

Reading Guide for: "Eleven" by Sandra Cisneros

Before Reading

QuickWrite

What is your definition of an "embarrassing moment"? Describe a situation at school that might embarrass a student your age.

Vocabulary

rattling (RAT lihng) v. used as adj: shaking and hitting together. Rachel felt all the years of her life rattling inside her like coins in a metal box.

raggedy (RAG uh dee) adj.: torn and in bad condition. The sweater was worn and raggedy.

itchy (IHCH ee) adj.: causing a feeling on the skin that makes you want to rub or scratch. The red sweater was made of an itchy, uncomfortable material.

invisible (ihn VIHZ uh buhl) adj.: not able to be seen. Rachel wished that she could be invisible and disappear.

During Reading

Read with a Purpose: Read this story to discover how a misunderstanding at school affects the eleventh birthday of a girl named Rachel.

1. Literary Focus: Characterization What do you learn about the narrator's personality from the thoughts and feelings she shares in this paragraph?
2. Read and Discuss The author has given us a lot of information about what it means to be eleven. What point is she trying to make?
3. Read and Discuss Why does the narrator wish she were 102 years old?
4. Reading Focus: Making Inferences What details in the story suggests why Rachel feels so strongly about the sweater?
5. Literary Focus: Characterization What do the narrator's self-description and speech in this and the previous paragraph tell you about her personality?
6. Read and Discuss How do Rachel's thoughts here support the inference you made about her strong feelings?
7. Read and Discuss How does this situation connect with the inference you made about Rachel's feelings?
8. Reading Focus Making Inferences What does Rachel mean by "it's too late"? Make an inference from clues in the story and your thoughts about how you might feel in a similar situation.
9. Read and Discuss How has this birthday ended up for Rachel?

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After Reading

QuickWrite

What can you learn about someone's character from how he or she acts in an embarrassing situation?

Reading Focus

Quick Check

1. What does Mrs. Price put on Rachel's desk?
2. What mistake has Mrs. Price made?

Read with a Purpose

3. What happens to Rachel that upsets her so much in class? How does this event affect her feelings about her eleventh birthday?

Reading Skills

4. How do you think Rachel gets along with other students? How does she feel about herself? Use the It Says/I Say/And So Strategy to make inferences about both questions. (Look below)

It Says... In the story	I Say ... What you know	And So... Inference
Rachel Calls Sylvia "Stupid."		
Rachel calls herself "skinny."		

Literary Focus

Literary Analysis

5. Interpret By the end of the story, Rachel is wishing she were 102—or anything but 11. What point is the author trying to make about age? What does this have to do with the story?
6. Infer/Connect What assumption does Mrs. Price seem to make about Rachel? Why didn't Rachel just refuse to put on the sweater? If you were Rachel, what would you have done?
7. Make Judgments Explain whether you think Rachel makes her situation worse by how she acts over the sweater.
8. Analyze/Infer At the end of the story, Rachel says that "everybody will sing Happy birthday...only it's too late." What is "too late"? What can you infer about Rachel and about how the situation affected her?

Literary Skills: Characterization

9. Analyze What character traits does Rachel have? What methods of characterization does the author use to show these traits?

Literary Skills Review: Conflict

10. Analyze Think about Rachel's struggle in this story. What is the external conflict for Rachel? In what way is this also an internal struggle?