

They were among the last students to arrive in class, so all the good desks in the back had already been taken. Victor was forced to sit near the front, a few desks away from Teresa, while Mr. Bueller wrote French words on the chalkboard. The bell rang, and Mr. Bueller wiped his hands, 120 turned to the class, and said, "*Bonjour*."<sup>7</sup>

"*Bonjour*," braved a few students.

"*Bonjour*," Victor whispered. He wondered if Teresa heard him. **F**

Mr. Bueller said that if the students studied hard, at the end of the year they could go to France and be understood by the populace.

One kid raised his hand and asked, "What's 'populace'?"

"The people, the people of France."

Mr. Bueller asked if anyone knew French. Victor raised his hand, wanting to impress Teresa. The teacher beamed and said, "*Très bien. Parlez-vous français?*"<sup>8</sup>

130 Victor didn't know what to say. The teacher wet his lips and asked something else in French. The room grew silent. Victor felt all eyes staring at him. He tried to bluff his way out by making noises that sounded French.

"La me vave me con le grandma," he said uncertainly. **G**

Mr. Bueller, wrinkling his face in curiosity, asked him to speak up.

Great rosebushes of red bloomed on Victor's cheeks. A river of nervous sweat ran down his palms. He felt awful. Teresa sat a few desks away, no doubt thinking he was a fool. Without looking at Mr. Bueller, Victor mumbled, "Frenchie oh weve gee in September."

Mr. Bueller asked Victor to repeat what he said.

140 "Frenchie oh weve gee in September," Victor repeated.

Mr. Bueller understood that the boy didn't know French and turned away. He walked to the blackboard and pointed to the words on the board with his steel-edged ruler.

"*Le bateau*," he sang.

"*Le bateau*," the students repeated.

"*Le bateau est sur l'eau*,"<sup>9</sup> he sang.

"*Le bateau est sur l'eau*."

Victor was too weak from failure to join the class. He stared at the board and wished he had taken Spanish, not French. Better yet, he 150 wished he could start his life over. He had never been so embarrassed. He bit his thumb until he tore off a sliver of skin.

The bell sounded for fifth period, and Victor shot out of the room, avoiding the stares of the other kids, but had to return for his math book. He looked **sheepishly** at the teacher, who was erasing the board, then

**F PLOT: RISING ACTION**

Why does the tension increase now that Victor and Teresa are in the same class together?

**G CONNECT**

Think of a time when you said you knew something that you really didn't. **Compare and contrast** how it made you feel with how Victor is feeling now.

**sheepishly** (shē'pīsh-lē)  
adv. with a bashful or embarrassed look

7. *Bonjour* (bōn'zhōōr) French: Good day.

8. *Très bien. Parlez-vous français?* (tr-ě byān pār'lá vōō frān'sā) French: Very good. Do you speak French?

9. *Le bateau est sur l'eau* (lē bā'tō ē sür lō) French: The boat is on the water.

widened his eyes in terror at Teresa who stood in front of him. "I didn't know you knew French," she said. "That was good." ②

Mr. Bueller looked at Victor, and Victor looked back. Oh please, don't say anything, Victor pleaded with his eyes. I'll wash your car, mow your lawn, walk your dog—anything! I'll be your best student, and I'll clean  
160 your erasers after school.

Mr. Bueller shuffled through the papers on his desk. He smiled and hummed as he sat down to work. He remembered his college years when he dated a girlfriend in borrowed cars. She thought he was rich because each time he picked her up he had a different car. It was fun until he had spent all his money on her and had to write home to his parents because he was broke. ①

Victor couldn't stand to look at Teresa. He was sweaty with shame. "Yeah, well, I picked up a few things from movies and books and stuff like that." They left the class together. Teresa asked him if he would help  
170 her with her French.

"Sure, anytime," Victor said.

"I won't be bothering you, will I?"

"Oh no, I like being bothered."

"*Bonjour*," Teresa said, leaving him outside her next class. She smiled and pushed wisps of hair from her face.

"Yeah, right, *bonjour*," Victor said. He turned and headed to his class. The rosebushes of shame on his face became bouquets of love. Teresa is a great girl, he thought. And Mr. Bueller is a good guy.

He raced to metal shop. After metal shop there was biology, and after  
180 biology a long sprint to the public library, where he checked out three French textbooks.

He was going to like seventh grade. ③ ①

② **PLOT: CLIMAX**

Why is this the moment of greatest interest in the story?

① **PLOT: FALLING ACTION**

How do Mr. Bueller's actions affect the plot at this point?

① **PLOT: RESOLUTION**

How has Victor's life changed by the end of the day?