“Only with the heart can a person see rightly; what is essential is invisible to the eye.”

Antoine de Saint-Exupéry
from The Little Prince
# UNIT AT A GLANCE

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“Cin, Cin, Cindy!” the three girls call out.

“Cindy! Will you help me put up the decorations for the dance?” Agnes says.

“Could you find my scissors, Cindy?” Marybeth chimes in.

“We need more cups!” Dara cries. “Cindy, where are the cups?” Cindy hurries over. “Here I come, Agnes,” she says in a low voice. “Okay, Marybeth. I’ll find them, Dara.”

Agnes is small and exquisite. Marybeth is strong and graceful. Dara is tall, dark, and statuesque. All three girls are beautiful. And popular. And busy.

Cindy is only busy. She sweeps the floor, brushes off the costumes, puts up the posters, runs the errands, counts the money, twists the crepe paper into bright spirals and hangs it from the gymnasium ceiling.

“You’re serving the punch tonight, aren’t you, Cindy?” Agnes says. It isn’t really a question.

Cindy nods. Of course she is. She always serves the punch. She never dances.

If you look at her eyes—you don’t, nobody does—but if you did, you’d wonder why blue eyes are considered attractive. Cindy’s eyes
do not remind anyone of the sky or the sea. Faded blue jeans have more colour. Worn flannel sheets possess more sparkle. Old dishwater is more lively.

As for her hair, it hangs there, lank and mousy and dull, without even the energy to snarl. Her nose is nondescript, her mouth twists nervously whenever anyone asks her a question. Her eyes blink. She bites her lips, she whispers, she winds her hair around her fingers and then chews on it.

"Where'd you get the shirt, Cin?" Agnes takes the sleeve between her thumb and forefinger. It's a flannel shirt, big and baggy, like Cindy's other clothes.

"My brother," Cindy says.

"Give it back to your brother," Agnes says. "The colour's all wrong. You look washed out."

"Oh," says Cindy. She imagines her face like a piece of cloth, loose and empty. Her shoulders slump even more.

Agnes turns away. A tall boy has just walked into the gymnasium. He has broad shoulders and shaggy blond hair. His eyes are blue and sparkling.

"Jeff!" Dara cries, holding open her arms.

Marybeth runs to him, but it is Agnes who gets there first. She puts her hand on his arm and smiles triumphantly at the other two.

"Let's go for ice cream," Jeff says. "Are we done working?"

"Cindy will finish," says Dara. "Won't you, Cindy?"

Cindy glances at the posters on the floor, the unfurled wheels of crepe paper, the piles of dust in the corners of the gymnasium, and nods. "Of course," she says. She always does.

Jeff links arms with Agnes and Marybeth, while Dara follows somewhat sulkily behind.

No one asks Cindy to go for ice cream. She wouldn't dream of it, anyway. Broom in hand, she hurries around the gymnasium, making sure everything is ready for the dance.

Tonight Cindy will stand behind the refreshment table, pouring punch and serving cookies on paper plates. Dara, Agnes, and Marybeth will all dance with Jeff, who will gaze adoringly at each in turn. Dara will be splendid in a rose gown that sets off her dark hair and eyes. Agnes will be exquisite in white with a wreath of flowers.
in her pale hair. Marybeth will wear a braided ribbon around her neck and a dress of many colours, and as she dances, she will look like a fountain shooting off sparks of coloured light.

Cindy will wear a dress that Marybeth gave her. It is dark blue and tight in the shoulders, too short, and the zipper cuts into her back. On Marybeth it looked graceful and lovely, but it’s cut all wrong for Cindy. But it’s better at least than her only other dress, a shapeless brown tent also handed down to her.

When Cindy pours the punch tonight, she will try not to spill it on her classmates. Otherwise Agnes might yell—she has a temper. When the dance is done, Cindy will sweep up, count the money, and put it in a safe. Then she will go home, eke out a few tears, and fall asleep.

But it doesn’t happen like that.

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At seven o’clock, Cindy goes home to eat and change into her dress. Her mother has left her supper on the plate. The mashed potatoes are cold and lumpy, and a thin layer of grease has congealed over the roast beef.

“What do you expect when you come home at all hours?” her mother complains. “I’m not a servant, you know.”

“Sorry,” Cindy says.

“Sorry isn’t enough. You ought to help out a little more. I’m tired. I’ve been working all day. Don’t expect to get out of here tonight without doing the dishes and mopping the floor.”

To drown out the sound of her mother’s nagging, Cindy picks up a magazine. As she turns the pages, her eye is caught by a picture of one of those ceramic statues that you buy in six instalments of $24.99 a month.

“Yes, you, too, can own this enchanting one-of-a-kind figurine,” says the ad. “Your very own fairy godmother will watch over and protect you with her realistic magic wand. Hand-painted silver stars decorate the edges of her robe. Tiny crystal slippers adorn her feet. Produced in a very limited edition by the acclaimed European porcelain artist, Tiddly Wink.”

“And blah, blah, blah,” Cindy says. But she takes another quick look at the fairy godmother. And then she grabs a pen and begins
filling out the order form. It’s silly, really; she doesn’t know why she’s doing it. For one thing, she doesn’t have the money; for another, she doesn’t like painted porcelain statues. But something is pushing her—almost like a hand on her back, a voice in her ear—that she can’t resist.

Cindy fills in her name, address, phone number, and age, then carefully tears out the coupon. If anyone needs a fairy godmother, it’s her, even if it’s a phony porcelain one.

And she puts the coupon in her pocket, thinking that maybe she’ll mail it later.

But it doesn’t happen that way.

Poof! A small figure has appeared on the table in front of her, right between the dinner plate and the water glass. She is about fifteen centimetres tall, with pretty porcelain cheeks, and bright blue eyes. She is wearing a long, flowing silk gown with hand-painted stars along the hem and sleeves.

“Oh!” Cindy cries out, then claps her hand over her mouth. The figurine is beautifully made. She almost seems to breathe. Slowly Cindy reaches out and touches the masses of silver hair piled into a bun.

“Stop poking at me!” snaps the figurine.

Cindy hastily withdraws her hand.

“I’m your fairy godmother,” she says with a haughty toss of her head. “In case you didn’t notice.”

Cindy feels in her pocket for the coupon, but it’s gone. And she didn’t even mail it.

The fairy godmother casts a shrewd, appraising glance at her and whistles low under her breath. “You’re a mess,” she says. “No wonder you called me.”

“I actually never called you.” Cindy twists a strand of lank hair around her finger and starts to chew on it. “I mean, I meant to...”

“Oh, stop blathering!” says the fairy godmother. “Take it from me. I can fix you up good. I know just what you need.”

“You do?” Cindy asks.

“Cindy! Did you clear the dishes? Is the floor washed? Don’t forget to take out the garbage!” her mother calls from the other room.
“You need me.” The fairy godmother raises a tiny golden wand. “Put yourself under my tutelage. All you have to say is yes and you’ll be completely transformed. Is that an offer you can refuse?”

Cindy opens her mouth, then shuts it. Does she really want a fairy godmother that much? Have things gotten to that point? Hasn’t she been getting along fine? Well, maybe not fine, but she’s coping.

“Do you hear me, Cindy?” her mother says. “Answer me! If that kitchen isn’t completely clean when I come in, you can forget about the dance!”

“Okay,” Cindy says to the fairy godmother.

“Okay, what?” the fairy godmother retorts. “Follow instructions! You have to say yes.”

“Yes!” Cindy says.

The fairy godmother waves her wand. Poof! The dishes are washed, the floor is clean, the garbage is empty.

“Cindy!!” her mother calls.

“All done, Mom!” She picks up the fairy godmother and runs up the stairs to her room.

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“Stand over there.” The fairy godmother points to the corner. “Take off those clothes,” she orders.

“Do I have to?” Cindy shrinks back. But at the commanding look in the fairy godmother’s eye, she takes off first the big faded flannel shirt her brother gave her, then the baggy jeans, the sneakers and heavy socks, and finally the old T-shirt she wears over her underwear.

Cindy wraps her arms around herself. Her skin is too pale, her arms and legs too long, and her hips are too narrow. It doesn’t help
that she needed to buy new underwear six months ago. Three safety pins hold her bra together; her underpants are ripped at the seams.

The fairy godmother gives her a sharp, appraising glance. “You don’t have a bad figure, you know. You should show it off more.”

“Uh...” Cindy doesn’t know what to say. She wishes that she could melt into the floor. The fairy godmother mutters a few words to herself, then waves her wand again. The air rustles like silk and releases the scent of a hundred flowers. Poof! A large mirror appears across from Cindy. She stares at the stranger reflected there. Who is it? She doesn’t recognize herself. She is completely transformed.

Her hair is piled on her head in shining, graceful curls. The blush on her cheeks and lips is not natural, but it has been so artfully applied that no one can tell.

And then there is the dress. It is pale apricot, with a long sweeping skirt, a tightly-cut bodice, and lace-covered sleeves. Her feet are shod in matching apricot-coloured slippers. There are rings on her fingers and a velvet choker around her neck.

“You’re a vision,” says the fairy godmother, clasping her hands.

Cindy twirls around. The dress is looped in the back, with a full sash. Indeed, the dress is so full of lace and ribbons and bows, hoops and sleeves and sashes, that she feels as if she could set sail in it.

She frowns at herself in the mirror, wondering if she has new underwear, too, perhaps something in French silk. To tell the truth, she’s not that crazy about the dress.

“What’s the matter?” the fairy godmother demands. “Don’t you like it?”

“It’s the colour,” Cindy says hesitantly. If she asks for a simpler dress, she might offend the fairy godmother. “Don’t you think blue or violet would look better on me?”

The fairy godmother shakes her head. “You young girls just don’t know left from right, or up from down. The colour is perfect for you, trust me.”

Cindy nods. “Okay.” It’s what she’s been saying all her life to everyone.

“This dress will change your life,” the fairy godmother says. “It will make you happy. And beautiful. And loved.”

Cindy looks at herself again. She resembles an overdressed box
of candy. She’s never seen Agnes, or Dara, or Marybeth wearing anything like this. “Really? You’re sure?”

The fairy godmother has a tinkling, chime-like laugh. “You’ll be the belle of the ball. Do you know how to dance?”

“No.” Her voice quavers a little. Even when she gets a break from serving punch, she always stands at the edge of the crowd and watches the others dance. No one has ever asked her to dance. Not even the other girls want to dance with her.

The fairy godmother raises the tiny golden wand again and points it at Cindy’s feet. Poof! They begin to tingle. Heat rushes to her toes. She begins to move. One, two, three; one, two, three. Step, glide, step. Cindy swirls and swoops around her bedroom as if she’s done it for a lifetime, while the fairy godmother claps in time.

“Bravo!” the fairy godmother cries. “Bravo! Babe, you’re terrific!”

Cindy comes to a halt. Was that really her, Cindy, dancing? Automatically she reaches up for a strand of hair to chew on.

“Oh, no! None of that!” The fairy godmother waves her wand once more. Poof!

Cindy’s hand freezes in midair. How could she ever have chewed on her hair? What a disgusting habit! The very thought of it makes her stomach churn.

As she lowers her hand, Cindy notices that her nails are all perfectly shaped and polished a pale apricot. She wants to bite them, but somehow she can’t. She can only gaze admiringly at the sapphire-and-gold rings on her fingers.

She dances a few steps, then halts in front of the mirror. Is that really her, she wonders again. She’s like a little girl dressed up in her mother’s clothes. Everyone is going to see through this costume.

“Oh!! Oh!!!” Cindy cries out at the very thought of it. Tears streak down her face, but her make-up does not smear.

She knows what is going to happen. They are going to send her to the washroom to scrub off the make-up and change back into her old, dark hand-me-downs. Then she will return to serve punch all night to Jeff and Marybeth and Dara and Agnes, and everything will be the way it’s always been.

But it doesn’t happen like that.

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When Cindy walks into the room, everyone falls silent and stares at her. She panics, she wants to run, but in these shoes, she’d fall on her face.

But no, instead, a girl named Alicia, who has never spoken to Cindy before, cries, “You look so fabulous!”

The fairy godmother is right. The dress is a hit; it transforms the evening. Everyone loves it. Everyone loves her.

“That dress!” Dara moans.

“Who does your hair?” Marybeth cries.

“Those bows!” Agnes screams. “And the lace, too!”

“You’re stunning! Beautiful! Fabulous!” The compliments rain down on her like flowers.

Do they recognize her? No one calls her by name. They all stare at her with big eyes. Can they be envious eyes?

As Cindy walks—or rather glides—across the gymnasium, Jeff takes her hand and says, “Will you dance?”

Cindy nods. This really is a fairy tale. The music begins. They dance together as if they’ve done it all their lives. She moves as if enchanted—and of course she is. She only hopes there are no side effects; after all, she never takes so much as an aspirin.

Jeff gazes adoringly into her eyes. “You’re beautiful,” he says. “That colour...what is it?”

“Apricot,” Cindy says.

As they dance around and around, not missing a step, his eyes never leave her face. “I know I’ve seen you before.”

“Yes,” Cindy says. “You’ve seen me before.”

“Where?”

Cindy almost smiles. “Maybe in another life.”

“I knew it!” he cries out triumphantly.

He leans toward her and whispers in her ear, “We were meant to be together.”

Cindy is beginning to have her doubts. Did he actually say those words? “Meant to be together?” How corny can you get? Dancing with Jeff isn’t all it’s cracked up to be. This conversation is actually dumber than dumb, and she’s beginning to feel a little annoyed by all the other girls staring and smiling at her.
She glances over at the refreshment table. A thin girl in an ill-fitting dress is pouring drinks. Cindy doesn’t wish she were back there again, but she doesn’t one hundred percent like where she is, either. Maybe not even ninety percent. Or even eighty.

The music stops. She sighs with relief, but Jeff won’t let her go.

“I want the next dance and the next dance and the next,” he says.

But her feet hurt. She wonders if the fairy godmother goofed and made the slippers too tight. Could a fairy godmother make a mistake? “I want to sit down.”

“You can’t.” Jeff holds her arm tightly. “I’ll die of unhappiness if I can’t have just one more dance. Please.”

Now he’s definitely getting on her nerves. Maybe it’s that pleading but possessive look in his eyes, or maybe it’s that he’s not listening to anything she says.

Cindy tries to pull away, but he won’t let her go.

“Dance with me now,” he insists.

Tears well up in her eyes. “Please...” she mutters.

Then she stops and takes a breath. She is different tonight. She’s not the old, shy, scared Cindy. The fairy godmother has transformed her, made her a new person. Very well, she will be that new person.

She smiles sweetly at Jeff, and then kicks him hard in the shins.

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In the bathroom, where she has escaped, dozens of girls mob her. They want to know about the dress, about her hair, her make-up, how she made Jeff fall in love with her so quickly, and why he looked so forlorn and stunned just now on the dance floor.

“What’s your secret?” Agnes asks breathlessly.

“I have a fairy godmother,” Cindy says, pretending to touch up her make-up. It still looks as flawless as when she left the house.

The other girls laugh.

“What’s it like dancing with Jeff?” asks a shy, plump girl.

“Boring.”

“Is anyone else going to get to dance with Jeff tonight?” This is Dara speaking.

“I hope so,” Cindy says.

“How come we’ve never seen you before?” one of the girls demands.
Cindy shrugs. “But you have. I always served the punch at the refreshment table.”

“No—not you! Cindy’s the one who always does it. Have you ever run into her? She’s nothing like you. You’d never allow yourself to even be seen with her!” Dara, Marybeth, Agnes, and the other girls laugh.

They don’t know who she is. They think she’s beautiful and poised and glamorous. They smooth her dress, tug at her bows, and pat the ribbons in her hair.

“We want to see how this lace is made. How did you get your hair to curl on top of your head like that? Are your shoes made of silk?”

Touching, prodding, and admiring, they crowd her into a corner. Cindy can barely breathe. “Give me some air, girls,” she pleads.

They don’t listen to her.

Once again, she is about to burst into tears. But again she stops. This is her night; she is the belle of the ball. She is not shy, scared, slouching, slumping Cindy anymore. She’s a new person. She already had a trial run with Jeff. She just needs some more practice.

Cindy opens her mouth and yells at the top of her lungs, “BUG OFF!”

Dara, Marybeth, Agnes, and the others flee.

Cindy smiles at herself in the bathroom mirror. She rips away her sash, kicks off the uncomfortable slippers, ties them to a loop on her dress, and walks barefoot to the gymnasium.

Jeff is waiting for her. He is limping slightly, but his eyes still light up when he sees her. “The next dance?” he asks, eyeing her bare feet and the slippers dangling from her dress.

“No, thank you.”

“We have to see each other again. You’re so—different.” He reaches for her hand, but she jerks it away and runs off.

She looks back once at Jeff. Good riddance! she thinks. That’s the end of that.

It is ten minutes before midnight. Cindy is looking forward to getting off this horrid dress, scrubbing all the make-up from her face, and having a long, hot soak in the tub.

But it doesn’t happen like that.

◆ ◆ ◆
Her parents are asleep when Cindy lets herself in with the key, but the fairy godmother is awake. Her blue porcelain eyes glitter with excitement as she paces back and forth on the shelf next to Cindy’s bed.

“Well? How was it?”
“Different,” Cindy says.
“The experience of a lifetime?”
“Yes.”
“I knew it would be!” the fairy godmother crows triumphantly.
“I hated it.”

The fairy godmother crosses her arms. “And just what was so bad about it, Miss Unreasonable? Weren’t you the most beautiful girl at the dance? The belle of the ball? Didn’t the most handsome boy fall in love with you?”
“Yes, yes, yes...” With clumsy fingers, Cindy unfastens the dress.
“Can you help me get these hoops off?”

The fairy godmother points the wand at Cindy’s costume. Poof! It’s gone. All that’s left is a sash and a pair of slippers. She’s sitting in her underwear again. At least it’s French silk.

“You had an evening any girl would die for,” says the fairy godmother, stamping her tiny porcelain foot. “How can you complain?”
Cindy tosses the apricot slippers to the floor. “You made them too tight,” she says. “I could hardly breathe in that dress. And Jeff is a bore.”

“Picky, picky, picky. Don’t let little details stand in the way of your happiness.”
“You call this happiness?” Cindy tugs at the pins in her hair.
“It will be soon. We haven’t even begun...” The fairy godmother has a determined look that Cindy doesn’t like. “By next week, every boy in the school will be mad for you.”
“No, thank you,” says Cindy, imagining a long line of Jeffs approaching her with that stubborn, possessive gleam in their eyes.
“We’ll wow ’em,” says the fairy godmother. “We’ll pow ’em. They’ll love you. They won’t leave you alone.”
“No, thank you!”
“Tonight was just a warm-up.” The fairy godmother’s eyes sparkle. “Wait until you see what I can really do.” She waves her wand again and again.

Poof! Poof! Poof! As if in a slide show, Cindy sees herself in one outfit after another. There are leggings in bright colours, cabled sweaters, gauzy blouses with lace and pearl buttons, silk skirts that cling, jungle print dresses, leather boots, and matching backpacks... And her hair is short, long, wavy, straight, piled on her head, cascading around her shoulders, curling over her ears.

It makes her dizzy to see herself in so many ways. She can hardly remember what she really looks like.

“Enough!” she cries. “Please! I don’t want to see any more.”
The fairy godmother’s eyes burn more brightly than ever. She points her wand at Cindy again.

“We’ll redo your face,” she says. “Make your nose a little straighter and your eyes a little larger. We’ll put highlights in your hair and sculpt your thighs. We’ll change your name to Cinda. No, to Synda, Cyndina...”

“Stop!” Cindy cries.

The fairy godmother keeps waving her wand. Cindy, Cinda, Synda, Cyndina, or whoever she is now, seizes the fairy godmother, plucks the wand from her fingers, and breaks it in two.

Instantly, Cindy—no doubt who she is now—returns to her former self. The straight, lank brown hair. The ripped underwear held together by pins.
“You’ll be sorry!” sobs the fairy godmother, her little porcelain features distorted by rage. “A fairy godmother’s curse on you! You’ll go back to serving sodas! You’re nothing without me! Twerp! Brat! Ingrate!”

Knowing that in fairy tales it’s always important to be polite, Cindy smiles and says, “Thank you,” once more before she picks up the shrieking figurine and drops her onto the bare floor, where she shatters into a thousand pieces.

Cindy sweeps her up carefully. She wouldn’t want to cut herself on pieces of her fairy godmother.

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At school the next day, between classes, she runs into Dara, Agnes, and Marybeth.

“Where were you last night?” Agnes complains. “We had to find someone else to serve the punch. And no one swept the floor.”

“You’ve got to start making posters for the next dance,” says Dara.

“And I have a dress for you to mend,” Marybeth adds. “I need it by tomorrow.”

“Tomorrow?” Cindy’s eyes prickle with tears. “I can’t possibly—” Suddenly she stops. Is she still shy, scared, slumping, slouching Cindy? Is she still going to sweep the floor, mend the dress, make the posters? Now that she isn’t the new Cindy anymore, is she the old Cindy again?

It might happen that way...or maybe it won’t.

Cindy faces the three girls.

“I’m out of the picture,” she says. Her voice begins to quaver, but she takes a breath and goes on. “Mend your own dress, Marybeth.”

“What?” The girls stare at her in shock.

Cindy stands up straighter. “Make your own posters,” she says. Her mouth is firm. Her eyes are clear. Her voice is strong. This isn’t a fairy tale anymore, so when she smiles, she isn’t being polite. She walks away. And then turns and yells, “Sweep your own floors!” And that’s the end of that.

She made it happen that way. ✦
1. **Responding to the Story**
   a. Describe the relationship between Cindy and her friends. What do you think of it?
   b. What do the transformations do for Cindy?
   c. In a short paragraph, describe the main message of this story. Exchange your writing with a partner and compare your views.
   d. Which events in this story do you find unrealistic? Which are realistic?

### STRATEGIES

2. **Reading Compare Stories**
   With a partner, discuss what happens in Cinderella. Read the definition of parody at right. Do you think that “The Transformations of Cindy R.” is a parody of Cinderella? Explain. Copy the chart below into your notebook and complete it with your partner, comparing the stories. Do you think this was an effective way for Anne Mazer to tell her story? Give reasons for your answer.

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<td><strong>Her Problem</strong></td>
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A parody is a humorous imitation of a serious writing format. It follows the form of the original, but changes its sense to nonsense.
3. **Writing A Fairy Tale**

Use the chart that you created in “Compare Stories” to help you write a short fairy tale, or a parody of one. It could be a contemporary fairy tale that has a message, such as “You can’t buy happiness.” Begin by jotting down notes about the characters and events. Remember to use strong adjectives and adverbs when describing your characters. Read your story to a younger student.

4. **Language Conventions Adjectives and Adverbs**

Adjectives are words that are used to describe nouns. Adverbs are used to describe verbs. For example:

> It was a stormy night when the ship sank suddenly.

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<th>adjective</th>
<th>noun</th>
<th>verb</th>
<th>adverb</th>
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</table>

In this story, the author uses both adjectives and adverbs to create vivid images of Cindy’s physical appearance and personality, both before and after her “transformation.” Copy the following chart into your notebook and list the adjectives and adverbs that the author has used to describe her. Pick one word from your chart that you think best describes Cindy “before” and “after.”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cindy “Before”</th>
<th>Cindy “After”</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Adjectives</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adverbs</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Self-Assessment:** In one paragraph, describe Cindy, either before or after her transformation, using adjectives and adverbs that you have chosen. Show your writing to a partner and discuss your choice of descriptive words.

5. **Media Truth in Advertising**

Reread the details of the advertisement, on page 13 of the story, in which Cindy finds her fairy godmother. How is this like a real ad? How does it parody one? What does it promise?

Record in your notebook the details of at least three TV or magazine ads that make similar promises. In your opinion, which is the most effective or persuasive? Why? Explain fully.
You Should Wear Khakis with That

Zits Comic Strip by Jerry Scott and Jim Borgman

GOALS AT A GLANCE

- Analyse the message of a comic strip.
- Develop a dialogue between two characters.
1. **Responding to the Comic Strip**
Discuss the content and message of this comic strip with a small group. Why will Jeremy take his girlfriend’s advice, but not his mother’s? Do you agree that how you dress is “who you are”? Explain.

2. **Oral Communication**  
**Develop Dialogue**
Think of a similar situation that you’ve experienced or witnessed. Develop eight lines of dialogue focussing on the experience. Role-play your dialogue with a classmate.
A recent survey from teen magazine ZOOT asked 66 teens between the ages of 13 and 18 whether they chose their friends on the basis of appearance. Two said “Yes.” Two said “Sometimes.” One said “Partly.” But 61 (or 92%) of them said “No.”

They said their friends’ other qualities—personality, sense of humour, loyalty—were more important than appearance. And yet 25 of these same teens said they’d like to change something about the way they looked. Usually they wanted to change their shapes—be stronger, thinner, taller. Sometimes they wanted to get rid of freckles or change the colour of their eyes or the shapes of their noses.

How come so many teens think other people are keeping an eye on their appearance when they don’t worry about how other people look? Why do they tell themselves that other people’s...
looks don’t matter, but theirs do? Actually, a lot of the teens in the survey knew the answer to that question. They said the reason they wanted to change was because “I’d feel better about myself,” “I’d have more confidence,” or “I’d feel more secure.” In other words, it isn’t the actual change in appearance they want so much as the feeling they think will go with it. What they really want is to feel good about themselves.

“I’D LIKE TO HAVE A FLAWLESS COMPLEXION, AND BE A BIT SKINNER AND TALLER.”
Jan, 15

A lot of adults have difficulty with the whole body-image issue, but it’s particularly tough for teens. During the teen years, you get a first real look at what you’re going to look like as an adult. Sometime during your teens, you reach your maximum height and your body shape begins to stabilize. Naturally, your body doesn’t look like anyone else’s body, and it probably doesn’t look like any of those “ideal” bodies you see on television or in magazines.

To make things even tougher, some teens begin to have trouble with their weight and a lot have trouble with acne. Some find out they need glasses, or braces, or both.

It’s tough to learn to accept yourself the way you are, and feel confident about it, when your body’s going through so many changes.

“I WOULD RATHER BE SOMEONE ELSE.”
Fran, 15

Some people are so determined to change the way they look that they actually damage their bodies by going on starvation diets, over-exercising, or using steroids or other drugs. They’re often doing these things because of other problems in their lives that have nothing to do with the shape of their bodies, and they can end up with major, long-term illnesses.

Some people get onto a treadmill. They don’t like the way they look so they don’t look after themselves. They don’t eat properly or get enough exercise.
Too much junk food and too little exercise make them feel depressed. Depressed people usually look as bad as they feel.

Others become like mismatched jigsaw puzzles, picking up bits and pieces of appearance from other people, but with no clear sense of what they really want to look like. As a result, they’re never satisfied with their appearances.

“NOBODY REALLY LIKES EVERYTHING ABOUT THEMSELVES.”
Sandy, 14

Teens who focus on the way they look and want to change their bodies are focusing on the wrong part of the equation. What needs changing is not their shapes or heights, but the way they see themselves. “If I looked better, I’d feel better about myself” is backward. When you are confident about yourself, you feel better. And when you feel better, you look better.

So, how do you build self-confidence?

Psychologists point out that people are always talking to themselves, and that the talk can get pretty negative. They think things like, “That was a dumb move,” or “I shouldn’t have said that.” Sometimes the self-talk is more general—and more destructive. “I’m so ugly.” “I’m so stupid.” “I’m no good.”

The good news is that you can train yourself to think self-confidently. The following exercises can help improve the way you think—and the way you feel:

1. Remember that few people are satisfied with everything about themselves. Everyone’s good at some things, and not so good at others. Train yourself to focus on your strengths, your talents, and your interests, rather than your shortcomings.

2. Every time you notice you’re dumping on yourself, substitute a more positive thought. Remind yourself of the things you’re good at. Say, “So I messed up. I can’t be perfect at everything.”

3. Remember that feelings change. It’s happened to you before: a situation looks terrible one day, not so bad the next. By the day after that, it’s forgotten.
Remind yourself that you’ve overcome problems before, and know that you can do it again.

4. Imagine that your life is a movie, with you in the starring role. Are your problems really disasters, or are you just seeing them that way? When you stand back from your problems, sometimes it’s easier to put them in perspective.

5. Spend time with people you trust and feel comfortable with. Talking to them about things that are bothering you can make problems seem less important. (If the problems are bigger than you can handle on your own, talk to a professional counsellor.)

6. Remember that you’re in charge of your emotions. People can make you feel badly if you let them, and you can make yourself feel badly, too. Everyone has “down” times, but you can make yourself feel better if you work on the positive thoughts.

Building self-confidence is mostly a matter of teaching yourself to think differently. Think of Danny de Vito, Roseanne, and Bart Simpson. Think of the people in your own life who are so self-confident that their appearances don’t matter.

“If I looked better, I’d feel better about myself.”
Fiona, 14

Statements about who you are come more from the way you speak and act rather than from the way you look. You can develop an image that you like without being taller, shorter, or thinner. Everybody is different from everybody else—not just in appearance, but in every way. You just have to find out what you like.

People with acne can get help from their doctors. People who really are overweight can diet safely. People who want to improve their physical condition can work on exercise and body building.

“I don’t like my nose. It’s a piggy nose—just like my mother’s!”
Jonathon, 13
It’s human nature to want to change for the better. It’s a great quality—and it can lead to outstanding achievement. The big thing is deciding what you can control and change, and what you can’t. When you’re working on the things you can—and want—to change, the other stuff doesn’t seem so important.

“I’M HAPPY JUST THE WAY I AM. EVEN IF I’M A BIT WEIRD.”
Mark, 14

The bottom line is that the self-confident look is what’s good-looking. It has very little to do with the actual appearance of your body, and changing the way your body looks isn’t what brings self-confidence.

Self-confidence comes from seeing your good qualities and accepting your imperfections, instead of focussing on your flaws. It comes from knowing that you have the power to change the way you think. It comes from knowing that the way you think affects the way you feel.

People who feel good about themselves look good, too.

At Face Value
Profile by Lorna Renooy

Lorna: Could you start by telling me a bit about yourself?
Ani: As a child, I felt different a lot of the time because of my birthmark. When you have a facial difference, you can either be introverted, or you can go out and face the world. That’s what I chose to do, with the help of my family.
I began singing at an early age. That set me apart from other kids, too. On stage, you’re so vulnerable. You’re alone there under bright lights that shine right on your face, in front of all these people who are staring at you.

I started wearing make-up to cover my birth-mark when I was eight years old. By Grade Seven, I was wearing make-up every day. Two years ago, I stopped because I decided I still wasn’t myself. The make-up was a mask, and I realized I was wearing it to protect myself from the meanness of people, but I also knew I was hiding who I was.

Lorna: What would you like to share with people who have facial differences?

Ani: You have to acknowledge that it is very, very hard to be different because of society and the way other people often see us. If we acknowledge this, it becomes less hard. Other people can be very cruel, or insensitive, but we shouldn’t feel limited by that. We can accept ourselves the way we are.

1. Responding to the Article

a. Were you surprised by the survey results in “Feeling Good, Looking Great”? Why or why not?

b. Do you think the opinions of singer Ani Aubin in “At Face Value” support the author’s main idea in “Feeling Good, Looking Great”? Give reasons for your answer.

2. Reading Generate Ideas

In the article, Mary Walters Riskin lists many things young people can do to build self-confidence. In a small group, examine the steps that she suggests. Discuss why you think they will or will not work. Compile a list of your own ideas about how young people can learn to feel good about themselves. You could create a Web page and post these suggestions, or ask for comments on these ideas in a chat room.
ZOOT magazine conducted a survey. They thought their readers would want to know what kids their own age thought about an important topic—the self-image of teens. A survey is a research method used to find out the opinions, preferences, or habits of a group of people.

With a small group, discuss an issue that concerns all of you. Find out how your group members feel about this issue. Share your ideas.

**Plan the Survey**

There are several questions you will need to answer in planning your survey:

1. What is your purpose for conducting a survey? What do you want to find out?
2. What do you predict will be the results of your survey? What will you do with the results?
3. Who will be your subjects? How many will you need? How will you select them—at random, based on age or gender? What general information will you record about them? Generally, the greater the number of subjects, the greater the reliability of your results.
4. Will the format be oral or written responses? Will you ask for facts, opinions, or both? Remember that people are more likely to respond to surveys that can be completed in a minute or two.

**Generate Questions**

Make your questions clear, brief, specific, and objective (without any implied judgment). How you ask a question can influence the way it is answered. Be careful not to ask questions that lead to a particular response, or that use loaded (judgmental) words. Instead of:

*How often do you cave in to peer pressure?*

Use

*Are you influenced by peer pressure?*

Use one, or a combination, of these types of questions:

- **MULTIPLE CHOICE**
  
  Follow a simple question with a list of possible answers.
Would your life be better without peer pressure?

a) [ ] yes  b) [ ] no  c) [ ] not sure

Allow more than one answer to be chosen, or let subjects add their own.

Which of your decisions are most affected by peer pressure? Please check all that apply.

[ ] buying clothes  [ ] choosing friends  [ ] obeying authorities  [ ] choosing extra-curricular activities  [ ] other (please specify) ________________

• RANKING
Ask your subjects to number their choices in order of importance.

What influences what you buy? Rank your answers from 1-5, with #1 as the most important and #5 as the least important.

[ ] cost  [ ] brand name  [ ] friend's recommendation  [ ] TV advertisement  [ ] popular kids have it

• OPEN-ENDED
An open-ended question has many possible answers. This makes it more difficult to group the answers and tally the results.

How do you feel about peer pressure?

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Produce the Survey Form

Use a computer to develop a rough draft of your survey. You may wish to include space for some general information from your subjects, such as age or gender. Design your survey so that it is neat and easy to read.

Edit and proofread your survey form before you distribute copies. If it's an oral survey, each group member must have at least one copy. If it's a written survey, include a sentence that explains why you are gathering the information. Set a deadline for the questionnaire to be completed and returned.

Conduct the Survey

Refer to the answers you provided to question three of “Plan the Survey.” Have at least twenty people respond to your survey. Remember to thank your subjects for their help.

Share the Results

Tally the responses to each question and analyse your data. How do the results compare with your predictions?

You might wish to write a summary of your findings. You might also want to display your data visually using a graph.

Present your findings to the class and answer questions about the survey. Perhaps you could publish the survey results on your school’s Web site or in a newsletter.

Group Assessment

[ ] Did we state the purpose of our survey clearly?
[ ] Did we follow our plan for the format and subjects?
[ ] Did we develop our questions carefully?
[ ] Did we tabulate and analyse our data correctly?
[ ] Did we summarize or graph our results clearly?
Peter glanced at the clock on the bookshelf. It was quarter after four. “Fifteen minutes to freedom,” he said to himself. Fifteen minutes until he could turn off the metronome—two, three, four—and stop moving his fingers across the keys.

For Peter the best part of the day began at the moment he stopped practising the piano. Beginning at four-thirty each day he had an entire hour to himself. He could read science fiction. He could play video games in the den. He just couldn’t leave the house.

This had never really bothered him until the afternoon three weeks earlier when he’d seen the runner gliding up Putnam Street hill. Something about the way the older boy looked, something about the way he moved, drew Peter away from his music and out onto the porch to watch the runner race by in his maroon and gold Darden High School sweat suit.
That night at dinner his mother had said, “Mrs. Kennedy says she saw you on the porch this afternoon. I hope you weren’t neglecting your music.”

“I was just saying hello to a friend,” Peter lied. He didn’t even know the other boy’s name.

Intimidated by his mother’s intelligence network, Peter had not ventured back onto the porch for three weeks, content to watch from his bench as the older boy churned up the hill and off to the oval behind Peter’s junior high school. But the previous afternoon, as he’d watched the second hand on the parlour clock ticking away the final seconds of his captivity, two, three, four, Peter had decided to go back out on the porch. He thought he might wave as the runner strode by, but instead he studied the older boy in silence.

The runner was tall, lean, and broad-shouldered. I am none of that stuff, Peter thought.
The runner had sharp features. Peter’s nose looked like he had flattened it against a window and it had stayed that way. The runner had a clear, steady gaze. Peter was near-sighted and tended to squint. The runner had a shock of copper-coloured hair. Peter had a frizz so fine it was hard to say what colour it was.

In spite of these differences, Peter could have imagined himself in the other boy’s place were it not for the runner’s grace. The way the boy moved reminded him of music. His legs had the spring of a sprightly melody. His arms pumped a relentless rhythm. He ascended the hill almost effortlessly, as though gravity were no greater hindrance on this steep incline than it had been on the prairie-flat main street below.

He must never lose, Peter thought.

That was another way in which they were different. Peter had just come in third in the piano competition sponsored by the university, after coming in second in the contest sponsored by the orchestra, and third in the contest sponsored by the bank.

“Peter,” his mother said, “you are a perpetual runner-up.” Then she decided that rather than practise for one hour every day, he should practise for two. Two hours!

But two hours were now up. And as Peter stopped the metronome, he spotted a familiar figure in a maroon sweat suit at the bottom of the hill.

Who is this kid? Kevin asked himself.

Kevin McGrail had not yet reached the crest of Putnam Street when he noticed the pudgy boy in the orange T-shirt on the porch of the white stucco house.

At least he’s on the porch today, Kevin thought. For three weeks the kid had watched him from his piano bench. Every day as he pounded up the hill Kevin would hear this weird tinkly music coming from the stucco house across the street. Then there would be a pause as he passed by, and he would see the little frizzy-headed kid looking at him through the window. Then the weird tinkly music would begin again.

At first Kevin felt kind of spooked when the music stopped, like maybe Freddy Krueger was going to jump out of the bushes or
something. But after a while he just wondered why the kid was so interested in him.

It wasn’t like he was a big star or anything. Kevin was number three on the Darden cross-country team, a nice steady runner who could be counted on to come in ahead of number three on the opposing team. Coach Haggerty always told him he could be number two if he worked at it, but Kevin thought working at something was the surest way to turn it from a pleasure into a chore.

Just look at what happened with Mark Fairbanks. He and Kevin used to hang out together, but that was before Haggerty had convinced Mark that if he devoted his entire life to cross-country he could be a star. Well, Markie was a star all right. He was the fastest guy on the team and one of the top runners in the district. But he was also the biggest drone in the school. Every day at the beginning of practice he would shout, “Okay, it’s time to go to work!”

Kevin felt the strain on his legs lighten as he reached the top of the hill. He saw the road flatten before him and felt the crisp autumn air tingling pleasantly in his lungs. As soon as this becomes work, he said to himself, I quit.

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“Mom,” Peter said at dinner, “I want to go out for the football team.”

His mother looked up from her Caesar salad with an expression of exaggerated horror. “Think of your hands!” she said.

Peter had known she would say that. “Well, maybe basketball then,” he replied.

“That is every bit as dangerous.”

Peter had kind of figured she would say that too. “Well, I want to do something,” he said. “Something where there’s people. Where there’s guys.”

His mother put down her fork, pressed her palms together in front of her face, hooked her thumbs under her chin, and regarded him from over her fingertips. Now we are getting serious, Peter thought.

“What about choir?” his mother proposed. “I haven’t wanted you exposed to a lot of influences. Musically, I mean. But I am not insensitive to your need for companionship.”
Peter shook his head. "How about cross-country?" he asked. "It's only running. How about that?"

"Sports are nothing but trouble," his mother said. "Trouble and disappointment. I think you will agree it is much more satisfying to devote yourself to something at which you can really excel."

"There is a boy on the high-school team who runs up at the oval every day," Peter said. "He told me I could practise with him."

His mother pursed her lips. If Peter could only have explained his plan to her, he was certain she would have said yes. But he wasn't ready to try that. He could barely make sense of it himself.

One thing he was sure of: That boy who ran past the house every day was a champion. He would know what separates winners from perpetual runners-up. And if Peter could learn that, well then, his mother would be happy, and if his mother was happy, well then, everything would be okay again. All she had to do was say yes.

"You still owe me two hours at that piano every day," she said.

Kevin was surprised to see the little piano player up at the oval the next day. The kid was dressed in one of those shapeless sweat suits they wore in junior-high-school gym class.

Looks like he's already winded, Kevin thought as he watched the kid struggle through about a dozen jumping jacks. I hope he doesn't hurt himself.

Kevin was beginning his second lap when the kid fell in beside him.

"Hi," the boy said.

"Hey," said Kevin without slowing down.

"I'm getting in shape for next season," said the boy, who was already breathing heavily and losing ground.

"It's good to give yourself a lot of time," Kevin said, not meaning to sound quite so smart-alecky.

"See you around," the boy called as Kevin opened up the space between them.

Every day for the next three weeks the routine was the same: The kid was always waiting when Kevin arrived. He would puff along beside Kevin for a few strides, try to start a gasping conversation, and then fall hopelessly behind. The kid was obviously
never going to be a runner, Kevin thought, and he sure didn’t look like he was enjoying himself. Yet there he was, grinding away, just like Fairbanks only without the talent.

You’re a better person than I am, Kevin thought. Or a sicker one.

That Friday when Kevin got to the oval the chubby kid took one look at him and started to run. It was as though he were giving himself a head start in some kind of private race. The thought of some competition between the two of them made Kevin laugh, because he generally lapped the kid at least five or six times each session.

He put the little piano player out of his mind and tried to focus on the rhythm of his own footfalls. The following weekend he and the rest of the Darden team would be competing in the district championships, and Kevin had begun to think it might be a good time to answer a question that had been nagging at him for the last month. He wanted to know how good he was—not how good he could be if he devoted his entire life to cross-country, but how good he was at that moment. What would happen, he wondered, if he ran one race as hard as he could?

Part of him did not want to know. Suppose he beat out Billy Kovacs, number two on the Darden team? That would mean Coach Haggerty would be all over him. He’d expect Kevin to have a big season in his senior year, maybe even make it to the state championships. Just thinking about the way Haggerty put his gaunt face up next to yours and shouted “Go for the goal!” was enough to stop Kevin in his tracks.

On the other hand, he might not beat Billy Kovacs, and that would be depressing too. Kevin liked to think of himself as somebody who could run faster if he wanted to run faster. But if he went all out and still finished in the middle of the pack, it would mean he was just another mediocre high-school runner.

Maybe I should just run a nice easy race and forget about this, Kevin thought. It would be less complicated.

As he began the seventh of his eight laps, Kevin noticed that the chubby kid was still running—puffing and panting and lurching from one foot to another. “This is my bell lap,” he gasped as Kevin trotted by.
Kevin chuckled at the idea of the little piano player in a race, but when he finished his workout he stopped to watch the other boy circle the track one last time. This was the kid’s fourth lap. Kevin had never seen him run more than a kilometre before, and he felt a sneaky sense of pride in his training partner’s accomplishment.

The kid came chugging down the track, gulping huge bites of air, and clutching his right side. But when he reached his imaginary finish line, he threw both hands into the air and held that pose for a moment before collapsing onto the grass. Kevin was about to jog over when he heard a voice in the stands announce: “And the winner in the Pudge Ball Olympics: Peter Whitney.”

Kevin turned quickly and recognized three kids from the freshman class at school. “Hey, why don’t you bozos take off,” he said sharply, and looked at them long enough for the kids to understand that he meant it.

The piano player was still lying flat on his back when Kevin reached him and extended a hand to help him to his feet.

“Thanks,” the boy said, in a barely audible voice.

Hours after he had arrived home, Peter kept replaying the details in his head to see if there was something he had missed. First the fudge-brains from Grade Nine had made fun of him and the runner had taken his side. Next the older boy had waited around while Peter caught his breath. Then they’d walked down the hill together all the way to Peter’s house. It was almost like they were friends.

But things had begun to go wrong as soon as Peter tried to ask him his secret. The trouble was he couldn’t figure out how to put the question in his own words, and so he began talking like the books his mother read to help her get ahead at her office.

“Do you visualize your goals?” he blurted.

The boy looked at him quizzically.

“Some people do that,” Peter continued, eager to fill the silence. “But other people, they say that you should concentrate on developing the habits of a highly effective person.”

The runner didn’t respond, so Peter felt compelled to keep talking. “Do you think your habits are effective? I mean, are they consistent with your aspirations? You know?”
The other boy shrugged. “You still play the piano?” he asked.
“Two hours a day,” Peter said.
“You like it?”
“No,” Peter said. “I mean, yes. I used to.”
“But now you don’t?”

Peter did not want to waste time talking about himself, but the older boy seemed genuinely interested. “Before we came here I had a different teacher,” he said, and as he did every time he sat down at the piano, he began to think of Mickey Ray.

Mickey was his teacher back in Rochester. He taught part-time at the university and at night he played in clubs. Peter’s mother didn’t like him because he wore a ponytail. But everybody told her that he was the best teacher in town. She let Peter take lessons from him on one condition: that they play only “performance pieces”—compositions Peter might later play in a competition.

But Mickey did not always abide by this condition. Every once in a while he would pull a new piece of music from his satchel, wink conspiratorially at Peter, and ask him to give it a try. This was how Peter got to know jazz and ragtime and gospel music.

After Peter played through the piece once, Mickey would sit down on the bench beside him. “Next time,” he would say, “a little more like this.” And off he would go, playing the same notes in the same order, but making the piece sound more fluid, more powerful, more alive.

“It is not about hitting the right key at the right time,” Mickey used to say. “It is about taking this baby for a ride.” Peter began to tell the other boy about Mickey Ray.

“He sounds cool,” the runner said.

“My teacher now is better,” Peter said. Actually he wasn’t sure if that was true. “Mr. Brettone is a superior musical pedagogue,” his mother had said. But lately Peter had found himself imagining that Mr. Brettone had tiny pickaxes attached to his fingertips and that each time he struck a key it would crack and crumble.

They were standing in front of the house by the time Peter finished the story, and he was no closer to learning the other boy’s secret than he had been before all those gruelling afternoons on the oval. Finally, just as the other boy was about to leave, he blurted: “How do you do it?”
“Do what?”
“Win.”
“I don’t know anything about winning,” the runner said. “I just know about running.”

Then came what Peter found the most puzzling exchange of all. “I hope you win at the districts,” he said as the boy jogged away. “Now what would I want to do that for?” the runner called back.

Kevin stood among the throng of two hundred runners packed into a clearing just off the first fairway at the Glen Oaks Golf Club. At the crack of the starter’s pistol they would all surge forward onto the manicured expanse of the fairway. The sight of all those bodies churning and all those bright uniforms bobbing up and down was so captivating that during his first two seasons Kevin had hung back at the beginning just to take in the spectacle.

Not this year, though. He had decided to run the race of his life, and moments after the gun was fired, he found himself in the first fourth of the great mob of runners struggling for position as they tore toward the first green, where the course cut sharply downhill and into the woods. As he hit what he thought of as a good cruising speed for the first stage of the race, Kevin couldn’t help wondering if he would wear himself out too quickly or collapse on the grass at the finish line like that crazy little piano player.

It was strange to be thinking of him at a time like this. Or maybe it wasn’t. Because what Kevin had been trying to figure out all along was whether excelling at his sport would somehow ruin it for him, the way excelling at the piano had ruined it for Peter. He half suspected that it would, but something the kid had told him that day Kevin had walked him home had given him a half-hearted kind of hope.

In the pack just ahead of him Kevin picked out Mark Fairbanks, Kovacs, and a couple of the top runners from other schools he had raced against during the year. No question—he was a lot closer to them than he usually was at the kilometre mark.

As the runner streaked by, Peter cheered and pointed his friend out to his mother. It had taken heroic persuasion to get Mom to come out to a cross-country meet on a Saturday morning, but now he was
sure that everything would go just the way he planned. His friend would win the race and then Peter would introduce him to Mom. He wasn’t really certain what would happen after that. He couldn’t really explain why he wanted them to meet. It wasn’t so that Mom could see that he was making friends at school, because she thought friends only distracted him from his piano. And it wasn’t because he thought she would be impressed by a cross-country champion, since Mom didn’t really appreciate sports.

Peter wanted them to meet so that Mom could see that he had a little of the runner in him, a little bit of the champion, a little bit of something that would lift him beyond the status of a “perpetual runner-up.” If he could only convince her of that, maybe it wouldn’t be so hard to keep sitting down alone at the piano. Or to keep sitting down to dinner with her.

“He’s not winning,” Peter’s mother said as they watched the runners cut off the fairway and into the woods.

“It’s strategy, Mom,” Peter told her, though he too was wondering why his friend was not at the head of the pack.
They were tearing along an old railroad bed at the top of a ridge near the fourth tee. Kevin’s legs still felt strong. His breath came easily. Fairbanks, who was fighting for the lead, was just a speck up along the train tracks, but Billy Kovacs was only eighteen metres or so ahead of Kevin.

I can take him, Kevin thought, but then I’ll have to hold him off the rest of the way. He hesitated for a second, and then decided to pick up his pace.

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A single runner in the maroon Darden uniform came streaking out of the woods and onto the tenth fairway. There was less than a kilometre remaining in the race.

“That isn’t your friend,” Peter’s mother said.

Another runner in red and white charged out of the woods a few metres behind. In a few moments there were six, seven, and then eight other runners pounding the last kilometre toward the finish line. Peter didn’t recognize any of them.

“I’m sorry, dear,” his mother said, rummaging in her purse for her car keys.

Peter felt as though he had bet a lifetime of allowances on the wrong horse.

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As he tore out of the woods and onto the tenth fairway, Kevin began counting the people ahead of him, a feat made more difficult by the sweat dripping into his eyes. There were fifteen of them, as nearly as he could tell. The top ten finishers went on to the state finals. Somewhere up along the railroad tracks the desire to be in that group had seized him and he had picked up his pace. Now the wind burned in his lungs and the acid burned in his calves. His Achilles tendons felt like guitar strings being tightened with each footfall. He had less than a kilometre to make up six places.

He glanced quickly across the fairway and saw Fairbanks duelling for the lead with Pat Connors of Tech. In the crowd behind them he saw the little piano player. He was gazing in Kevin’s direction, disappointment etched on his face.

I’m running the race of my life and it isn’t good enough for him, Kevin thought. He could feel the anger rising inside him. The race
was ruined for him now, and he began to doubt his motives. Was he really running all out just to see what it felt like, or had the attention of this peculiar little kid made him hungry for more?

Kevin wanted his sense of purity back. He wanted to stop caring whether he finished in the top ten. Something inside him whispered “Slow down” but instead he emptied his mind and kept running.

Into that emptiness floated the memory of the conversation he and the little piano player had had just a few days before. The kid had been talking about his old teacher, the one who liked to take the piano “for a ride.” I can’t play, Kevin thought, but I can run. This can be my ride.

Imagineing that he was Mickey Ray, Kevin focussed his eyes on the ground in front of him and sprinted the last couple hundred metres, unaware of the screaming fans or the other runners on the course.

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Peter couldn’t understand what the big fuss was about. The kid had come in eleventh. That wasn’t even good enough to qualify for the state finals, yet people were acting like that was a bigger deal than Mark Fairbanks, who had come in second. It was pretty cool to take a minute off your best time, he supposed, but still, eleventh place wasn’t worth all the cheering the Darden fans did when the kid crossed the finish line.

Besides that, Kevin McGrail looked horrible. When he had glided up Putnam Street six weeks ago he had been so smooth, so poised. Now he was bent over, walking like he had a sunburn on the bottoms of his feet.

Peter saw the boy’s coach, a gaunt man wearing a baseball cap, put an arm around Kevin’s shoulder. “You dug down deep and you came up big,” the coach barked.

Kevin drew a few rapid breaths. “I was joy-riding,” he said.

“Joy-riding,” Peter repeated to himself as he sat at his piano later that afternoon. “Joy-riding lands you in eleventh place.” He stood up, opened the piano bench, and withdrew the exercises Mr. Brettone had assigned for that week. Beneath it he found The Fats Waller Songbook. Mickey had given it to him as a going-away present. Peter thumbed through the pages until he found “Your Feet’s Too Big.” Just the title made him laugh. And the way Mickey used to play it...

He looked up to see his mother standing in the doorway. “What are we featuring this afternoon?” she asked.

“Exercises for the left hand,” Peter said, and he sat down to work.
1. **Responding to the Story**
   b. Why do you think Kevin at first resists becoming the best that he can be? Why does he change his mind?
   c. In your opinion, did Peter get to joy-ride? If so, how?
   d. What advice would you like to give to Kevin? Peter? Peter’s mom?

2. **Reading Character Analysis**
   Read through the story carefully a second time. As you read, record on a Venn diagram the similarities and differences between the two boys. To create a Venn diagram, draw two circles that partially overlap. Label one circle “Kevin” and the other “Peter.” Where the circles overlap, insert characteristics that the boys have in common. Where the circles are separate, record characteristics that are unique to each boy. Include both physical and personality traits.
   Imagine that you are the editor of the school yearbook and are responsible for gathering information on your fellow classmates. Using the information from the Venn diagram write two paragraphs in which you describe the characteristics of Kevin and Peter. Include these paragraphs in your writing portfolio.

3. **Story Craft Point of View**
   In small groups, discuss point of view in this story. Point of view refers to the position from which the events of a story are presented. In “Joy-riding,” Jim Naughton tells the story from the points of view of both Kevin and Peter. Why might he have chosen to do this? Does using two points of view make the story easier or harder to follow? Explain.
4. Writing  Continue the Story
Imagine that Kevin and Peter meet again as adults. In your notebook, write a conversation in which they exchange information on what they have accomplished in their lives. You should reveal whether or not they have reached their goals.

5. Editor’s Desk  Punctuating Dialogue
This story contains a lot of dialogue (characters speaking with and to each other). What do you notice about the structure of dialogue in this story? What kind of punctuation is used? Here are some basic guidelines to follow when including dialogue in a story.

• Use proper punctuation.
  Begin and end direct speech with quotation marks.
  “May I please sit here?” asked the girl.
  Ending punctuation remains within the quotation marks.
  “The fire is on the first floor!” exclaimed the officer.
  Use commas in a broken quotation. Capitalize the first word in the quote, but not the first word that begins the second half of the quote.
  “If we can’t find the answer,” said John, “we’ll move on to the next question.”

• Vary the vocabulary used in dialogue. Instead of always using said, try words such as stated or exclaimed. Instead of asked, try questioned or inquired. You may find a thesaurus helpful.
• New speakers require new paragraphs.
Long, long ago in a small village there lived a man who was neither young nor old, neither evil nor good, neither ugly nor handsome, neither stupid nor smart. He was an average man. His name was Rumour.

One day, as Rumour was speaking to the baker, he heard, or thought he heard, someone say something vicious about one of his neighbours. His eyes lit up.

Rumour repeated this bit of news about his neighbour to others in the village. He told the butcher, who told her brother, who told his wife, who told her neighbour, and so on. Rumour also told his cousin the story, and he told his neighbour, who told her friends, and so on. And so on.

By sunset, the whole village knew the story, and everyone was whispering about Rumour’s neighbour.

Before very long, the neighbour heard what was being said about her. She was deeply hurt and very upset that such a dreadful and false story about her was swirling around in the village. She wondered who could have spread the story. She told everyone she knew that it wasn’t true. But still many chose to believe what they had heard. Distraught and broken-hearted, the neighbour became ill. A very short time later, she packed up her belongings and moved away to another village.
Eventually, Rumour learned that the story he had spread was not true. He was filled with regret at having spread such a lie. So he went to the wisest person in the village to find out what he could do to repair the damage he had caused.

“Go to the butcher and buy a chicken,” the wise woman said. “On your way home, pluck its feathers. Place them one by one along the road through the village.”

Rumour was disappointed by this advice. It made no sense. He decided he would follow it anyway, since the woman would say nothing else.

The next morning, the wise woman approached Rumour. She had new instructions for him. “Today, walk along the road and gather the feathers you left there yesterday and then come and see me.”

Rumour went off to look for the feathers, but could not find a single one. Of course, he thought, the wind has blown all the feathers away.

He searched until red stained the evening sky, and managed to find three tattered, dusty feathers stuck in a shrub along the roadside. He returned to the wise woman and held them out to her.

“Ahh,” said the wise woman. “It was easy to scatter the feathers on the road. But was it possible to gather them again? That’s what gossip is like. It takes no effort to spread tales and lies, but once gossip spreads, you can never recall it or undo the wrong it caused.”
1. **RESPONDING TO THE FABLE**
   
   a. Why does Rumour spread information about his neighbour?
   
   b. What lesson does Rumour learn? How does he learn it?
   
   c. What do the feathers represent in this fable? Explain the effectiveness of this symbol.
   
   d. It would have been faster for the wise woman to simply give Rumour the answer to his question. Why, in your opinion, didn’t she do that?
   
   e. What are rumours? How and why do they get started?
   
   f. Have you ever been the subject of a rumour? How did you feel? How did it affect your self-image?

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2. **WRITING A FABLE**

   A fable is a short story that usually teaches a lesson. With your class, discuss the lesson in “Feathers in the Wind.” In your opinion, is the lesson an important one? Explain.

   Decide on a moral lesson that you think is important for children to learn, for example, “It’s wrong to be greedy.” Write a fable based on this lesson. Remember that fables are very short and often include animal characters with human characteristics. However, you could choose to follow the model of “Feathers in the Wind” and feature a human character with a name like “Greed” or “Vanity.”

   Revise and edit your fable until you’re satisfied that it will interest and entertain a younger audience. Practise reading it aloud.

   Read your fable to younger students. Remember to use gestures, sound effects, volume, and tone effectively.

   **SELF-ASSESSMENT:** Ask the audience to state the lesson of your fable. If they can’t, consider how you can make the lesson clearer and then rewrite your work.

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*A symbol* is a person, place, thing, or event that is used to represent something else. For example, a rainbow is often used as a symbol of hope.
your eyes plead approval
of each uttered word
and even my warmest smile
cannot dispel the shamed muscles
from your face
let me be honest
with you
to tell the truth
I feel very much at home
in your embarrassment
don’t be afraid
like you
I too was mired in another language
and I gladly surrendered it
for english
you too
in time
will lose your mother’s tongue
and speak
at least as fluently
as me
now tell me
how do you feel?
I Lost My Talk
Poem by Rita Joe

I lost my talk
The talk you took away.
When I was a little girl
At Shubenacadie school.

You snatched it away:
I speak like you
I think like you
I create like you
The scrambled ballad, about my word.

Two ways I talk
Both ways I say,
Your way is more powerful.

So gently I offer my hand and ask,
Let me find my talk
So I can teach you about me.
1. **Responding to the Poems**
   a. Why do you think Jim Wong-Chu called his poem “How Feel I Do?” What does Rita Joe mean by the title of her poem “I Lost My Talk”? 
   b. The speakers in both poems share similar situations but they feel differently. In your own words, explain what each is saying. 
   c. Which poem do you prefer? Why? 
   d. What kind of school do you think “Shubenacadie school” is? What information in the poem makes you think so? 

2. **Poet’s Craft Analyse Message**
   Poets choose their words very carefully. They rely on the sound and the impact of every word to carry the message they wish to convey. What is the message of each poem? How do the poets use words effectively? Record the answers to these questions in your notebook. 
   **Self-Assessment:** Review the poems in your writing portfolio. How could you improve your choice of words to better reflect your message? 

3. **Language Conventions Examine Punctuation**
   With your class, discuss Jim Wong-Chu’s use of punctuation. What punctuation marks has he used? Where has he used capital letters? What effect does this have on the reader? 
   In your notebook, rewrite “How Feel I Do?” in prose form, with the “correct” punctuation and grammar. Share your writing with a partner. Discuss whether or not the prose form has the same effect on the reader as the poem does.
I left a pail of milk cooling in the summer kitchen for Ma, scraped a chair up to the table, and began loading my fork with scrambled egg. Food halfway to my mouth, Jenny began shrieking, “There’s a strange man coming up the lane, Ma!”

We all rushed over to the window, Ma, Harry, and I, and peered out over Jenny’s brown curls.

“That’s no man, that’s your father,” Ma said. She drew back slowly from the window, her face working, deciding its expression. She quickly crossed to the stove and broke three eggs into a bowl. “Thomas. Pour your father some coffee,” she ordered, beating the yolks streaky yellow into the clear whites.

And that was it. No band, no marching parade, just my father walking down the rutted lane in the cool dawn.
I was barely eleven when he left our farm west of London, Ontario in 1941 for the war in Europe, and a man of almost fifteen when he returned in late November of 1945.

I poured a second cup of coffee and shoved it across to my father sitting opposite me, in the chair I’d sat in for the past four years. He was shorter than I remembered, but that could be because the years had left me several centimetres taller.

Ma slapped more bacon on his plate and he nodded his thanks and suddenly it was like he’d sat there every morning. I opened my mouth to ask a question, but Ma shook her head in warning and I stayed quiet.

Harry and Jenny stared at him until I began to wonder if he’d think he’d grown a third arm or something. Harry was five when Dad went away and Jenny nearly two. She thinks she knows Dad but she really only knows him through our stories.

Finally he pushed his empty plate away and stared at each of our faces in turn. “Is it the weekend?” he asked. The first words out of his mouth.

We shook our heads.

“Thursday, Dad,” Jenny said. I could tell she was trying out the word Dad on her tongue, seeing how it fit.

“Holiday is it?”

Again we shook our heads. I didn’t understand what he was getting at.

“Well then, you’re all going to be late for school if you don’t get moving.”

My mouth fell open. When James McKinley’s father came home they had a big welcome back party for him. But our Dad...near four years he’d not seen us and he wanted us out of the house.

He pushed back his chair and stood. “While your Ma fixes the lunch pails, we’ll take a walk around the farm, Thomas.”

I hurriedly shrugged my arms into my jacket and ran down the porch steps after him. He stood for a moment, perfectly still, looking out over frost-stubbled fields glowing amber beneath the slanting, early morning sun. We walked to the barn and swung back heavy wooden doors that creaked their protest.

“Could do with some oil on those hinges,” he said.
He stopped to pat a cow on the rump. “All milked?”
I nodded.
“You didn’t take time to clean the stalls though.”
“Harry and I do it after evening milking,” I mumbled.
I wondered if he remembered my letter to him telling of the last calving and how Ma and I had been up all night.

He walked the length of the barn, leaned over, and ran a hand along the blade of the mower. “This here’s got rust on it. You have to take care of equipment if you expect it to run right.”

Anger flushed my face. I wanted to tell him how I worked late into the night after school all September and October bringing in the oats and barley, mowing the grasses, then doing homework with eyes so heavy-lidded the black print in my textbooks jumped around making it impossible to read. Getting the rust off, well, I left that until winter when things slowed down somewhat. I almost told him this, but Harry yelled it was time for school and nothing was said.

As we walked along the concession road, Jenny told everyone who’d listen how her Dad was back. She used the word Dad so much I began to wonder if she knew any others. Harry tried so hard to be indifferent, but he looked nearly ready to burst and finally did, bragging to the boys walking with us how his Dad would tell him war stories all evening long. I almost told him that I doubted he’d hear a single one but decided there was no point in that. I was glad to see them turn off at the little school and let me walk in peace the rest of the way to the collegiate.

I sat all day staring at chalkboards, teachers, ruled paper, and ink wells, but not seeing them at all. Instead I saw Dad running his hand over the mower blade, pointing to the barn door hinges and the stalls, and remembered the letters I wrote telling him which fields I’d planted, which ones I’d left fallow.

Returning home in the late afternoon dusk, I ran up the lane to the house and quickly traded my school clothes for my working coveralls. Through my bedroom window I saw Ma and Jenny in the back orchard picking the last of the apples for a pie. I clattered down the wood stairs and called to Harry. Rushing into the barn I stopped so suddenly Harry nearly ran up my back. Dad was seated on the three-legged stool milking a cow. My job.
“You boys get cleaning those stalls,” he said without looking around.

Harry quickly grabbed a pitchfork, happy to be free of milking. He’d always been afraid of the cows and their restless feet.

I stood a moment then said, “I usually milk while Harry mucks out.”

“Milking’s nearly finished so you both can do stalls today,” Dad said.

“But that’s how we’ve done it every day since you’ve been away,” I told him, surprising even myself with the stubbornness in my voice.

“Well, I’m back now,” he said.

Slowly I took the fork and heaved dirty straw into a pile. My father had been my hero. His feet confidently walked the furrows, planting, harvesting. His voice was calm as he settled the horses and cows. I’d followed behind, walking like him and talking like him, thinking out the words before speaking. That’s how he was and how I wanted to be.

“Dad,” Harry said, “What did you do over in the war?”

“Pretty much what every other soldier did over there,” Dad replied.

Harry waited but Dad said nothing more. No heroic war stories for Harry to repeat at school the next day.

“James McKinley’s father came home with a chest full of medals,” I said, voice shrill. “Five in all. He wore them to town one day. He told us that he fought so many Germans he soon lost count.”

Dad raised his head from the milking pail without losing his rhythm and looked at me.

I pretended not to see. For once I was not thinking about my words before I spoke. “They had a big party for him when he came home. A real hero’s welcome.”

Dad picked up the pail and pushed past me into the dairy. Harry and I finished the stalls and took turns cranking the handle of the separator. Cream into one bottle, milk into another.
After supper Ma told me to empty Dad’s bag in the summer kitchen so she could wash his things next morning. I pulled khaki shirts and pants from his duffel bag and put his shaving kit aside, then heard a clanking in the bottom. Metal hitting metal. I up-ended the bag and out fell a medal and then another. By the end I counted eight, three more than James McKinley’s father. Hanging on coloured ribbons, they dangled from my fingers, one with an oak leaf and two with silver bars over star-shaped medals. Pretty much what every other soldier did. I stood there a long time holding them, then went into the kitchen.

Dad sat next to the stove smoking a cigarette, Jenny leaning against his leg. After a moment he put a hand on her head, stroking her curls. Harry lay on the floor on his stomach, turning the pages of a comic book while Ma darned socks. It all looked so right, Dad might never have been away.

“Where do I put these?” I asked him, holding up the medals.

Harry’s eyes went round. “Gosh,” he said.
A shadow passed over Dad’s face so quickly I wondered if it were just a trick of the light. “Put them on my dresser for now,” he said. I passed through the kitchen to their bedroom and left the medals gleaming in a puddle of coloured ribbon on the dresser. I turned back to the door and Ma was behind me.

“Some men are just like that,” she said.

Later that night after the little ones were in bed, I wandered out to the kitchen and saw Dad standing on the back porch. I pulled my jacket on and went out to the woodbox, piling firewood in my arms. I watched the red end of Dad’s cigarette move slowly to his mouth and down again, saw white smoke curl up in the black night and wondered how many cigarettes he’d smoked in how many countries. We’d sent enough overseas to him.

“Had a while in Montreal between trains,” Dad said, “so I toured around the city a bit. Couldn’t believe the amount of stuff in the store windows. Dresses, shoes, chocolate, meat. Same thing in Toronto and I wondered if those people even knew there’d been a war on. Then I get back here, to the farm, and it’s changed. You changed. You grew up on me. Harry and Jenny too. Thought I knew that from your letters, but I was wrong.”

I said nothing, remembering the letters from Italy, Holland, France, and Belgium.

“Four years,” he said. A match flared yellow, lighting his face momentarily as he lit another cigarette. “I got a bit of money coming to me from the army,” Dad said. “Do you think Austin Taylor would sell us his flatlands down by the river?”

Us! I set the wood down on the porch and turned the idea over in my mind before speaking. “It’d make good pasture for the cows. We could get more stock,” I said. I took a deep breath. “We could do with some equipment too. New tractor would be nice.” My heart pounded in my ears.

Dad nodded. “Saturday morning we’ll speak to Taylor, then go to the Co-op in town. See what they have.” He ground his cigarette out with his foot, splashing red sparks into the night, and went into the house.
1. **Responding to the Story**

a. How has Thomas changed since his father left? How does he feel about his father’s return?

b. Why does Thomas say his father had been his hero? Do you think he feels the same way at the end of the story? Why or why not?

c. What does Ma mean when she says, “Some men are just like that”? Do you agree or disagree? Explain.

2. **Reading Discuss Characters**

With a small group, analyse the characters in this story. Have each member of the group create a web for one character. Remember to include character traits that are revealed by what the characters think, say, and do, and by what others think or say about them. For each character trait add a quote from the text that supports it. When each group member is finished, discuss the webs and revise them to include any new information.

3. **Writing A Friendly Letter**

Scan the story to locate references to letters that were sent among the characters when the father was away. What types of information did they contain? Write a friendly letter or e-mail to a parent or other relative. Describe an incident involving someone you know in which you both came to a better understanding of one another.

**Self-Assessment:** Check your spelling before you send your letter or e-mail. Have you used homophones correctly? Have you consulted a dictionary to ensure correct spelling? Check your punctuation and grammar. Have you used complete sentences? Have you organized your ideas into paragraphs? Have you presented the incident clearly? Make sure you have followed the form of a friendly letter.
Conversation with Myself

Poem by Eve Merriam

This face in the mirror
stares at me
demanding Who are you?
    What will you become?
and taunting, You don’t even know.
Chastened, I cringe and agree
and then
because I’m still young,
I stick out my tongue.

GOALS AT A GLANCE

- Write a personal response to poetry.
- Analyse photographs.
1. Responding to the Poem
Can you answer the two questions asked by the face in the mirror? If you feel you can, then do so in your journal. If you don’t feel ready yet, explain why.

2. Visual Communication Analyse Photos
Catherine Chatterton, a photographer, created this photo and the ones on pages 8–9 and 56–57. With a partner, examine and discuss these photos and what they represent. How do they make you feel? Why? How do you think they were created? Do they effectively represent the selections or the theme? Explain.

Reflecting on the Unit

Self-Assessment: Reading
As you worked on this unit, what did you learn about
• parody?
• point of view?
• message?
• fables?
• symbols?
• developing characters?
In your notebook, list some of the reading strategies you used to help you prepare for reading or as you read selections.

Writing Letter to a Character
Which character in this unit would you like to talk to? Why? What would you tell him/her about yourself? What questions would you ask this character? Write a friendly letter to the character you’ve chosen. Share your letter with a partner, asking him or her to respond in role.

Oral Communication Group Discussion
With a small group, discuss further one of the issues raised in this unit, such as media influences on self-image, or gossiping. Brainstorm solutions to the problems that are created by this issue. Then share your response with another group. What conclusions can you draw?