

Unit 1 *Personal* *Narratives*

Lesson 5: Cooking up Memories



Vocabulary

VOCABULARY

Core Vocabulary

grimace, n. facial expression that indicates pain or distaste

castor oil, n. a kind of vegetable oil

fragrant, adj. having a strong, often pleasant, smell

tempting, adj. appealing, attractive

When I Was Puerto Rican

Prologue: How To Eat A Guava

by Esmeralda Santiago

Esmeralda Santiago is a writer and actress. She was born in Puerto Rico in 1948, and moved with her family to the United States when she was thirteen. This excerpt is the beginning of her first book, When I Was Puerto Rican, the first of her three memoirs. It tells the true story of her childhood in Puerto Rico and the move to New York.

Barco que no anda, no llega a puerto.

A ship that doesn't sail, never reaches port.

There are **guavas** at the Shop & Save. I pick one the size of a tennis ball and finger the **prickly** stem end. It feels familiarly bumpy and firm. The guava is not quite ripe; the skin is still a dark green. I smell it and imagine a pale pink center, the seeds tightly **embedded** in the flesh.

A ripe guava is yellow, although some varieties have a pink **tinge**.



The skin is thick, firm, and sweet. Its heart is bright pink and almost solid with seeds. The most delicious part of the guava surrounds the tiny seeds. If you don't know how to eat a guava, the seeds end up in the **crevices** between your teeth.

When you bite into a ripe guava, your teeth must grip the bumpy surface and sink into the thick **edible** skin without hitting the center. It takes experience to do this, as it's quite tricky to determine how far beyond the skin the seeds begin.

Some years, when the rains have been plentiful and the nights cool, you can bite into a guava and not find many seeds. The guava bushes grow close to the ground, their branches **laden** with green then yellow fruit that seem to ripen overnight. These guavas are large and juicy, almost seedless, their roundness **enticing** you to have one more, just one more, because next year the rains may not come.

As children, we didn't always wait for the fruit to ripen. We raided the bushes as soon as the guavas were large enough to bend the branch.





A green guava is sour and hard. You bite into it at its widest point, because it's easier to grasp with your teeth. You hear the skin, meat, and seeds crunching inside your head, while the inside of your mouth explodes in little spurts of sour.

You **grimace**, your eyes water, and your cheeks disappear as your lips purse into a tight O. But you have another and then another, enjoying the crunchy sounds, the acid taste, the gritty texture of the unripe center. At night, your mother makes you drink **castor oil**, which she says tastes better than a green guava. That's when you know for sure that you're a child and she has stopped being one.

I had my last guava the day we left Puerto Rico. It was large and juicy, almost red in the center, and so **fragrant** that I didn't want to eat it because I would lose the smell. All the way to the airport I scratched at it with my teeth, making little dents in the skin, chewing small pieces with my front teeth, so that I could feel the texture against my tongue, the tiny pink pellets of sweet.

Today, I stand before a stack of dark green guavas, each perfectly round and hard, each \$1.59. The one in my hand is **tempting**. It smells faintly of late summer afternoons and hopscotch under the mango tree. But this is autumn in New York, and I'm no longer a child.

The guava joins its sisters under the harsh fluorescent lights of the exotic fruit display. I push my cart away, toward the apples and pears of my adulthood, their nearly seedless ripeness predictable and bittersweet.



How to Eat a Guava

Activity 5.1

Reading Comprehension

Answer the following questions about “How To Eat a Guava.” Refer back to the text and include evidence for your answer.

1. List two settings where “How To Eat a Guava” takes place.

2. What does the guava in the first paragraph remind the author of?

3. The author writes, “It smells faintly of late summer afternoons and hopscotch under the mango tree.” What does “it” refer to?

4. Restate the quote in question 3 in your own words.

5. Summarize “How To Eat a Guava” in one sentence.

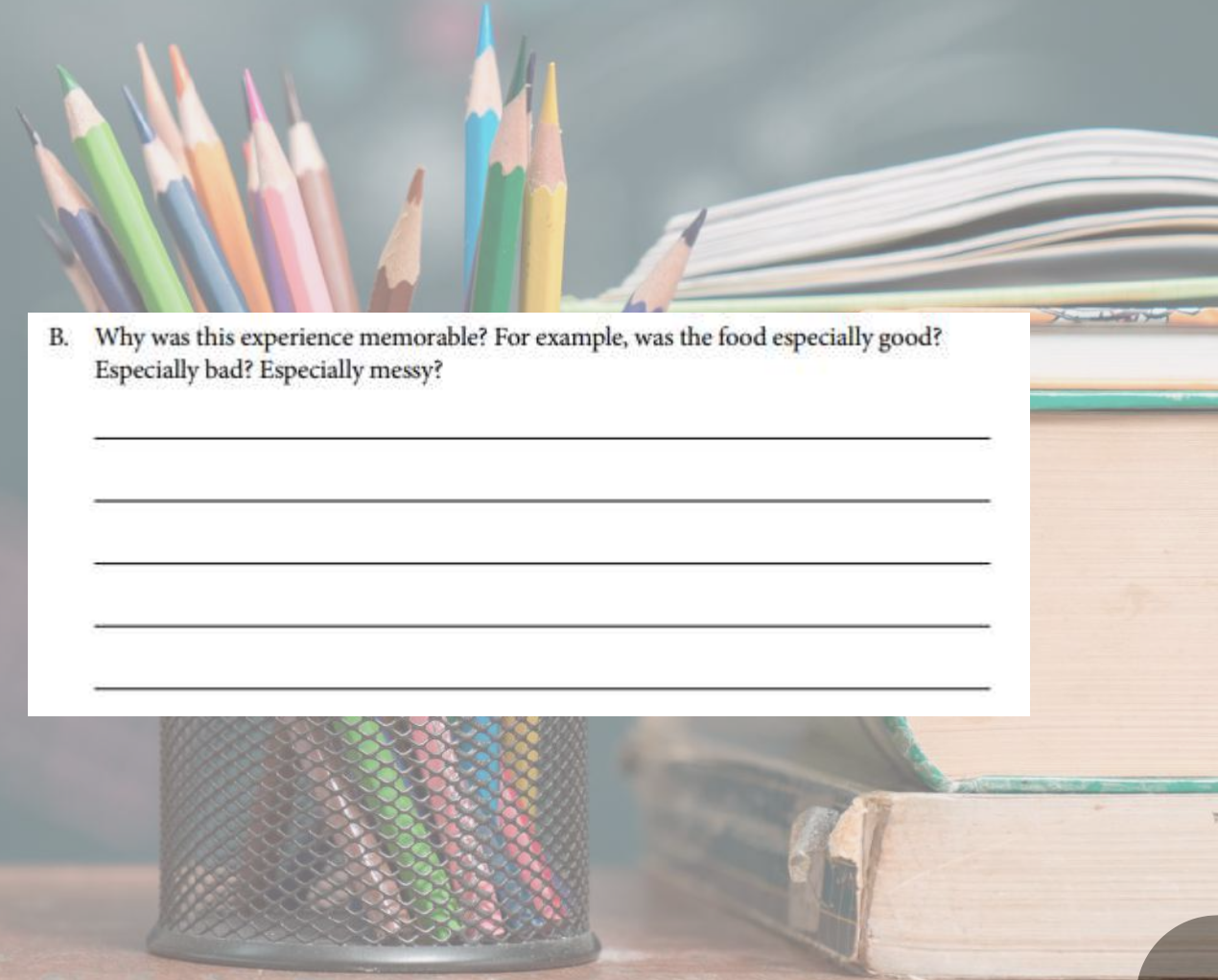
Writing with Sensory Details

Planning 5.2

- A. Choose one of the topics from your brainstorming on Activity Page 4.3. Then list the events that make up the food experience. These events can include what you or others thought, said, and did.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____
9. _____
10. _____

- B. Why was this experience memorable? For example, was the food especially good? Especially bad? Especially messy?



Writing with Sensory Details

Planning 5.2

Turn and Talk

- **Share your events and details with a partner!**
- **Add more details to help your narrative make sense!**

