

Literature often tells the story of underdogs who rise up in the end. The Mighty Ducks is the story of a rag-tag hockey team that ends up winning the state championship. Cinderella tells the story of the rejected youngest sister who ends up marrying the prince. "The Marble Champ," by Gary Soto, is also an underdog story. It tells not only about Lupe winning the marble championship, it also tells that she overcomes her athletic difficulties through hard work and family support.

Lupe overcomes her difficulties through the support of her family. For example, one dinner, Lupe asks her father to come to the marble competition. Her father drops his fork and drops into deep thought. He had finally planned to spend that very day playing racket ball, his favorite activity. But he looked into Lupe's eyes, thought about how important it was that she was risking

entering a sports competition, and announced he would be there. Lupe grinned. There are other ways in which Lupe's family showed their support. Her parents let her practice marbles even after dark, her brother gave tips on how to shoot marbles, and her whole family was there to encourage her when she was worried. Gary Soto shows how important family support was to Lupe. His story contains a full page description of the family dinner. This section was not important to the plot of the story but it needs to be in the story because it shows how supportive Lupe's family was to her.

Lupe also overcame her difficulties through hard work. Lupe's decision to work hard and succeed in sports was made when she lay in front of her shelf full of academic trophies and medals. She wished there was at least one trophy that showed

that she could do sports – but there were none. She decided that she would work hard, day and night, to win a marble tournament. A bit later, she came home from school and immediately tossed down her backpack and got out her marbles. Let me point out Lupe usually came home from school and did her homework - that is why she had a shelf full of academic trophies. She put on a determined face, and started to flick her marbles. At five o'clock, she hadn't started homework. It's six o'clock, she had flicked 500 times, and she hadn't started her homework. At seven o'clock, she'll die if she goes on any longer. Final score—marbles: three hours; homework: zero hours.

Lupe overcomes her difficulties by squeezing an eraser 100 times for thumb strength, by doing “fingerups” for finger strength, and by practicing after dark even

when she could be tired to improve her overall marble game.

Gary Soto shows Lupe's hard work through repetition. For example, he says unnecessary lines like "Tried again and again," and "Practice, practice, practice, squeeze, squeeze, squeeze." These lines support my idea that Lupe is working hard,

I enjoy underdog stories because they make me have a feeling of strange success inside. I have experienced being an underdog, in soccer. But in the end, like Lupe, my soccer team succeeded. The hidden lessons I learned from this story taught me that even if you don't think about it, there is a part inside of you that says your parents are there; just remember who held you when you learned how to swim.

Literary Essay to “Eleven” By Maxwell

Some people think that growing up is fun, or exciting, having birthday parties and blowing out candles. But smart kids know that growing up is not all fun. Your old clothes don't fit anymore, and you can't play the same games, and you need to worry about new things, like money or work. In the story, “Eleven,” by Sandra Cisneros, Rachel comes to an understanding of what being eleven really feels like.

Rachel comes to understand that when you are eleven, you are also ten, nine, eight, seven, six, five, four, three, two, and one. In the story, Rachel sits at her desk, staring at the nasty red sweater Mrs. Price made her keep. She was disgusted with it, and wanted to cry like she was three. She tried not to let her three come out though. Why did she want to cry over a sweater? She thought she was eleven, old enough not to cry over something silly like a sweater. She then

realizes that she was not just eleven, but ten, nine, eight, seven, six, five, four, three, two, and one. There are other sections of the story where Rachel understands that when you are eleven, you're also all the ages inside. For example, she says "when you are scared and need to sit on your Mama's lap, that is the part of you that is still five." And "When you say something stupid, that is the part of you that is still ten." Another section of the story where Rachel sees that she has all the ages is "When you are sad and need to cry, that is the part of you that is still three." And one more place is when she blabbed and stuttered to Mrs. Price when she wanted to say something. That was the part of her that was still four. Her understanding that when you are eleven you are also all the ages inside is important because the way Sandra Cisneros stretches out "10, 9, 8, 7, 6, 5, 4, 3, 2, and 1" instead of just saying "all the other ages"—she really wants to show that that is

the most important part.

Something else that Rachel comes to understand is that turning eleven can be a let down I see this in the text here: Rachel expected to feel eleven on her birthday as soon as she woke up. But she did not. She opened her eyes and everything was just like yesterday but it was today. She went to school and expected to feel like a big eleven-year-old, but instead has a terrible day. Mrs. Price forces her to wear a nasty, disgusting sweater. She cries in front of the whole class like she was three. At the end of the day, she just wanted it to be gone and forgotten. Other parts in the text where I see that Rachel understands being eleven can be a let down are "You don't feel eleven. Not right away. It takes a few days, weeks even, sometimes even months until you say eleven when they ask you." And "You are not smart eleven. Not until you are almost twelve." And when she realizes that she does not know what to do

when Mrs. Prices forces her to wear the sweater. She does not have enough ages yet. I can really tell that Rachel does not feel eleven because Rachel says “I’m eleven” or a variation on that a lot, and that shows that she really has to remind herself, because that is not the way she feels. Also, Sandra Cisneros made a list of examples at the end of the story of things that are far away like “I wish I was 102 or anything but eleven” and “far away like a runaway balloon” or like “a teeny tiny little o in the sky.” This really shows how much Rachel wants the day to be over with. Because she did not have a happy birthday. She had a let down birthday.

Literature can help you understand things better. For example, I have come, through Rachel’s thoughts and experiences, to a conclusion that growing up is not all birthday parties and blowing out candles. And I have learned that I should appreciate being young, while I am.

Eleven

Adam Zone

In literature, authors write a lot about one character being upset and taking it out on another person. Sandra Cisneros' essay "Eleven" is about a girl named Rachel who is mistreated by her teacher and in return mistreats her classmates.

Rachel is mistreated by her teacher. Mrs. Price finds an ugly, old sweater in the lost room and forces Rachel to put it on. Rachel says "That's not... mine", but Mrs. Price moves on to the next math problem without understanding Rachel, saying "Of course, it's yours." Mrs. Price says "I remember you wearing it once." This is mistreatment because Mrs. Price isn't respecting Rachel. Mrs. Price doesn't care about what Rachel has to say. Later, right before the bell rings, Mrs. Price pretends as if everything is ok, ignoring the real pain Rachel is feeling.

In return for Mrs. Price mistreating Rachel, Rachel then goes on to mistreat her classmates. Rachel thinks of

her classmates in a derogatory way. An example of this is when Rachel commented, "Maybe because I am skinny, maybe because ~~she~~ she doesn't like me, that stupid Sylvia Saldívar says '...~~the worst~~ ~~part~~ ~~of~~ ~~the~~ ~~sweater~~ I think it belongs to Rachel'". Then later on, Rachel comments "...But the worst part about it is right before the bell that stupid Phyllis Lopez who is even dumber than Sylvia Saldívar says she remembers the sweater is hers". In both these examples, Rachel is calling her classmates dumb and stupid. She's doing this in her mind, but her feelings probably affect her actions too. Sandra Cisneros also shows Rachel mistreating her classmates when Rachel describes the sweater as smelling like "cottage cheese" and "...all itchy and full of germs that aren't even mine". This shows that Rachel is disgusted with wearing her classmates' clothes. The sweater it turns out, belongs to Phyllis and she

Must feel awful, seeing Rachel
cry over the fact that Rachel
needs to wear her sweater.

This story teaches me that
when someone mistreats a
person a person, that person
needs to protest so
that they don't pass
on their fury to other
people. When someone gets
mad at me, I sometimes
don't protest ~~and~~ and instead pass
it on to someone else.
Randa Cisneros in "Eleven"
teaches me to speak up.

"The Marble Champ"

Judah

In literature, Characters face challenges and learn to survive. In the short story "The Marble Champ" by Gary Soto, Lupe learns to overcome her difficulties by working hard and believing in herself.

Lupe overcomes her difficulties through hard work. Soon after Lupe decided to become skilled at marbles, she came home from school and decided to waste no time before playing marbles. But this wasn't just play, this was serious work. Lupe had never been good at sports, so this time she was determined to become good at marbles. She picked five marbles that she thought were her best. Lupe didn't practice on any old table; she smoothed her bedspread to make it into a good surface for her marbles. She really thought about what to do to get good at this sport. She shot softly at first to get her aim accurate. The marbles rolled and clicked against one another. Lupe was

disappointed, but didn't give up. She decided her thumb was weak and decided to strengthen it. Lupe worked to get her thumb strong by spending three hours flicking at marbles. She worked to get her wrists strong by doing twenty pushups on her fingertips, and she worked to get her thumb even stronger by squeezing an eraser one hundred times. Gary Soto uses a lot of repetition to emphasize that Lupe worked hard to become good. For example he wrote, "She tried again and again," and "Practice, practice, practice. Squeeze, Squeeze, Squeeze."

Lupe overcame her difficulties, not only by hard work, but also because she believed in herself.

She practiced and practiced and practiced. She squeezed and squeezed and squeezed. She believed that this would work.

Lupe became pretty good. Marbles became her goal--not anything academic. She beat her brother, who

played marbles. And, she beat a neighbor friend who, not only played marbles, was a champ. She believed in herself to play against them and she might win. The friend said, "She can beat the other girls for sure, I think." This didn't stop Lupe. It didn't even make her nervous! She kept going and still believed in herself. Lupe believed in herself to try and win the academic awards. Lupe believed in herself to work and try to become good. Lupe believed in herself to go to the games and try to win. In the beginning, Gary Soto writes, "Lupe Medrano, a shy girl who spoke in whispers..." It is important to notice that Gary Soto is writing about a character who is complicated. He

writes that she is shy,
but she sits and looks
at all of her awards.
Then, as the story goes
on, Lupe changes to a girl
who believes in herself.
In the beginning, Lupe
was shy. Then, in the
end, she shook hands with
people who watched her,
even a dog! At first,
her thumb was "weaker
than the neck of a
newborn chicken." Then,
after she exercised it,
it was swollen ~~with~~
because of the muscle.
Her thumb was so strong,
that when she shot, she
shattered a marble. Gary
Soto writes to make
us think that Lupe is
determined to become good
at marbles.

When I read I am often drawn to stories that are about people my own age who have problems that I might have because then I can really feel how the character is feeling. In the short story "The Marble Champ" by Gary Soto a girl named Lupe has never been good at sports, but through determined effort she will do something she has never done before — win a sport.

At the start of the story Lupe had never been good at sports. She could not catch a high pop, kick a soccer ball, or shoot a basketball. One afternoon Lupe lay on her bed staring up at the shelves that held her awards. Her awards were for spelling, reading, science, piano, chess and for never missing a day of school. Not one of her awards was for a sport. "I wish I could win something, anything, even marbles."

Gary Soto uses lists in the beginning of the story to convey the point that Lupe has been a winner. For example "... the school's spelling bee champion, winner of the reading contest three summers in a row, blue ribbon awardee in the science fair, the top student at her piano recital and the playground grand champion in chess." Soto wants readers to notice that although Lupe has excelled in many areas in her life she has not

been good in sports.

Through determined effort Lupe will win in a sport! One night after dinner, Lupe and her dad went outside. It was dark, but with a couple of twists the porch light went on. The light shone down on the circle Lupe had drawn earlier in the dirt. Lupe set the marbles inside the circle and she dropped down to her knee, she released her thumb. Even though she completely missed the marble she did not stop. She was determined to perfect her shot. She practiced again and again and again. It started to become a regular movement in her thumb. It was getting late and she continued to work her way around the circle. Dropping, aiming, releasing. Lupe prepared for the championship by squeezing an eraser 100 times, by shooting marbles for three hours and by pushing up and down on her fingers 20 times.

Gary Soto uses repetition to illustrate determined effort as an important part of Lupe's character. For example "Squeeze, squeeze, squeeze. Practice, practice, practice." Repeating these words shows how Lupe's determination to work hard in order to succeed.

From this story I have learned that

determined effort can have surprising results. Lupe had motivation to succeed, but I don't think she was expecting to win her first game. I think she had prepared herself as best she could and she was going to try her hardest. What I realize is that having determined effort to always do your best is important, because it can help make your wishes come true.