

THE CIRCUIT

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Pre-Reading Activity

Mexico and the United States share a long border and a long history. For more than 150 years, Mexicans have been crossing the border with the hope of finding higher-paying jobs than they could find in their home country. They are known for their hard work and efficiency,¹ as well as for their willingness to work for low pay and under difficult conditions. Most work as manual laborers,² especially on farms. This is very important for American farms that need large numbers of workers during the harvest³ season.

Nevertheless, the United States government has not always welcomed Mexicans into its country. During World War I, Mexican workers filled the jobs of millions of people who had become soldiers and were fighting overseas. When the soldiers returned after the war, they wanted their jobs back and the Mexican workers out of the country. In 1917, the government passed a law forbidding Mexican workers to enter the United States without a visa. From 1919, workers could not get a visa unless they first proved that they had a job waiting for them in the United States. Workers who were already in the country but who didn't have a regular job were sent back to Mexico.

When the United States joined World War II, however, there was once again a great need for Mexican workers. In 1942, the American and Mexican governments signed an agreement creating the Bracero Program. (*Bracero* is a Spanish word that means “someone who works with his arms” — in other words, a manual laborer.) Under this program, Mexicans were allowed to temporarily⁴ enter the United States to work on farms. Experts believe that approximately 4.5 million braceros came to the U.S. as a result of the program, which ended in 1964. Many of them stayed in the country for years, either sending money back to their families in Mexico or marrying fellow Mexicans and raising families in the United States.



A bracero in a field

The Bracero Program guaranteed⁵ good treatment of Mexican workers, including a minimum salary of thirty cents an hour, as well as proper housing, food, and medical care paid for by employers. Children under the age of fourteen were not allowed to work, and were supposed to be sent to school instead. In many cases, however, employers ignored⁶ some or all of the program requirements. They employed their workers under terrible conditions, but the workers were usually afraid to complain, because they wanted or needed to keep their jobs.



The living conditions of one farm worker's family

Besides the workers who came to the U.S. from Mexico via the program, millions of Mexicans crossed the border illegally during that time. They were treated even more badly than the legal workers, because employers knew that they were illegal and therefore could not complain to anyone about their treatment.

- **Although the Bracero Program no longer exists, there are still millions of Mexicans living and working in the United States. In Israel, there are also many foreign workers that work in farming, construction, and care for the elderly. Do you think that that is a positive or a negative trend? Why?**

1. efficiency = working well without wasting time
2. manual laborers = people who work with their hands
3. the harvest = a time when fruits, etc., are collected on a farm
4. temporarily = for a short amount of time
5. guaranteed = promised
6. ignored = didn't pay any attention to



Vocabulary for Part One

List 1

1. **acquire** *v.* (line 37)
2. **alarm** *n.* (line 71)
3. **bell / doorbell** *n.* (line 47)
4. **bush** *n.* (line 46)
5. **chew** *v.* (line 61)
6. **dawn** *n.* (line 21)
7. **design** *n.* (line 69)
8. **detect** *v.* (line 27)
9. **dizzy** *adj.* (line 67)
10. **exchange** *v.* (line 48)
11. **fence** *n.* (line 45)
12. **figure** *v.* (line 29)
13. **forehead** *n.* (line 41)
14. **glue** *n., v.* (line 64)
15. **handle** *n.* (line 38)
16. **(be) in store** *idiom* (line 16)
17. **lean back / forward, etc.** *idiom* (line 12)
18. **neat(ly)** *adj., adv.* (line 15)
19. **pale** *adj.* (line 69)
20. **peak** *n.* (line 1)
21. **pick up** *v.* (line 35)
22. **place in / on, etc.** *v.* (line 40)
23. **rear** *adj.* (line 30)
24. **right** *n.* (line 24)
25. **satisfied** *adj.* (line 27)
26. **sigh** *n., v.* (line 40)
27. **signal** *n., v.* (line 8)
28. **sleeve** *n.* (line 41)
29. **spill** *v.* (line 38)
30. **star** *n., v.* (line 11)
31. **stick** *n.* (line 69)
32. **strain** *n.* (line 51)
33. **sweat** *n., v.* (line 41)
34. **sweep** *v.* (line 53)
35. **thoroughly** *adv.* (line 25)
36. **underneath** *prep., adv.* (line 67)
37. **wear out** *idiom* (line 51)
38. **whisper** *n., v.* (line 70)
39. **wipe (something) away / from / off, etc.** *idiom* (lines 40–41)
40. **yell** *n., v.* (line 9)



Notice While Reading

The Circuit is about a Mexican boy who lives in the United States with his family. As you read Part One of the story, mark sections of the text that mention difficulties that the writer and his family face.

PART ONE

It was that time of year again. Ito, the strawberry sharecropper,¹ did not smile. It was natural. The peak of the strawberry season was over and the last few days the workers, most of them braceros, were not picking² as many boxes as they had during the months of June and July.

As the last days of August disappeared, so did the number of braceros. Sunday, only one—the best picker—came to work. I liked him. Sometimes we talked during our half-hour lunch break. That is how I found out he was from Jalisco, the same state in Mexico my family was from. That Sunday was the last time I saw him.

When the sun had set and sunk³ behind the mountains, Ito signaled us that it was time to go home. “*Ya esora*,”⁴ he yelled in his broken Spanish. Those were the words I waited for twelve hours a day, every day, seven days a week, week after week. And the thought of not hearing them again saddened me.

As we drove home, Papá did not say a word. With both hands on the wheel, he stared at the dirt road. My older brother, Roberto, was also silent. He leaned his head back and closed his eyes. Once in a while he cleared from his throat the dust that blew in from outside.

Yes, it was that time of year. When I opened the front door to the shack, I stopped. Everything we owned was neatly packed in cardboard boxes.⁵ Suddenly I felt even more the weight of hours, days, weeks, and months of work. I sat down on a box. The thought of having to move to Fresno and knowing what was in store for me there brought tears to my eyes.

That night I could not sleep. I lay in bed thinking about how much I hated this move.

A little before five o'clock in the morning, Papá woke everyone up. A few minutes later, the yelling and screaming of my little brothers and sisters, for whom the move was a great adventure, broke the silence of dawn. Shortly, the barking of the dogs accompanied them.

While we packed the breakfast dishes, Papá went outside to start the “Carcanchita.” That was the name Papá gave his old ’38 black Plymouth.⁶ He bought it in a used-car lot in Santa Rosa in the winter of 1949. Papá was very proud of his little jalopy. He had a right to be proud of it. He spent a lot of time looking at other cars before buying this one. When he finally chose the “Carcanchita,” he checked it thoroughly before driving it out of the car lot. He examined every inch of the car. He listened to the motor, tilting his head from side to side like a parrot,⁷ trying to detect any noises that spelled⁸ car trouble. After being satisfied with the looks and sounds of the car, Papá then insisted on knowing who the original owner was. He never did find out from the car salesman, but he bought the car anyway. Papá figured the original owner must have been an important man because behind the rear seat of the car he found a blue necktie.

1. sharecropper = (a kind of) farmer

2. picking = taking fruit off of trees or plants

3. sunk = gone down

4. *Ya esora* = It's time

5. cardboard boxes = cartons

6. Plymouth = a type of car

7. parrot = a kind of bird which often has bright colors

8. spelled = meant



Papá parked the car out in front and left the motor running. “*Listo*,”¹ he yelled. Without saying a word, Roberto and I began to carry the boxes out to the car. Roberto carried the two big boxes and I carried the two smaller ones. Papá then threw the mattress² on top of the car roof and tied it with ropes to the front and rear bumpers.

35 Everything was packed except Mamá’s pot. It was an old large galvanized³ pot she had picked up at an army surplus store in Santa Maria the year I was born. The pot had many dents and nicks,⁴ and the more dents and nicks it acquired, the more Mamá liked it. “*Mi olla*,”⁵ she used to say proudly.

I held the front door open. Mamá carefully carried out her pot by both handles, making sure not to spill the cooked beans. When she got to the car, Papá reached out to help her with it. Roberto opened the rear car door and Papá gently placed it on the floor behind the front seat. All of us then climbed in. Papá sighed, wiped the sweat off his forehead with his sleeve, and said wearily, “*Es todo*.”⁶

As we drove away, I felt a lump in my throat.⁷ I turned around and looked at our little shack for the last time.

At sunset we drove into a labor camp near Fresno. Since Papá did not speak English, Mamá asked the camp foreman if he needed any more workers. “We can’t need no more,” said the foreman, scratching his head. 45 “Check with Sullivan down the road. Can’t miss him. Leaves in a long white house with a fence around it.”

When we got there, Mamá walked up to the house. She went through a white gate, past a row of rose bushes, up the stairs to the front door. She rang the doorbell. The porch light went on, and a tall husky⁸ man came out. They exchanged a few words. After the man went in, Mamá clasped her hands and hurried back to the car. “We have work! Mr. Sullivan said we can stay there for the whole season,” she said, gasping and pointing 50 to an old garage near the stables.

The garage was worn out by the years. It had no windows. The walls, eaten by termites,⁹ strained to support the roof full of holes. The dirt floor, populated by earthworms,⁹ looked like a gray road map.

That night, by the light of a kerosene¹⁰ lamp, we unpacked and cleaned our new home. Roberto swept away the loose dirt, leaving the hard ground. Papá plugged¹¹ the holes in the walls with old newspapers and tin can tops. Mamá fed my little brothers and sisters. Papá and Roberto then brought in the mattress and placed it in the far corner of the garage. “Mamá, you and the little ones sleep on the mattress. Roberto, Panchito, and I will sleep outside under the trees,” Papá said. 55

Early next morning Mr. Sullivan showed us where his crop¹² was, and after breakfast, Papá, Roberto, and I headed for the vineyard¹³ to pick.

1. *Listo* = We’re ready

2. mattress = the soft part of the bed that you lie on

3. galvanized = covered with metal

4. dents and nicks = places where the metal was hit, cut, or otherwise damaged

5. *Mi olla* = My pot

6. *Es todo* = That’s all

7. I felt a lump in my throat = I felt pressure in my throat (like I was going to cry), I felt emotional

8. husky = strongly built

9. earthworms = animals with long, thin bodies and no bones or legs

10. kerosene = oil

11. plugged = filled

12. crop = fruits or vegetables that are growing

13. vineyard = a place where grapes are grown



60 Around nine o'clock the temperature had risen to almost one hundred degrees.¹ I was completely soaked² in sweat and my mouth felt as if I had been chewing on a handkerchief.³ I walked over to the end of the row, picked up the jug of water we had brought, and began drinking. "Don't drink too much; you'll get sick," Roberto shouted. No sooner had he said that than I felt sick to my stomach. I dropped to my knees and let the jug roll off my hands. I remained motionless⁴ with my eyes glued on the hot sandy ground. All I could
65 hear was the drone⁵ of insects. Slowly I began to recover. I poured water over my face and neck and watched the dirty water run down my arms to the ground.

I still felt a little dizzy when I took a break to eat lunch. It was past two o'clock and we sat underneath a large walnut tree that was on the side of the road. While we ate, Papá jotted⁶ down the number of boxes we had picked. Roberto drew designs on the ground with a stick. Suddenly I noticed Papá's face turn pale as he looked
70 down the road. "Here comes the school bus," he whispered loudly in alarm. Instinctively, Roberto and I ran and hid in the vineyards. We did not want to get into trouble for not going to school. The neatly dressed boys about my age got off. They carried books under their arms. As they crossed the street, the bus drove away. Roberto and I
75 came out from hiding and joined Papá. "*Tienen que tener cuidado,*"⁷ he warned us.



After lunch we went back to work. The sun kept beating down. The buzzing insects, the wet sweat, and the hot dry dust made the afternoon seem to last forever. Finally the mountains around the valley reached out and swallowed the sun. Within an hour it was too dark to continue picking. The vines blanketed the grapes,
80 making it difficult to see the bunches. "*Vámonos,*"⁹ said Papá, signaling to us that it was time to quit work. Papá then took out a pencil and began to figure out how much we had earned for first day. He wrote down numbers, crossed some out, wrote down some more. "*Quince,*"¹⁰ he murmured.

When we arrived home, we took a cold shower underneath a waterhose. We then sat down to eat dinner around some wooden crates¹¹ that served as a table. Mamá had cooked a special meal for us. We had rice and
85 tortillas with "*carne con chile,*" my favorite dish.

The next morning I could hardly move. My body ached all over. I felt little control over my arms and legs. This feeling went on every morning for days until my muscles finally got used to the work.

1. one hundred degrees = 38° Celsius

2. soaked = very wet

3. handkerchief = piece of cloth used as a tissue

4. motionless = not moving

5. drone = buzzing noise

6. jotted = wrote

7. *Tienen que tener cuidado* = You have to be careful

8. vines = plants that produce grapes

9. *Vámonos* = Let's go

10. *Quince* = Fifteen (dollars)

11. crates = boxes



Basic Understanding

Answer the questions about Part One of the story.

1. Complete the fact file about the boy telling the story. (lines 1–10)

- a. Name: **Panchito**
- b. Country where his family was from: _____
- c. Language that his family spoke: _____

2. Complete the sentence: (lines 1–10)

At the end of August, there were fewer _____ than there were in June and July.

3. What did Panchito see when he entered his house? (lines 11–17) _____

4. a. How did Panchito (the writer) feel about his family’s move to Fresno? (lines 11–21) _____

b. Did his younger brothers and sisters feel the same way? Explain. _____

5. Everyone was careful with Mamá’s pot because (—). (lines 35–41)

- a. it was Mamá’s favorite pot
- b. they didn’t want to damage it
- c. there was food inside it
- d. it was still new and shiny

6. How did Papá, Roberto, and Panchito get jobs in Fresno? (lines 43–50) _____

7. List *three* problems with Mr. Sullivan’s garage. (lines 51–85)

Complete the sentences.

- a. There were _____.
- b. There were _____.
- c. There were _____.

8. Complete the sentence: (lines 67–76)

When the school bus came down the road, _____.

9. How much money did Papá, Roberto, and Panchito earn on their first day in the vineyard? (lines 77–82) _____

10. What were *two* physical difficulties that Panchito faced during his first days of grape picking? (lines 60–87)

- a. _____
- b. _____

11. Match the people / things / places to their description.

- | | |
|---------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| ___ i. “Carcanchita” | a. Panchito’s new boss |
| ___ ii. Jalisco | b. Panchito’s favorite dish |
| ___ iii. Mr. Sullivan | c. Where Panchito’s family was from |
| ___ iv. “Carne con chile” | d. Panchito’s boss during the summer |
| ___ v. Ito | e. Papá’s beloved car |



Vocabulary Practice (List 1)

True or false?

- ___ 1. Panchito **strained** to finish his first day of work at the vineyard.
- ___ 2. Ito always **whispered** when he spoke to his workers.
- ___ 3. There was a tall **fence** around the garage that Panchito's family lived in.
- ___ 4. Panchito's family cleaned the garage **thoroughly** when they first moved in there.
- ___ 5. The **peak** of the strawberry season was in June and July.
- ___ 6. Mamá's pot had two **handles**.
- ___ 7. Panchito was unhappy about moving because he knew what **was in store** for him.
- ___ 8. Papá, Roberto, and Panchito had to pick fruit from **bushes** for Mr. Sullivan.
- ___ 9. Papá **acquire** "Carcanchita" especially for the move to Fresno.
- ___ 10. The school boys felt **alarm** when they saw Roberto and Panchito.
- ___ 11. Some of the beans in Mamá's pot **spilled** because she wasn't carrying it carefully enough.
- ___ 12. Papá found some money **behind** the rear seat of his car.
- ___ 13. Panchito felt **dizzy** on his first day of grape picking.
- ___ 14. Papá **figured** that "Carcanchita" had previously been owned by an important man.
- ___ 15. Roberto and Panchito hid in the vineyard so that the police wouldn't **detect** them.
- ___ 16. The hard work and the heat at the vineyard caused Panchito to be covered with **sweat**.
- ___ 17. Papá, Roberto, and Panchito started picking grapes at **dawn** every day.
- ___ 18. Papá turned **pale** because he thought the school boys would try to steal some grapes from them.
- ___ 19. "Carcanchita" was **worn out** by too much driving and on a page.
- ___ 20. When Panchito got home, everything that his family owned was **neatly** packed into "Carcanchita."
- ___ 21. Mr. Sullivan came out to talk with Mamá even before she had a chance to ring the **doorbell**.
- ___ 22. Mamá **picked up** her favorite pot from an army surplus store.
- ___ 23. Papá was **satisfied** with "Carcanchita," even though its motor didn't sound so good.
- ___ 24. After Panchito **wiped off** the sweat from his **forehead**, he continued working even harder .
- ___ 25. After Mamá and Mr. Sullivan **exchanged** a few words, Papá, Roberto, and Panchito all had jobs.
- ___ 26. Part of Roberto's job in the vineyard was drawing **designs** with a **stick**.
- ___ 27. When Roberto **swept** the garage, he found earthworms on the floor.
- ___ 28. The school boys **stared** at Roberto and Panchito working in the vineyard.
- ___ 29. Panchito kept his eyes **glued** to the ground when he felt sick from drinking too much water.
- ___ 30. In the morning, Panchito **yelled** excitedly together with his brothers and sisters.
- ___ 31. Papá **placed** the mattress **underneath** the tree for Mamá and the children to sleep on.
- ___ 32. It was dark when Ito **signaled** that it was time for the workers to stop picking strawberries.



Focusing on Language: The Past Perfect

We use the Past Perfect to talk about completed events in the past which happened *before* other events in the past. For example: I arrived at Mia’s house and discovered that she **had already left**. (In other words, Mia left before I arrived at her house.)

If, however, we want to talk about a number of short actions that happened one after the other, we usually just use the Past Simple.

The form of the Past Perfect is **had + verb + ed / V3**. It is usually used together with one or more sentences in the Past Simple (the event/s that happened after it).

We often use the Past Perfect in sentences that contain one of the following verbs: **realized, remembered, forgot, knew, understood**, etc.

For example: When I arrived at the office, I **realized** that I **hadn’t locked** the doors the night before.

Time expressions used with the Past Perfect include: **already** (in positive sentences only, between *had* and the verb), **still** (in negative sentences before *hadn’t*), **yet** (in negative sentences between *hadn’t* and the verb), **after, before** (in the Past Simple clause), **by a certain time** (in the Past Simple clause), **until** (in the Past Simple clause), **earlier, previously** (in between *had* and the verb)

For example: I had **already** gotten dressed **by the time** my alarm clock rang.

They **still** hadn’t found the lost ring. They hadn’t **yet** found the lost ring.

Tamara only started eating **after** all her guests had finished their meal. All her guests had finished their meal **before** Tamara started eating.

The young child had never seen a kangaroo **until** he visited the zoo.

Why did she ask me the same question that she had asked me **earlier**?

I had **previously** answered her question, so she didn’t need to ask it again.

A. Read the sentences from the story below and underline the form of Past Perfect in each sentence. Then write which event / action happened first, and which event / action happened later.

1. “The peak of the strawberry season was over and the last few days the workers, most of them braceros, were not picking as many boxes as they had (picked) during the months of June and July.” (lines 1–3)

Event / Action 1: _____

Event / Action 2: _____

2. “When the sun had tired and sunk behind the mountains, Ito signaled us that it was time to go home.” (line 8)

Event / Action 1: _____

Event / Action 2: _____

3. “I was completely soaked in sweat and my mouth felt as if I had been chewing on a handkerchief.” (lines 60–61)

Event / Action 1: _____

Event / Action 2: _____



4. “I walked over to the end of the row, picked up the jug of water we had brought, and began drinking.” (lines 61–62)

Event / Action 1: _____

Event / Action 2: _____

5. “While we ate, Papá jotted down the number of boxes we had picked.” (lines 68–69)

Event / Action 1: _____

Event / Action 2: _____

6. “Papá then took out a pencil and began to figure out how much we had earned our first day.” (line 81)

Event / Action 1: _____

Event / Action 2: _____

7. “We then sat down to eat dinner around some wooden crates that served as a table. Mamá had cooked a special meal for us.” (lines 83–84)

Event / Action 1: _____

Event / Action 2: _____

- B. Below are pairs of events / actions from the story. Use each pair to write a sentence based on the story. Make sure to use the correct grammatical form for each event / action.**

1. (eat supper / finish working in the vineyard) _____

2. (spend the summer picking strawberries / find it hard to pick grapes) _____

3. (continue to pick strawberries / almost all the braceros leave) _____

4. (go to sleep / clean their new home) _____

5. (examine “Carcanchita” thoroughly / buy “Carcanchita”) _____

6. (pack everything in cardboard boxes / come home from the strawberry farm) _____



Focusing on Literature

► Narrator

A **narrator** is the storyteller in a literary text. If the narrator is a character in the story, the story is in first person. If the narrator is not a character in the story, the story is in third person.

1. Who is the **narrator** in *The Circuit*? _____
2. What do we know about him / her? _____

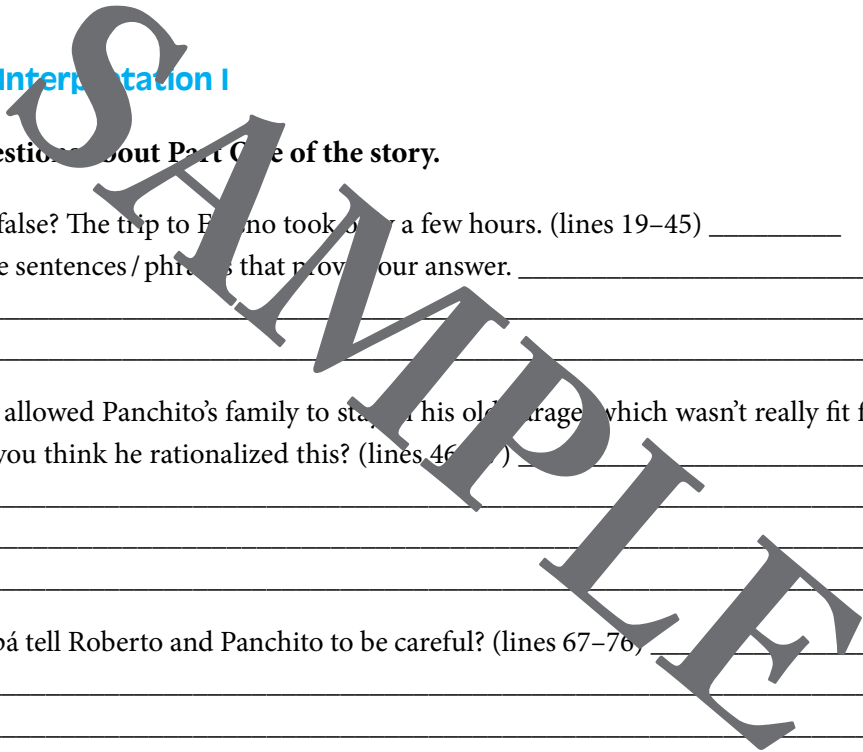
Analysis and Interpretation I

Answer the questions about Part C of the story.

1. a. True or false? The trip to Fresno took only a few hours. (lines 19–45) _____
b. Copy the sentences / phrases that prove your answer. _____

2. Mr. Sullivan allowed Panchito’s family to stay in his old garage, which wasn’t really fit for anyone to live in. How do you think he rationalized this? (lines 46–57) _____

3. Why did Papá tell Roberto and Panchito to be careful? (lines 67–76) _____





Analysis and Interpretation II: Critical Thinking Strategies

Read one or more of the following questions with your teacher and answer it / them as directed by your teacher.

► Inferring

- Although the narrator (Panchito) tells his story simply, there are things that he doesn't say directly. Instead, he gives us details and hints which allow us to "read between the lines." For example, he writes how sad he is to move to Fresno, and how excited his younger brothers and sisters are about the move. However, he doesn't write about Papá and Roberto's feelings about the move — or does he?

Look at lines 11–13, where the writer describes their ride home from the strawberry fields. Read the description of Papá and Roberto's behavior. Can you **infer** their feelings about the move from that description?

Inferring = guessing based on clues, inferring implicit meaning from the text by being able to "read between the lines"

Useful vocabulary: assume, conclude, deduce, infer, read between the lines, understand

Now use your skill of **inference** to answer the following questions.

- Every day, Ito told his workers that they could leave by saying "Vámonos," but when he did so at the beginning of the story, his words had a different and more firm meaning. How did Panchito know that he would not be hearing those words again? (lines 1–11) _____

- Had Panchito's family ever lived in Fresno before? How do you know that from the story? (lines 14–18) _____

- How many people were there in Panchito's family? What hints in the story tell you this? (lines 11–21) _____

- Did Panchito's family have a lot of possessions? Copy the words from the text that prove your answer. (lines 14–41) _____

- Do you think that Panchito's family had previously moved a lot? Why or why not? (lines 14–41) _____

- Based on Part One of the story, list at least *one* personality trait that Papá and Mamá shared. Explain your answer. _____



2. We can also use the skill of **inferring** to guess words from context — that is, guessing the meaning of an unfamiliar word by looking at all the clues in the text: what it could logically mean within the context of the sentence / paragraph, what part of speech it is, etc. Try to infer the meaning of the following words based on their context:
- a. “When I opened the front door to the **shack**, I stopped.” (line 14)
The meaning of the word *shack* is (—).
i. a kind of car
ii. go home
iii. sad and angry
iv. a small house
Which clue(s) in the sentence helped you choose your answer? _____

- b. “Papá was very proud of his little **jalopy**.” (lines 23–24)
What do you think a *jalopy* is? Which clue(s) in the lines before this sentence helped you understand what the word *jalopy* means? _____

- c. “Since Papá did not speak English, Mamá asked the camp **foreman** if he needed any more workers.” (lines 43–44)
Who or what do you think the “camp foreman” is? Which clue(s) in the sentence helped you choose your answer? _____

- d. “The vines **blanketed** the grapes, making it difficult to see the bunches.” (lines 79–80)
Can you think of a synonym for the word *blanketed*? Fill in the sentence below with a suitable synonym (*without* using a dictionary!).
The vines _____ the grapes, making it difficult to see the bunches.

► Making Connections

3. Before you began reading this story, you read about the Bracero Program (page 5). Now, see if you can **connect** the information given about the program with some of the details given in the story in order to better understand the story.

Making Connections = connecting between people, ideas, events, situations, etc., making connections between specific aspects of a text, making connections between a text and other contexts in relation to theme, historical and cultural contexts, or pertinent information from the author’s biography

Useful vocabulary: associated, connected, influenced, linked, related



- a. In lines 69–76, the writer tells us about Papá’s alarm when he sees the school bus. Find the information from the text on page 5 to better understand this, and in your notebook, complete the connection between the two pieces of information.

i. *From the text on page 5:*

ii. *From the story:*

Papá turned pale when he saw the school bus. Instinctively, Roberto and Panchito ran and hid in the vineyards. They did not want to get into trouble for not going to school.

iii. Roberto and Panchito had to both be under the age of fourteen, but

_____.

- b. In lines 51–57, the writer describes the garage that Mr. Sullivan allows his family to stay in. Find the information from the text on page 5 to better understand this and complete the connection between the two pieces of information.

i. *From the text on page 5:*

ii. *From the story:*

The garage had no windows. The walls and roof were full of holes. The dirt floor was full of earthworms. There was no electricity or furniture in the garage.

iii. Instead of complaining, Panchito’s family _____

_____.



Your Opinion

Work in pairs or in groups. Give your opinion (orally) on one or more of the issues below.

► Child Labor

- Roberto and Panchito were children, but they worked alongside their father in the strawberry fields and vineyards, twelve hours a day, seven days a week. They couldn't go to school, and certainly had no time to make friends and spend time with other children their age. This may seem very unfair to us, but we have to remember that their family was very poor, and it might have been impossible for their parents to feed everyone if Roberto and Panchito hadn't worked.

In the past, child labor was the norm, but nowadays, it is rare in most Western countries. In the United States, for example, children under the age of sixteen are only allowed to take some after-school jobs, such as working in a fast-food restaurant or in a gas station (usually up to three hours a day). However, some states have even stricter laws than that. For instance, in West Virginia, children under age sixteen may not work at any job during the school year.

- How would you feel if you were Papá or Mamá and had to send your children to work at such an early age? Explain why you feel this way.
- What would you do if you were in a situation similar to Panchito's? If your parents had a hard time making do, would you offer to get an after-school job in order to help them out? Or do you think that it's only the parents' responsibility to provide for their children?
- How do you feel about teenagers working (not because their parents ask them to)? List the advantages and disadvantages of having a job while you are still in high school. Do you think that there should be a minimal age for having a job? Why or why not?

Vocabulary for Part Two

List 2

- | | |
|--|--|
| 1. assign(ment) <i>v. (n.)</i> (line 108) | 14. recess <i>n.</i> (line 116) |
| 2. enroll <i>v.</i> (line 105) | 15. relief <i>n.</i> (line 95) |
| 3. enthusiasm <i>n.</i> | 16. relieve(d) <i>n., adj.</i> |
| 4. enthusiastic(ally) <i>adj. (adv.)</i> (line 110) | 17. rub <i>v.</i> (line 94) |
| 5. goose bumps <i>n.</i> (line 125) | 18. rush <i>v.</i> (line 111) |
| 6. hesitant(ly) <i>adj. (adv.)</i> (line 112) | 19. stain(ed) <i>n. (adj.)</i> (line 94) |
| 7. hesitate <i>v.</i> | 20. savor <i>v.</i> (line 89) |
| 8. hold (one's self / someone) back
<i>phrasal verb</i> (line 104) | 23. speechless <i>adj.</i> (line 103) |
| 9. lead (someone) to / toward, etc. <i>idiom</i> (line 104) | 21. startle(d) <i>v., (adj.)</i> (line 102) |
| 10. nervous <i>adj.</i> (line 99) | 22. struggle <i>n., v.</i> (line 104) |
| 11. pretend <i>v.</i> (line 117) | 24. take roll (take attendance) <i>idiom</i> (line 108) |



Notice While Reading

What changes in Panchito's life?

PART TWO

It was Monday, the first week of November. The grape season was over and I could now go to school. I woke up early that morning and lay in bed, looking at the stars and savoring the thought of not going to work and of starting sixth grade for the first time that year. Since I could not sleep, I decided to get up and join Papá and Roberto at breakfast. I sat at the table across from Roberto, but I kept my face down. I did not want to look up and face him. I knew he was sad. He was not going to school today. He was not going tomorrow, or next week, or next month. He would not go until the cotton season was over, and that was sometime in February. I rubbed my hands together and washed the dry, acid stained skin fall to the floor in little rolls.

When Papá and Roberto left for work, I felt relief. I walked to the top of a small grade¹ next to the shack and watched the “Carcanchita” disappear in the distance in a cloud of dust.

Two hours later, around eight o'clock, I stood by the side of the road waiting for school bus number twenty. When it arrived, I climbed in. Everyone was busy either talking or yelling. I sat in an empty seat in the back.

When the bus stopped in front of the school, I felt very nervous. I looked out the bus window and saw boys and girls carrying books under their arms. I put my hands in my pant pockets and walked to the principal's office. When I entered I heard a woman's voice say, “May I help you?” I was startled. I had not heard English for months. For a few seconds I remained speechless. I looked at the lady who waited for an answer. My first instinct was to answer her in Spanish, but I held back. Finally, after struggling for English words, I managed to tell her that I wanted to enroll in the sixth grade. After answering many questions, I was led to the classroom.

Mr. Lema, the sixth grade teacher, greeted me and assigned me a desk. He then introduced me to the class. I was so nervous and scared at that moment when everyone's eyes were on me that I realized that I were with Papá and Roberto picking cotton. After taking roll, Mr. Lema gave the class the assignment for the first hour. “The first thing we have to do this morning is finish reading the story we began yesterday,” he said enthusiastically. He walked up to me, handed me an English book, and asked me to read. “We are on page 125,” he said politely. When I heard this, I felt my blood rush to my head; I felt dizzy. “Would you like to read?” he asked hesitantly. I opened the book to page 125. My mouth was dry. My eyes began to water. I could not begin. “You can read later,” Mr. Lema said understandingly.

For the rest of the reading period I kept getting angrier and angrier with myself. I should have read, I thought to myself.

During recess I went into the restroom and opened my English book to page 125. I began to read in a low voice, pretending I was in class. There were many words I did not know. I closed the book and headed back to the classroom.

Mr. Lema was sitting at his desk correcting papers. When I entered he looked up at me and smiled. I felt better. I walked up to him and asked if he could help me with the new words. “Gladly,” he said.

The rest of the month I spent my lunch hours working on English with Mr. Lema, my best friend at school.

1. grade = hill



One Friday during lunch hour Mr. Lema asked me to take a walk with him to the music room. “Do you like music?” he asked me as we entered the building.

125 “Yes, I like corridos,”¹ I answered. He then picked up a trumpet, blew on it and handed it to me. The sound gave me goose bumps. I knew that sound. I had heard it in many corridos. “How would you like to learn how to play it?” he asked. He must have read my face because before I could answer, he added, “I’ll teach you how to play it during our lunch hours.”

130 That day I could hardly wait to get home to tell Papá and Mamá the great news. As I got off the bus, my little brothers and sisters ran up to meet me. They were yelling and screaming. I thought they were happy to see me, but when I opened the door to our shack, I saw that everything we owned was neatly packed in cardboard boxes.

Basic Understanding

Answer the questions about Part Two of the story.

1. a. When did Panchito start going to school? (lines 88–94) _____
 b. Did Roberto join him? Why or why not? _____

2. Complete the sentence: (lines 100–105)
 It was hard for Panchito to answer the woman in the principal’s office because _____
 _____.
3. How did Panchito feel when Mr. Lema introduced him to the class and everyone was looking at him? (lines 106–113) _____
4. Why was Panchito angry? (lines 106–115)
 - a. He didn’t want to read aloud to the class.
 - b. When he read aloud to the class, he made many mistakes.
 - c. He didn’t like the story that the class was reading.
 - d. He had been too nervous to read aloud to the class.
5. How did Mr. Lema help Panchito in his first month at school? (lines 116–121) _____

6. Complete the sentence. (lines 122–127)
 In addition to teaching Panchito English, Mr. Lema offered to _____
 _____.
7. What did Panchito see when he arrived home on the last day of the story? (lines 128–131) _____

1. corrido = a type of Mexican ballad or folk song



Vocabulary Practice (List 2)

Fill in the sentences with the words from the box below.

1. When Panchito entered the principal's office, he was _____ to hear himself being addressed in English.
2. After introducing Panchito to the class, Mr. Lema _____.
3. Mr. Lema, Panchito's teacher, taught with a lot of _____.
4. Panchito had to answer a lot of questions before he was allowed to _____ in the school.
5. Panchito was very _____ to not have to go to work any longer.
6. Panchito tried to read his English book in the restroom, but he _____ with many of the words.
7. When Panchito was in the principal's office, he had to _____ from speaking in Spanish.
8. Listening to Mr. Lema play the trumpet gave Panchito _____.
9. Although Panchito _____ the thought of not having to go to work, he was unhappy knowing that Roberto would not be able to join him.
10. Panchito's hands were _____ from all the grapes he had picked in the previous few months.
11. After his first lesson, Panchito took his English book into the restroom and _____ that he was reading aloud in front of his class.
12. Panchito was happy to go to school, but he also felt _____ about entering the school building.
13. The first _____ that Panchito had in Mr. Lema's class was to read aloud from an English book.
14. After he had answered many questions, someone from the school _____ Panchito to his classroom.
15. Panchito's hands were so dry from picking grapes that when he _____ his hands together, pieces of skin came off.
16. During _____, Panchito asked Mr. Lema to help him with his reading.
17. When Mr. Lema asked Panchito to read, Panchito was _____.
19. Mr. Lema was _____ to ask Panchito to start reading.
20. When Panchito came home from school on Friday, his little brothers and sisters _____ to greet him.

savored – led – enroll – pretended – startled – goose bumps – hesitant –
 stained – rushed – enthusiasm – struggled – speechless – hold back –
 relieved – took roll – rubbed – nervous – recess – assignment



Focusing on Literature

► Theme

Every good piece of literature has a **theme** — a message or general idea — and many pieces of literature have more than one theme. A theme is almost never written directly in the text, but must be inferred from a careful reading of the text and its recurring¹ symbols or ideas.

A theme is always universal — that is, it’s a concept or message that applies not only to the characters and plot of any one specific piece of literature, but that can apply to hundreds of other pieces of literature with entirely different characters, plots, and settings, and that can often also apply to readers’ own lives. For example, a writer can choose to focus on the theme of the cruelty of war by writing about a group of soldiers fighting together in World War II, or by writing about an elderly couple who is left homeless and penniless as a result of the civil war in Syria, or by writing about two brothers fighting against each other in the American Civil War.

A theme can be written as a concept or as a statement. For example, a thematic concept of a text could be “forgiveness,” while the thematic statement could be “Forgiveness is healing.”

- 1. What do you think the main theme of The Circuit is? Write it as a thematic concept. _____

Analysis and Interpretation I

Answer the questions about Parts One and Two of the story.

- 1. List three facts from lines 106–121 that show that Mr. Lema was a good teacher.
a. _____
b. _____
c. _____
2. Do you think that Panchito told Mamá and Papá about his great news? Why or why not? _____
3. How is Panchito’s move at the end of the story different from the move to Fresno? Write one thing. _____
4. Did you like the ending of the story? Why or why not? _____

1. recurring = happening again, repeating themselves



Analysis and Interpretation II: Critical Thinking Strategies

Read one or more of the following questions with your teacher and answer it / them as directed by your teacher.

► Inferring

1. The answers to the following questions are not written directly in the text. Can you **infer** them from the text?
 - a. Most students don't like going to school, but Panchito was very happy to do so. Why? _____

 - b. i. Why did Panchito feel relief when Papá and Roberto left for work? (lines 88–96) _____

 - ii. Copy the sentences from the text that prove your answer. _____

 - c. In line 126, Panchito says, "He must have read my face." What did Mr. Lema read in Panchito's face? How do you know that? _____

 - d. Why were Panchito's little brothers and sisters crying and screaming when he arrived home from school? _____
 - e. What event do you think took place the morning after the story finishes? _____

► Making Connections

2. From the story, it seems that Mr. Lema was not surprised by Panchito's sudden appearance in his classroom, even though it was two months after the beginning of the school year. Why do you think that is so? **Make connections** to the information you read about Mexico and the United States on page 5 and to information given in the story. _____

3. Is the ending of the story surprising? Why or why not? Answer by **making connections** to information stated earlier in the text. _____



► Sequencing

Writers don't always write stories in chronological order. Readers must be able **to sequence** (understand the order in which events take place in a story) in order to properly understand the story.

Sequencing = understanding the sequence of events that have not been presented in chronological

Useful vocabulary: after, after a while, at last, before, eventually, finally, first, flashback, foreshadow, last, order, next, progression, second, sequence, series, simultaneously, subsequently, then

4. Below are some of the events that happened in Part Two of the story or in the months *after* the story took place. **Sequence** them based on Part Two of the story.

- ___ a. Panchito improved his English.
- ___ b. Panchito came home from Mr. Lema's class for the last time.
- ___ c. Roberto started going to school.
- ___ d. Panchito's family packed everything they owned into cardboard boxes.
- ___ e. Panchito started going to school.

5. In *The Circuit*, Panchito tells us the story of several months of his life. However, he also mentions events that happened before the story took place. These events are listed below. Can you list them in the order in which they occurred? (Remember that the order in which they are mentioned in the text is not necessarily the order in which they actually occurred.) You must be able to justify your **sequencing** to your teacher / class. (There is one event for which you don't have enough information to be able to decide where in the sequence of events it belongs. Write NEI <Not Enough Information> next to that event.)

Important note: Santa Maria and Santa Rosa are both cities in California.

- ___ a. Mamá bought her pot.
- ___ b. Panchito's family moved from Jalisco to the United States.
- ___ c. Papá bought "Carcanchita."
- ___ d. Ito hired Papá, Roberto, and Panchito to work in his strawberry fields.
- ___ e. Panchito started learning how to read English.

6. In your notebook, make a flowchart of at least *eleven* events: all nine events that you **sequenced** in questions 4 and 5, as well as at least *two* additional events that happened in Part One of the story. For example:

1. Panchito's family moved from Jalisco to the United States.





Post-Reading Activity

Choose *one* of the following tasks and write/present it in your *own* words. (Do *not* copy from the story!)

1. You are Mr. Lema. Write the story told in *The Circuit* from your own point of view (approximately 120–140 words total).

Remember that:

- You only know the parts of the story that relate to you.
- You should include not only the facts as they are told in the story, but also your own feelings and thoughts.

2. You are Panchito. Write Mr. Lema a letter from your new place of residence (approximately 120–140 words total).

Remember that:

- A letter should begin with a date in the right-hand corner, and in the line underneath, “Dear ...” on the left side of the page.
- Panchito never had a chance to tell Mr. Lema that he was moving.

3. You are Roberto. After working alongside your brother Panchito for months, you had to continue working without him while he went to school. Although he tried not to tell you too much about school so as not to make you jealous, you could see the books and notebooks he took out of his schoolbag and worked on every night. Write a series of three diary entries (approximately 120–140 words total) describing your routine and your feelings about it. One entry should be from the beginning of September, one from the second week of November, and one from the middle of December.

Remember that:

- Each diary entry should be dated and should begin with “Dear Diary.”
- You must pay attention to where you were on each of these dates and what you were doing.
- On the one hand, you are close to your brother and have spent a lot of time with him, but on the other hand, you might be jealous of him when he attends school and you can’t.
- Panchito probably didn’t tell you the story of Mr. Lema and the music lessons.

4. You are a radio/television reporter. You have been asked to present a special report on the working conditions of Mexican farm workers in the United States. While researching the subject, you have visited different farms and interviewed both employers and workers there, including Mr. Sullivan’s farm, where you interviewed Mr. Sullivan, as well as Panchito and his family. Present your report (approximately two to three minutes of speaking) to your class, or record it as an audio or video file.

Remember that:

- The report should be objective and present all sides of the coin, not just one point of view.
- The report should give general facts rather than only focusing on Mr. Sullivan’s farm.
- You should practice before presenting to your class/recording your presentation and pay special attention to fluency, clarity, and comprehensibility.



5. Draw a map of the “circuit” that Panchito and his family traveled every year. Include at least *one* place not mentioned by name in the story (the place where they went to immediately after the story ends). Next to each place, write a description of the place from Panchito’s point of view (approximately 120–140 words total).

Remember that:

- The descriptions should be in your own words.
 - The descriptions should include not only what Panchito did in each place, but also his feelings about each place.
 - If you don’t know the name of a place, look at a map of California and choose the name of a place.
 - For the places not mentioned in the story, you must use your imagination as well as logic, e.g., they probably didn’t suddenly travel to the other side of the country, but rather stayed in the California area.
6. Look for information about corridos, the Mexican music that Panchito liked. Then write your own corrido (putting your own words to an existing tune) based on the events that took place in *The Circuit* (12–16 lines). Record the song, or perform it for your class. Give your teacher a written version of the song.

Remember that:

- You must use your own words.
- Choose music that complements your words, or words that complement your music.