I am unable to offer a full text version of the story. If you enter “Seventh Grade Full Text by Gary Soto” into any search engine, you will find a copy of the story available for you to print and use in class. Here is the link I used: [Full Text Seventh Grade](#)

If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to email me at
chompingatthelit@gmail.com

Name:

Date:

Before Reading

In the space below, write down **FIVE** words that you associate with seventh grade, or any words that you feel best describe seventh grade.

PREVIEW

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1)

2)

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Name:

Date:

“Seventh Grade” by Gary Soto
Vocabulary and Terms

Word	Part of Speech	Definition
catechism	noun	formal classes in religious instruction
raza-style	adjective	describes a friendly gesture that Mexican-Americans use to greet one another
a saludo de vato	noun	Spanish greeting between guy friends
ese	noun	a slang term used to address a man, as in “hey man”
scowl	verb	frown in an angry or bad-tempered way
quiver	verb	to shake with a slight, rapid movement
ferocity	noun	fierceness; extreme intensity
conviction	noun	the state or appearance of being convinced; a very strong belief or opinion
linger	verb	to continue to stay; delay leaving
portly	adj	describes stout or heavy
bonjour	interjection	French for “Hello” or “Good day”
sheepishly	adverb	in a shy or embarrassed way
Tres bien. Parlez-vous français?	French phrase	“Very well. Do you speak French?”
Le bateau est sur l'eau.	French phrase	“The boat is on the water.”

Name:

Date:

"Seventh Grade" by Gary Soto
Reading Comprehension Questions

1. What background information do you learn about Victor in the opening paragraph?

Readers learn that Victor can speak Spanish and that he would like to travel to France one day. Victor currently lives in Fresno, but he dislikes how hot it gets. Victor lives in a community surrounded by "brown people" implying his community is mostly Mexican like Victor. Victor shows himself to be mindful and a planner. He is someone who thinks about the future often. He is also prepared to fill out his electives confidently.

2. What is the main reason Victor wants to take French?

Victor mentions he would like to travel to France someday, but more importantly, Victor wants to take French because the girl that he likes (Teresa) is taking French, and he hopes to be in the same class as her. This year, Victor is going to make Teresa "his girl."

3. How are Michael and Victor similar and how are they different?

Victor and Michael are both young Mexican-American boys interested in girls and want girls to like them back. Michael has determined from magazines that girls like boys who scowl, so that is his plan to get attention. Michael is not sold on this strategy and thinks it's foolish. Instead, Michael tries to engage in interactions with Teresa and acts very casual although readers know Michael is nervous. Unlike Michael, Victor is already interested in one particular girl, Teresa. Victor has a plan to increase his chances of her noticing him by making sure Teresa sees him often.

4. Summarize how you know that Victor likes Teresa. What qualities does she have that Victor likes?

Victor lingers after homeroom in order to "bump" into Teresa and speak with her. When he does talk with her, he blushes since he is nervous. The narrator reveals Victor's thoughts that he is taking French class in hopes to form a relationship with her. Victor thinks Teresa is pretty and smart. He describes her as "cute" and he admires her mathematical ability.

5. What motivates Victor to raise his hand in French class?

Victor raises his hand because he is eager to impress Teresa. He thinks by showing he is smart and knows French that Teresa will notice him; however, his impatience for an opportunity to impress Teresa prevents him from thinking that this lie will backfire and he might actually have to say something in French.

6. What details in the story make it clear that Victor feels humiliated?

Readers know Victor is humiliated because he wishes he could start his life over. Victor bites his thumb until he tears off a sliver of skin which is a sign of being anxious and worried. "The bell sounded for fifth period, and Victor shot out of the room, avoiding the stares of the other kids" which shows he is ashamed and thinks that the other kids will make fun of him.

7. How does Victor's teacher respond to Victor's lie after class is over? What does it say about Mr. Bueller's personality?

Mr. Bueller looks at Victor and then keeps his head down pretending not to hear the conversation between Victor and Teresa. Mr. Bueller sits down, smiles, and hums remembering the things he did when he was young and trying to impress a girl he liked. Mr. Bueller is kind and thoughtful. He is very understanding and cares about his students.

8. How do Mr. Bueller's actions affect the plot?

Mr. Bueller allows Victor's lie to continue which means Teresa believes that Victor can speak French. Mr. Bueller saves Victor from great embarrassment. Teresa now wants Victor to tutor her in French. Victor looks forward to the rest of seventh grade.

9. How has Victor's life changed by the end of the day?

Victor feels more confident in himself. He appreciates his teacher Mr. Bueller and he likes Teresa even more than before. Victor is excited about seventh grade, but now he is determined to learn French so that he can continue his friendship with Teresa.

10. What is the theme of this story?

Be yourself and be careful about lying because you can easily get caught. It is important to be yourself because pretending to be someone else can cause you trouble.

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Date:

“Seventh Grade” by Gary Soto
Discussion Questions

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Answers will vary for all.

1. What is your opinion of Teresa? Support your answer with evidence from the story.

Answers will vary.

2. Why do people feel the need to create false impressions of themselves?

Answers will vary. They are insecure or unsure about who they are. People are worried what will happen if people don't accept them socially.

3. What negative impacts might come from Victor's little lie? Are all lies harmful? Explain.

Students might say that Teresa may find out the truth eventually and then think badly of Victor.

4. How does the author depict seventh grade in the story? Is it an accurate portrayal of today's world?

Soto portrays seventh grade using minor but vivid details of the school environment. For example: wobbly card tables, chalkboards, long lines, picking classes, the water fountain that never turns off, and students all wearing new fall clothes. Soto also uses the characters' actions to depict what seventh grade is like. For example, Victor is constantly distracted by thoughts of his crush. Victor is easily embarrassed and wishes to start his whole life over because of one tiny moment. This shows that relationships and social interactions are important to many middle schoolers, which I believe remains true today.

5. What are others ways Mr. Bueller could have reacted to Victor? How would the story be different?

Mr. Bueller could have embarrassed Victor or made him look foolish both in class and afterward when Victor was speaking to Teresa. Because Mr. Bueller can identify with Victor, he lets the moment pass. If Mr. Bueller made it known to the class that Victor did not know French, Victor would probably hate Mr. Bueller. Teresa would have never talked to Victor after class and Victor would not be excited about the rest of seventh grade.

6. What advice would you give Victor about the way he tries to impress Teresa and their friendship moving forward?

Answers will vary.

7. Name a time you were eager to impress someone, whether it be a coach, parent, teacher, friend, etc. How did your experience go?

Answers will vary.