

The DRIVE-IN MOVIES

Gary Soto

Narrator and Point of View

What clues here indicate the narrator is telling the story from the first-person point of view?

Vocabulary ►

prelude (prā' loōd')

n. introduction to a main event

For our family, moviegoing was rare. But if our mom, tired from a week of candling eggs,¹ woke up happy on a Saturday morning, there was a chance we might later scramble to our blue Chevy and beat nightfall to the Starlight Drive-In. My brother and sister knew this. I knew this. So on Saturday we tried to be good. We sat in the cool shadows of the TV with the volume low and watched cartoons, a **prelude** of what was to come.

1. **candling eggs** examining uncooked eggs for freshness by placing them in front of a burning candle.

One Saturday I decided to be extra good. When she came out of the bedroom tying her robe, she yawned a hat-sized yawn and blinked red eyes at the weak brew of coffee I had fixed for her. I made her toast with strawberry jam spread to all the corners and set the three boxes of cereal in front of her. If she didn't care to eat cereal, she could always look at the back of the boxes as she drank her coffee.

I went outside. The lawn was tall but too wet with dew to mow. I picked up a trowel² and began to weed the flower bed. The weeds were really bermuda grass, long stringers that ran finger-deep in the ground. I got to work quickly and in no time crescents of earth began rising under my fingernails. I was sweaty hot. My knees hurt from kneeling, and my brain was dull from making the trowel go up and down, dribbling crumbs of earth. I dug for half an hour, then stopped to play with the neighbor's dog and pop ticks from his poor snout.

2. **trowel** (trou' el) *n.* a small hand tool used by gardeners to weed or dig.

▼ **Critical Viewing**

How might seeing a movie at a drive-in like this one differ from seeing it in a regular theater?

Comprehension

Why is the narrator being extra good?



LITERATURE IN CONTEXT

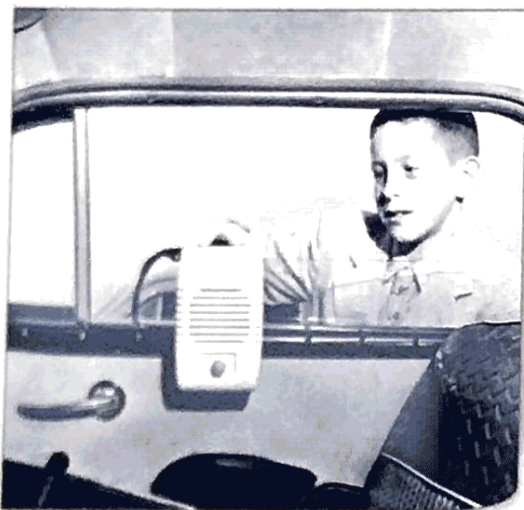
Social Studies Connection

Drive-In Movies

The first drive-in theater had three speakers near the screen to project sound. If you parked near the screen, you could hear every word perfectly. If you lived nearby, you heard every word, too. A later system of individual speakers, placed on the car door when the window was rolled down, satisfied angry neighbors.

Connect to the Literature

Why might a trip to the drive-in movies be a reward for the narrator?



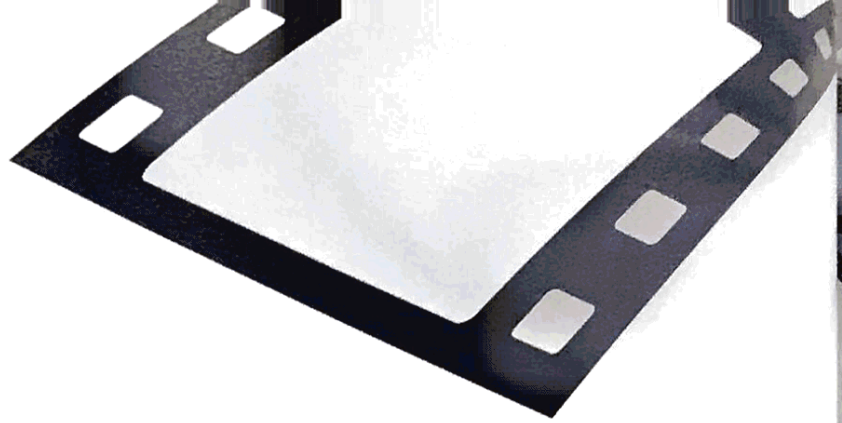
Vocabulary ►

pulsating (pul' sāt' in)
adj. beating or throbbing
in a steady rhythm

migrated (mī grāt əd)
v. moved from one
place to another

Spiral Review

CENTRAL IDEA How do these vivid details contribute to the author's central idea?



I then mowed the lawn, which was still beaded with dew and noisy with bees hovering over clover. This job was less dull because as I pushed the mower over the shaggy lawn, I could see it looked tidier. My brother and sister watched from the window. Their faces were fat with cereal, a third helping. I made a face at them when they asked how come I was working. Rick pointed to part of the lawn. "You missed some over there." I ignored him and kept my attention on the windmill of grassy blades. •

While I was emptying the catcher, a bee stung the bottom of my foot. I danced on one leg and was ready to cry when Mother showed her face at the window. I sat down on the grass and examined my foot: the stinger was **pulsating**. I pulled it out quickly, ran water over the sting and packed it with mud, Grandmother's remedy.

Hobbling, I returned to the flower bed where I pulled more stringers and again played with the dog. More ticks had **migrated** to his snout. I swept the front steps, took out the garbage, cleaned the lint filter to the dryer (easy), plucked hair from the industrial wash basin in the garage (also easy), hosed off the patio, smashed three snails sucking paint from the house (disgusting but fun), tied a bundle of newspapers, put away toys, and, finally, seeing that almost everything was done and the sun was not too high, started waxing the car.

My brother joined me with an old gym sock, and our sister watched us while sucking on a cherry Kool-Aid ice cube. The liquid wax drooled onto the sock, and we began to swirl the white slop on the chrome. My arms ached from



buffing, which though less boring than weeding, was harder. But the beauty was **evident**. The shine, hurting our eyes and glinting like an armful of dimes, brought Mother out. She looked around the yard and said, “Pretty good.” She **winc**ed at the grille and returned inside the house.

We began to wax the paint. My brother applied the liquid and I followed him rubbing hard in wide circles as we moved around the car. I began to hurry because my arms were hurting and my stung foot looked like a water balloon. We were working around the trunk when Rick pounded on the bottle of wax. He squeezed the bottle and it sneezed a few more white drops.

We looked at each other. “There’s some on the sock,” I said. “Let’s keep going.” ●

We polished and buffed, sweat weeping on our brows. We got scared when we noticed that the gym sock was now blue. The paint was coming off. Our sister fit ice cubes into our mouths and we worked harder, more intently, more dedicated to the car and our mother. We ran the sock over the chrome, trying to pick up extra wax. But there wasn’t enough to cover the entire car. Only half got waxed, but we thought it was better than nothing and went inside for lunch. After lunch, we returned outside with tasty sandwiches.

Rick and I nearly jumped. The waxed side of the car was foggy white. We took a rag and began to polish **vig**orously and nearly in tears, but the fog wouldn’t come off. I blamed Rick and he blamed me. Debra stood at the window, not wanting to get involved. Now, not only would we not go to the movies, but Mom would surely snap a branch from the plum tree and chase us around the yard.

◀ Vocabulary

evident (ev’ ə dənt)

adj. easy to see;
very clear

winced (winst)

v. pulled back
slightly, as if in pain

Make Predictions

How do you predict the narrator will feel at the drive-in, after his long day of hard work? Read on to check whether you are correct.

◀ Vocabulary

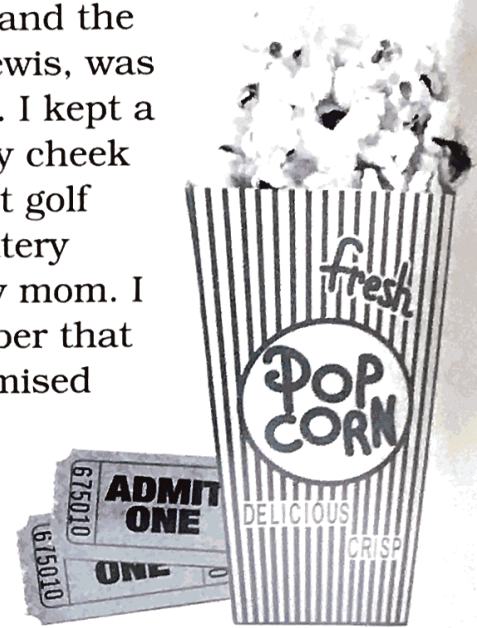
vigorously (vig’ ə r

əs lē) *adv.* forcefully
or energetically

Mom came out and looked at us with hands on her aproned hips. Finally, she said, "You boys worked so hard." She turned on the garden hose and washed the car. That night we did go to the drive-in. The first feature was about nothing, and the second feature, starring Jerry Lewis, was *Cinderfella*. I tried to stay awake. I kept a wad of homemade popcorn in my cheek and laughed when Jerry Lewis fit golf tees in his nose. I rubbed my watery eyes. I laughed and looked at my mom. I promised myself I would remember that scene with the golf tees and promised myself not to work so hard the coming Saturday. Twenty minutes into the movie, I fell asleep with one hand in the popcorn.

Make Predictions

How does this outcome fit with your prediction about how the narrator would feel after his day of work?



Language Study

Vocabulary The following words appear in "The Drive-In Movies." For each item, choose a synonym, or word with a similar meaning, from the vocabulary list.

pulsating migrated evident winced vigorously

1. clear, obvious, ?
2. shrank back, cringed, ?
3. throbbing, beating, ?
4. actively, energetically, ?
5. traveled, roamed, ?

WORD STUDY

The **Latin prefix pre-** means "before" or "in advance."

In this story, the narrator and his siblings begin Saturday mornings by watching television.

This activity is a **prelude** to all the activities that they will do later on. It happens *before* the other activities.

Word Study

Part A Explain how the **Latin prefix pre-** contributes to the meaning of *precaution*, *predict*, and *preheat*. Consult a dictionary if necessary.

Part B Use sentence context and what you know about the Latin prefix *pre-* to explain your responses to the following questions.

1. How might a movie's *preview* help people decide whether or not to see that movie?
2. Does the *preface* appear at the end of a book?

Literary Analysis

Key Ideas and Details


1. **(a) Make Predictions** Did you predict that Soto's mother would take the family to the drive-in movies? **(b)** On what details did you base your prediction?
2. **Make Predictions** As you read, did you change any of your predictions? Explain.

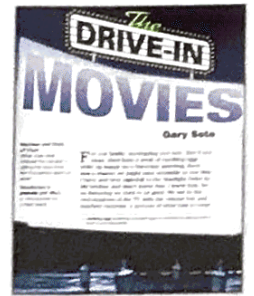
Craft and Structure

3. **Narrator and Point of View** Make a chart like the one on the right to note how the author develops point of view in the narrative. Include at least three examples.
4. **Narrator and Point of View** What details about the events described in the narrative would you expect to find if the narrator were Soto's mother?

Integration of Knowledge and Ideas

5. **(a)** How does Soto persuade his mother to take the family to the drive-in movies? **(b) Draw Conclusions:** Why do you think Soto's mother does not get angry with the children for making a mess with the car wax?
6. **(a)** What two things does Soto promise himself to remember? **(b) Assess:** Do you think he still has fond memories of that day and night? Explain.
7. **Make a Judgment:** Do you think children should have to do chores before their parents allow them to do something enjoyable? Why or why not? With a partner, discuss and support your responses.

8.  **What is important to know?** With a small group, discuss the following questions. **(a)** As a child, what did Soto know and consider important about his family's Saturday activities? **(b)** As an adult, what does Soto know and consider important about his childhood Saturdays?



Event

The narrator is stung by a bee.

Details Provided by Narrator

The narrator wants to cry but takes the stinger out and packs the wound with mud.

ACADEMIC VOCABULARY

As you write and speak about "The Drive-In Movies," use the words related to gaining knowledge that you explored on page 163 of this text.