



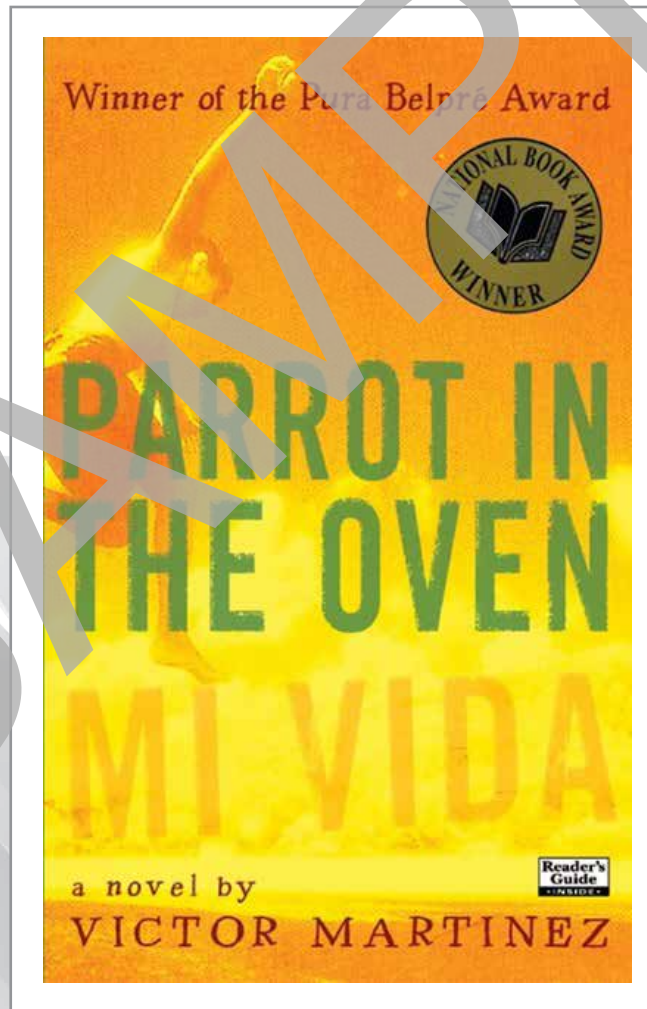
TEACHER GUIDE

GRADES 9-12

COMPREHENSIVE CURRICULUM BASED LESSON PLANS

Parrot in the Oven: Mi Vida

Victor Martinez



READ, WRITE, THINK, DISCUSS AND CONNECT

Parrot in the Oven: Mi Vida

Victor Martinez

TEACHER GUIDE

NOTE:

The trade book edition of the novel used to prepare this guide is found in the Novel Units catalog and on the Novel Units website. Using other editions may have varied page references.

Please note: We have assigned Interest Levels based on our knowledge of the themes and ideas of the books included in the Novel Units sets, however, please assess the appropriateness of this novel or trade book for the age level and maturity of your students prior to reading with them. You know your students best!

ISBN 978-1-50204-069-5

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Skills and Strategies

Thinking

Identifying attributes, research, compare/contrast, pros/cons, problem solving, creative thinking, and critical thinking

Comprehension

Predicting, sequencing, foreshadowing, cause and effect, inference, and anticipating

Vocabulary

Target words, synonyms, antonyms, defining, parts of speech, sentences, and context clues

Listening/Speaking

Interviewing, discussion, oral reports, taping, and music

Writing

Character journal, personal writing, creative writing, headlines, research, critique, reports, and poem

Literary Elements

Literary analysis, story mapping, voice, plot development, setting, and characterization

Across the Curriculum

Social Studies—law and research; Art— color, advertisements, collage, and illustrations; Health—athletic training; Technology— Internet, graphics, and presentations; Drama— staging and acting

Genre: fiction

Point of view: first person

Style: narrative

Setting: a Chicano neighborhood in the Central California valley, 1950s

Themes: coming-of-age, poverty, racism/stereotypes, family, belonging

Conflict: person vs. person, person vs. authority, person vs. society

Tone: frank; mostly pessimistic with a slight turn at the end

Summary

Parrot in the Oven: mi vida tells the story of Manny Hernandez, a Mexican-American youth who is growing up in a violent, poverty-stricken home. Manny encounters many conflicts throughout the story. He struggles to understand why people make certain choices in life, and he finally must make his own difficult choices that could change the course of his life forever.

About the Author

Victor Martinez has written many poems, short stories, and essays. *Parrot in the Oven: mi vida* is his first novel, which won the National Book Award for Young People's Literature in 1996. Mr. Martinez attended both California State University at Fresno and Stanford University. He was born and raised in Fresno, California, along with his eleven brothers and sisters. He now resides in San Francisco, California.

Initiating Activities

1. Previewing the book: Have students read the following preview paragraph (found at the beginning of most editions of the book).

"How are you doing today, Perico?" Perico, or parrot, was what Dad called me sometimes. It was from a Mexican saying about a parrot that complains how hot it is in the shade, while all along he's sitting inside an oven. People usually say this when talking about ignorant people who don't know where they're at in the world. I didn't mind it so much, actually, because Dad didn't say it because he thought I was dumb, but because I trusted everything too much, because I'd go right into the oven trusting people all the way—brains or no brains. (Chapter 4, pages 51–52)

Discuss with students: Why did the author choose this passage to be read before starting the book? Based on this excerpt, what will this book most likely be about?

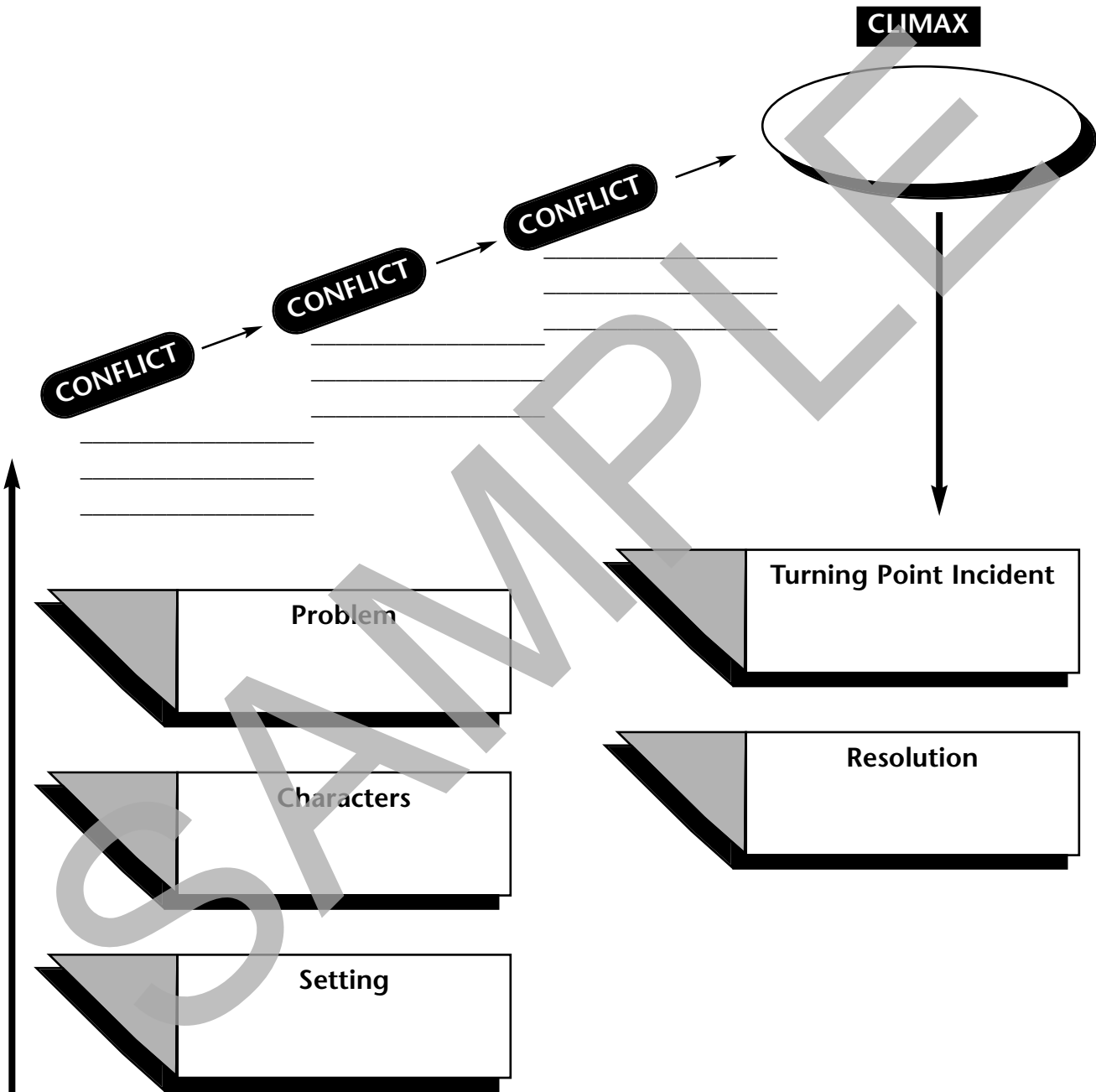
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2. Predict: Given the following clues, have students write a paragraph predicting what they think will happen in the story.
 - Gangs
 - Poverty
 - Violence
 - Family
 - Belonging
 3. Character Journal: List the main characters from *Parrot in the Oven* and have each student create a character journal for one of the characters. As students read the book, they should write journal entries from that character's point of view. Entries should reflect on the events of the story. At various points in their reading, have students share their journals with classmates.
 4. Prediction Chart: Have students set up a prediction chart (see page 7 of this guide) to use as they read the book. As they read, they should add new information about characters, conflict, and predictions.
 5. Social Studies: Have students look in the daily newspaper to find information on crimes in their community. They should list the different crimes committed and number of arrests. Students should plot this information on a graph and discuss the steps a neighborhood can take to reduce crime.

Vocabulary Activities

Note: *Parrot in the Oven* includes several Spanish slang words, expletives, and derogatory terms. While such terms are not included in any vocabulary list or activity, teachers should be prepared to encounter such terms and have an appropriate strategy for dealing with them.

1. Rhymes and Chimes: Have each student choose one vocabulary word and then write a riddle, rhyme, poem, or song that describes that word. Students should trade descriptions and determine which vocabulary word matches each description.
2. Root/Base Words: Have students find the base word for at least eight vocabulary words. Students look at each word and answer the following question: What is the meaning of the root word? What is the meaning of the vocabulary word? What prefix or suffix has been added to the vocabulary word? What is the meaning of the prefix or suffix? How has the meaning of the root/base word changed by adding the prefix or suffix?
3. Target Word Pictures: Have each student illustrate a vocabulary word and have classmates guess the target word. Some suggested words for *Parrot in the Oven* are: tripod (11), mallet (23), bungalows (42), reservoir (47), pompadour (50), flange (68), saplings (77), catapult (137), amoebas (141).
4. Synonym/Antonym Match: Have students select vocabulary words from a chapter and list one synonym and one antonym for each vocabulary word on a small piece of paper. Students mix the papers and match each synonym/antonym pair to the appropriate vocabulary word.

Story Map



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6. How do Patty and Rita feel when the other boys beat Manny? (*Answers will vary.*)
 7. Why doesn't Manny feel any fear or pain while he is hit and kicked by the gang members? (*Answers will vary.*)

Supplementary Activity

Drama: Have students stage and act out the scene between Manny and the gang members before his initiation (pp. 188–191).

Chapter Eleven, pp. 196–216

Vocabulary

peroxide (198)	castanets (200)	scowled (201)	squelched (202)
ominously (203)	buffeting (207)	jackknife (208)	halfheartedly (211)
migrated (211)	radiation (212)	pneumonia (213)	prickle (214)
wondrous (215)			

Discussion Questions

1. Why doesn't Manny want his mother to know he joined a gang? (*Answers will vary.*)
2. How does Manny feel when Rita pays attention to him after his initiation? (*Answers will vary.*)
3. Why do you think Magda wants to peroxide her hair? (*Answers will vary, but should include a reference to her desire to be attractive.*)
4. Manny's mother lets him go out even though she knows he is lying about playing baseball. Why do you think she does this? (*Answers will vary.*)
5. The gang members are discussing what to do as they talk in the parking lot. Why doesn't Manny suggest something to do? (*Answers will vary.*)
6. How does Manny's attitude toward Eddie change after Eddie steals the purse from the old lady? Do you think he would have stayed with the gang if the robbery had not occurred? (*He realizes that he does not belong with the gang. He wants to treat other people right. Answers will vary on the second question.*)
7. Manny believes that Eddie would not understand if Manny tried to tell him how to treat people. Do you agree? Why or why not? (*Answers will vary.*)
8. How does Manny feel as he sits with his two sleeping sisters? Why does he feel this way? (*Answers will vary.*)

Supplementary Activities

1. Critical Thinking/Writing: Have the students brainstorm and list their opinions about what constitutes responsible parenting versus irresponsible parenting. Based on their brainstorming, have students evaluate the parenting skills of Manny's parents.

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2. Writing/Newspaper Article: Have students pretend to be a reporter on the scene when Eddie steals the lady's purse. Have the students write a headline and a short article about this event.
 3. Literary Devices: Locate examples of figurative language used in this chapter (e.g., the wind was like icy fish nibbling around our pants legs, p. 202; Trees were creaking and whining like rusty wheels, p. 207; A knot of cars tried to untangle at an intersection, p. 207; silky rain was again falling with long, gathering sighs, p. 213; shadows lifted from the floor like a flock of birds rising into the horizon, p. 214).

SAMPLE