

Chapter 2

Characters

Living Many Lives

Chapter Preview In this chapter you will—

Read: Selections

Interact with Text: Graphic Organizers

Practice Read: *The Musician*

by Meish Goldish
Interactive Reading, p. 48

“It Says, I Say, And So” Chart

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Mother and Daughter

by Gary Soto
Holt Literature and Language Arts, p. 109

Character Comparison-and-Contrast Chart

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The Smallest Dragonboy

by Anne McCaffrey
Holt Literature and Language Arts, p. 119

Character-Traits Chart

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Here Be Dragons

by Flo Ota De Lange
Holt Literature and Language Arts, p. 137

Venn Diagram

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A Rice Sandwich

by Sandra Cisneros
Holt Literature and Language Arts, p. 140

Character-Analysis Questionnaire

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The Tejano Soul of San Antonio

by Sandra Cisneros
Holt Literature and Language Arts, p. 147

Evidence Chart

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Four Selections

by Sandra Cisneros
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Project: Mexico

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Top Ten Languages

from *The World Almanac for Kids*
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Project: Almanac

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Learning to Float

from *Marisol and Magdalena* by Veronica Chambers
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Project: Prediction Chart

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Strategy Launch: “It Says, I Say, And So”

LITERARY FOCUS: ANALYSIS OF CHARACTER

When you analyze a character in a story, you take the character apart to see what kind of person he or she is. Sometimes a writer directly describes a character. A writer might say, “Joe was a trusting soul.” Usually, however, a writer reveals more indirectly what a character is like. The writer might describe the character’s appearance, actions, speech, and thoughts and show us how other characters react to that person. Then we make up our own minds about the kind of person we are meeting.

A STRATEGY THAT WORKS: “IT SAYS, I SAY, AND SO”

To understand characters in literature—and in real life—we have to make inferences, or guesses based on evidence. A strategy that can help you make inferences about characters in stories is “It Says, I Say, And So.”

POINTERS FOR USING “IT SAYS, I SAY, AND SO”

- »»» The “It Says” part of the strategy means that you identify what the text says about the character. Read the details that describe a character’s looks, actions, and words. Look for how other people in the story feel about the character.
- »»» The “I Say” part of the strategy means that you say what *you* think. Give your opinion of the character’s thoughts, words, or actions.
- »»» In the “And So” part of the strategy, combine the information in the text (It Says) with what you think about that information (I Say) to make an inference (And So).



Reading Standard 1.2
Use knowledge of Greek, Latin, and Anglo-Saxon roots and affixes to understand content-area vocabulary.

Reading Standard 2.2 (Grade 6 Review)
Analyze text that uses the compare-and-contrast organizational pattern.

Reading Standard 3.3
Analyze characterization as delineated through a character’s thoughts, words, speech patterns, and actions; the narrator’s description; and the thoughts, words, and actions of other characters.

Practice Read

BEFORE YOU READ

"The Musician" is a story about computers and music, but mostly it is about a relationship. You will meet two characters, a father and son. They have a lot in common, but they also have a few differences. That's what makes the story!

The Musician

Meish Goldish

INFER

Circle the names of the two characters introduced in the first two sentences. How do you think Tano knows what his father wants the moment he knocks on the door?

IDENTIFY

Pause at line 16. Underline the words that show what Tano does. Then, circle the words that reveal what Tano thinks.

Tano knew what his dad would say the moment he knocked on Tano's open door.

"Why aren't you downstairs practicing the piano?" Dad asked, entering the bedroom.

Tano was sitting at his desk, surfing web sites on his computer.

"I'm doing some computer stuff now, Dad," Tano answered. "I'll practice a little later."

Dad began to peel the orange he was holding.

10 "There's no time like the present," Dad said, holding out a slice of orange to his son.

"No thanks, Dad. I don't really like oranges," said Tano.

"But they're good for you," Dad said. "Just like practicing the piano is good for you."

Tano rolled his eyes upward. Here we go again, he thought. The same old, tired speech I get week after week.

"Dad," said Tano, trying to sound respectful and not annoyed, "I eat plenty of healthy foods. All kinds of fruits

and vegetables. I eat grapes, pears, plums, apples. I just
20 don't happen to like oranges."

After taking a deep breath, Tano added, "And I just
don't happen to like playing the piano, either."

For a moment, Tano's father stared at his son with a
distant look. Tano wasn't even sure his father was looking
at him. It was more like he was daydreaming, Tano
thought.

Suddenly, Dad shrugged his shoulders and said, "Sorry
to bother you, son." He turned and left the room.

Tano turned back to his computer work but couldn't
30 **concentrate**. Guilt feelings began to creep inside him.

I know I shouldn't have said that to Dad, Tano
thought. It's been so hard on him since Mom died. I should
just do everything he asks me, without objecting. I should
just be the perfect son.

Tano walked over to his bed and lay down. He thought
about how much he missed his mother. It had been nearly
a year since she died. Now just he and Dad were left in the
house. Tano and his father were together at school as well,
since his father was the music teacher there. About five
40 months ago, Dad had urged Tano to take up the piano. But
much as he tried, Tano just didn't seem to enjoy it.

The sudden ringing of the telephone startled Tano.

"Hello?" he answered.

"Hey, Tano. It's Dave. Want to come over and spend
some time on my computer?"

"I don't know, Dave. I really should be practicing the
piano now."

"Oh, come on. You don't need the piano. And I just
got some new computer games with awesome video
50 features. You could show me how to master them, like you
always do."

INFER

Circle the words "guilt feelings" in line 30. Then draw an arrow from the words "guilt feelings" to two things that Tano has just told his father he doesn't like. Why do you think saying those things makes Tano feel guilty?

VOCABULARY DEVELOPMENT

concentrate (kän'sən·trät') v.:
direct or focus one's
thoughts or actions.

Concentrate is built on the Latin word *centrum*, meaning "center," and the prefix *com-*, meaning "together."

IDENTIFY

Underline the words in lines 31–41 that help you understand why Tano and his dad are having a hard time.

Tano thought for a moment. His best friend always knew how to get to him.

“Okay,” Tano sighed. “I’ll be there in about ten.”

“Super.”

Tano hung up and put on his jacket. He passed his father in the living room. Dad was reading the newspaper.

“I’m going over to Dave’s house, Dad.”

His father looked over the paper and raised an eyebrow. “No piano?” he asked.

“I promise I’ll practice twice as long tomorrow, Dad.”

“Okay,” his father replied. “Just don’t stay out too late. Even on a weekend, you need to get your sleep.”

“Right, Dad,” Tano replied, closing the front door.

Dave was all smiles when Tano walked into his room. Music was playing loudly in the background.

“There’s my man!” Dave called out. “Mister Computer Know-It-All. Just the guy I need right now!”

Tano looked around Dave’s room. He couldn’t believe what a mess it was always in. Tano knew his own mother never would have let him be that sloppy.

“So where are these games you’re too dense to figure out?” Tano asked sarcastically.

Dave took a large step backward. “Ouch!” he exclaimed. “What’s with you and the attitude?”

Tano paused. “I’m sorry,” he apologized. “You didn’t deserve that. I guess I’m just kind of upset.”

Dave turned down the music and sat in a chair. He pulled up another chair and motioned for Tano to sit.

“So tell me about it, my friend. What happened?”

Tano explained how his father had wanted him to practice the piano, and how he felt guilty telling him he

INFER

Pause at line 80. Underline what Dave does that shows he is ready to listen to Tano. What kind of person does Dave seem to be?

IDENTIFY

IDENTIFY

Dave began, “Don’t feel guilty about not wanting to play the piano. Your father loves to play the piano. And he’s a great player, too. Everyone in school thinks he’s a fantastic musician and a fantastic teacher. But that doesn’t mean you have to follow in his footsteps. People shouldn’t be forced to take on other people’s interests. You have your own interests. Why should you be a musician? Is your father a computer genius?”

• • • • • **Notes** • • • • •

[illegible]

There was a moment of silence. Then Dave added, “And if I were your father, I’d get a little more interested in computers.”

"That's true," Dave said. "But this is different."

“What do you mean?” asked Tano.

Dave sat down, leaned close to Tano, and lowered his voice.

“You didn’t hear this from me,” Dave confided, “but the other day, when I was waiting in the school office, I

IDENTIFY

Underline Dave's words in lines 119–128 that introduce another problem into the story.

INFER

Pause at line 142. Underline the words that tell you Tano does not tell his father what the meeting is about. Does Tano seem to think it is important to keep promises? What does that reveal about Tano's character?

overheard Mr. Murray tell Ms. Vasquez that come September, the whole school is going to change big time. The entire office will become computerized. Every secretary will have to be trained to use the new system."

120 Tano looked puzzled. "So what's that got to do with my father?" he asked. "He's a music teacher, not a secretary."

Dave smiled and said, "Wait. There's more. Mr. Murray also said that other departments would be upgraded with computers, too. Your father is going to have to play some kind of digital keyboard, and teach it to students, too."

Tano laughed when he heard that.

"My father—a computerized keyboard? No way. He barely knows how to set his alarm clock."

130 "Hey," Dave responded, "I'm just telling you what I heard. But you can't repeat it. Promise?"

"I promise."

For the next hour, Tano taught Dave how to play his new video games. There was no more talk about Tano's piano practicing or about the possible changes in school.

On Monday morning, Tano's father stopped his son in the school hallway.

"Son," his father said, "I'll be home a little late this evening. There's a big faculty meeting today after school. I have no idea what it's about."

140 Tano suspected why the meeting was called. He was tempted to tell his father, but remembered his promise to Dave.

When Dad returned home in the early evening, Tano was sitting at the piano, practicing. Dad sat down and listened as Tano finished his exercises.

“Very nice, son,” Dad said with a smile. “Your mother would be quite proud of you.”

Tano and his father went into the kitchen and began to make dinner together. Neither one of them knew how to
150 prepare any fancy dishes. But they were great at making tuna casserole, which had become their favorite meal.

When it was ready, the two sat down at the table to eat.

“So how did your meeting go?” Tano asked.

“Okay, I guess,” Dad sighed.

“You don’t sound so happy about that,” Tano said.

For a while, the two ate in silence. Then Dad spoke up.

“Actually, the meeting was kind of upsetting,” he confessed. “I guess the world is changing a little too fast for me. The principal announced that my music department would
160 now have to **incorporate** digital equipment. He said that’s what today’s students want, and that’s what the state board of education now wants. Only, it’s not what I want. I can’t play on a computer.”

Tano asked, “Won’t the school send you to take a course or something? They can’t just expect you to learn it on your own, can they?”

“Well, they’re planning to offer an in-service course,” Dad explained. “They’ll even pay me to take it. But I’m worried that I may not be able to master these new instru-
170 ments. You know how I am with anything **electronic**.”

Tano sat quietly for a moment. He wasn’t sure exactly what to say.

“My biggest problem,” Dad continued, “is that I honestly don’t understand why we need **computerized** keyboards. A piano is a piano. It was good enough for Bach, Beethoven, and Brahms. It should be good enough for kids today.”

INFER

Re-read lines 148–152. Underline the things that Tano and his dad do together. What do their activities reveal about their relationship?

VOCABULARY DEVELOPMENT

incorporate (in·kôr’pə·rāt’)
v.: bring together into a single whole; merge.

Incorporate is built on the Latin word *corporare*, meaning “make into a body.”

electronic (i·lek’trän’ik)
adj.: operated or produced by the action of electrons.

Electronic is built on the word *electron*, which in turn is built on the word *electric*.

computerized
(kəm·pyōt’ər·īzd’) adj.: operated by means of a computer.

Computerized is built on the Latin word *putare*, meaning “count.”

DECODING TIP

Divide the word *harpsichord* (line 181) into syllables. Draw a line between each syllable.

INFER

Pause at line 188. Underline what Tano has just said that explains why his dad hugs him.

INFER

Pause at line 205. How have Tano and his dad solved their problems?

VOCABULARY DEVELOPMENT

inspiration (in'spə·rā'shən) *n.*: creativity; brilliance.

Inspiration is built on the Latin *inspiratio*, meaning "breath in."

Tano let out a little laugh.

"What's so funny?" Dad asked.

180 "Well, Dad, I think you probably know that Bach actually played on a harpsichord not on a piano."

His father smiled. "My wise guy son," he laughed. "And when did you become such a music expert?"

"Well," Tano smiled, "I happen to be taking piano lessons, remember? And I've got a great teacher!"

Dad got up and gave Tano a big hug.

"Thanks. I needed that."

"So did I, Dad."

Dad said, "So what am I going to do about this whole
190 digital thing? The school expects me to start teaching with it in September."

A big smile crossed Tano's face.

"Say, Dad, I know a computer expert who could probably help you out. He knows something about the piano. He's even been taking lessons recently. Between his computer knowledge and your music knowledge, I'll bet you'd make a great team."

Tano's father smiled a big smile, too.

"So," he asked, "would this expert of yours be willing
200 to help me out?"

"Sure he would," Tano laughed.

"And would he keep taking his piano lessons?"

Dad asked.

"He'd have to," Tano replied. "Just to be able to teach you how to play a digitized keyboard."

For a while, Tano and his father just sat at the table, laughing together. Tano laughed so hard that a tear rolled down his cheek. Finally, in a burst of **inspiration**, Dad spoke up.

“Hey, what do you say we have a bunch of grapes for dessert?” he suggested.

“How about an orange?” Tano laughed.

INFER

Why do you think Tano suggests an orange for dessert?

OWN THE STORY

PRACTICING THE STANDARDS

Characterization Complete the “It Says, I Say, And So” chart on the following page. Share your completed chart with a classmate. Discuss ways in which your ideas about the story’s characters are similar and/or different. You can use your chart to write an analysis of Tano or his dad.

KEEPING TRACK

Personal Word List Enter the new words you learned from this story in your Personal Word List. As you listen to or watch news stories about technology, listen for some of the words you learned.

Personal Reading Log As you record this title in your Personal Reading Log, note your general impressions of the story. Give yourself 4 points on the Reading Meter.

Checklist for Standards Mastery Use the Checklist for Standards Mastery to check your progress in mastering the standards.

The Musician

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Interact with a Literary Text

“It Says, I Say, And So” Chart Use this chart to make inferences about the characters in “The Musician.” First, read the question. You may write several comments under the “It Says” and “I Say” columns. Write one response, or inference, that answers the numbered question in the “And So” column.

Question	It Says (What the text says)	I Say (My thoughts)	And So (My inference)
1. How does Tano feel about his dad at the beginning of the story?			
2. Do Tano and his dad respect each other?			
3. Have Tano and his dad changed in any ways by the end of the story?			