

ILLINOIS  
OBJECTIVES

## Preview Unit Goals

**LITERARY  
ANALYSIS**

- Identify and analyze first-person and third-person point of view
- Identify and analyze character traits and characterization
- Compare characters
- Identify and analyze symbols

**READING**

- Develop reading strategies including visualizing, predicting, and connecting
- Identify author's purpose
- Take notes and generate research questions

**WRITING AND  
GRAMMAR**

- Write a description of a person
- Use present, past, and future verb tenses correctly
- Use comparative and superlative forms of adjectives and adverbs correctly
- Use subject and object pronouns correctly

**SPEAKING,  
LISTENING,  
AND VIEWING**

- Conduct an interview
- Analyze visual elements, sound, and dialogue in television
- Analyze television techniques that establish character

**VOCABULARY**

- Understand and correctly use words that are easily confused
- Use context clues to help determine the meaning of words and phrases
- Use word roots and affixes to help determine word meaning

**ACADEMIC  
VOCABULARY**

- first-person point of view
- third-person point of view
- characterization
- character
- symbol
- context clues

## LITERARY ANALYSIS: FIRST-PERSON POINT OF VIEW

Have you ever listened to a stranger tell a story? You often learn a great deal about the personality, experiences, and opinions of that person. When you read a story told from **first-person point of view**, the **narrator** is a character in the story. You learn what happens as the narrator experiences it.

As you read “Eleven,” notice how the only information you receive comes from the narrator. Think about how that affects what you know about the characters and events.

## READING STRATEGY: CONNECT

Characters, settings, and events in a story may remind you of people you know, places you’ve been, feelings you’ve had, or other stories you’ve read. When you **connect** with a story or parts of a story, you use your knowledge and experiences to help you better understand what you are reading.

As you read “Eleven,” complete a chart like the one shown. Record details from the story and how they remind you of experiences from your own life.

<i>Rachel's Birthday</i>	<i>My Connections</i>
<i>wakes up feeling like she's still ten</i>	<i>I remember that on my 11th birthday I didn't feel any different.</i>

## VOCABULARY IN CONTEXT

Sandra Cisneros uses the words in the list to help tell the story of a young girl’s difficult experience in school. Complete each phrase with the appropriate word from the list.

**WORD LIST** alley    except    invisible    raggedy

1. \_\_\_\_ for math, the girl did well in school.
2. She felt \_\_\_\_ among the crowds of students.
3. Her old, \_\_\_\_ clothes embarrassed her.
4. After school, she ran home through the back \_\_\_\_.

## Escaping Through Fairy Tales

Sandra Cisneros grew up in a bilingual home, speaking English to her mother and Spanish to her father. For that reason, different aspects of language became more noticeable to her.



Sandra Cisneros  
born 1954

As a child, Cisneros enjoyed reading fairy tales. She loved the style of language used, and in time she began writing her own stories and poems. Cisneros’s mother made sure that her daughter had the space and quiet that she needed in order to write, even in a house with six brothers.

**Writing to Be Heard** Cisneros was shy as a child, much like Rachel in “Eleven.” She compares who she was as a child—a quiet person who was never asked to speak in class—to the writer she is now. She notes, “I am finding that with words I have the power to make people listen, to make them think in a new way. . . . It’s a powerful thing to make people listen to you.”

**MORE ABOUT THE AUTHOR**  
For more on Sandra Cisneros, visit the Literature Center at [ClassZone.com](http://ClassZone.com).

# ELEVEN

Sandra Cisneros

**W**hat they don't understand about birthdays and what they never tell you is that when you're eleven, you're also ten, and nine, and eight, and seven, and six, and five, and four, and three, and two, and one. And when you wake up on your eleventh birthday you expect to feel eleven, but you don't. You open your eyes and everything's just like yesterday, only it's today. And you don't feel eleven at all. You feel like you're still ten. And you are—underneath the year that makes you eleven.

Like some days you might say something stupid, and that's the part of you that's still ten. Or maybe some days you might need to sit on your  
10 mama's lap because you're scared, and that's the part of you that's five. And maybe one day when you're all grown up maybe you will need to cry like if you're three, and that's okay. That's what I tell Mama when she's sad and needs to cry. Maybe she's feeling three.

Because the way you grow old is kind of like an onion or like the rings inside a tree trunk or like my little wooden dolls that fit one inside the other, each year inside the next one. That's how being eleven years old is.

You don't feel eleven. Not right away. It takes a few days, weeks even, sometimes even months before you say Eleven when they ask you. And you don't feel smart eleven, not until you're almost twelve. That's the way  
20 it is. **A**

## ANALYZE VISUALS

Based on the colors and details in this painting, how do you think the girl is feeling?

## **A** CONNECT

The **narrator** shares her feelings and thoughts about her birthday. Have you ever felt like this?

Detail of *Room 13, Los Estudiantes* (2004), José Ramirez. Mixed media on canvas, 47" × 19".



Only today I wish I didn't have only eleven years rattling inside me like pennies in a tin Band-Aid box. Today I wish I was one hundred and two instead of eleven because if I was one hundred and two I'd have known what to say when Mrs. Price put the red sweater on my desk. I would've known how to tell her it wasn't mine instead of just sitting there with that look on my face and nothing coming out of my mouth.

"Whose is this?" Mrs. Price says, and she holds the red sweater up in the air for all the class to see. "Whose? It's been sitting in the coatroom for a month."

30 "Not mine," says everybody. "Not me."

"It has to belong to somebody," Mrs. Price keeps saying, but nobody can remember. It's an ugly sweater with red plastic buttons and a collar and sleeves all stretched out like you could use it for a jump rope. It's maybe a thousand years old and even if it belonged to me I wouldn't say so.

Maybe because I'm skinny, maybe because she doesn't like me, that stupid Sylvia Saldívar says, "I think it belongs to Rachel." An ugly sweater like that, all **raggedy** and old, but Mrs. Price believes her. Mrs. Price takes the sweater and puts it right on my desk, but when I open my mouth nothing comes out. **B**

40 "That's not, I don't, you're not . . . Not mine," I finally say in a little voice that was maybe me when I was four.

"Of course it's yours," Mrs. Price says. "I remember you wearing it once." Because she's older and the teacher, she's right and I'm not.

Not mine, not mine, not mine, but Mrs. Price is already turning to page thirty-two, and math problem number four. I don't know why but all of a sudden I'm feeling sick inside, like the part of me that's three wants to come out of my eyes, only I squeeze them shut tight and bite down on my teeth real hard and try to remember today I am eleven, eleven. Mama is making a cake for me for tonight, and when Papa comes home everybody  
50 will sing Happy birthday, happy birthday to you.

But when the sick feeling goes away and I open my eyes, the red sweater's still sitting there like a big red mountain. I move the red sweater to the corner of my desk with my ruler. I move my pencil and books and eraser as far from it as possible. I even move my chair a little to the right. Not mine, not mine, not mine.

In my head I'm thinking how long till lunchtime, how long till I can take the red sweater and throw it over the schoolyard fence, or leave it hanging on a parking meter, or bunch it up into a little ball and toss it in the **alley**. **Except** when math period ends Mrs. Price says loud and in  
60 front of everybody, "Now, Rachel, that's enough," because she sees I've shoved the red sweater to the tippy-tip corner of my desk and it's hanging all over the edge like a waterfall, but I don't care.

**raggedy** (răg'ĭ-dē) *adj.*  
tattered or worn out

**B FIRST-PERSON POINT OF VIEW**

What have you learned about the **narrator** so far?

**alley** (ăl'ē) *n.* a narrow street behind or between buildings

**except** (ĭk-sĕpt') *prep.*  
but; however

“Rachel,” Mrs. Price says. She says it like she’s getting mad. “You put that sweater on right now and no more nonsense.”

“But it’s not—”


“Now!” Mrs. Price says. **C**

**T**his is when I wish I wasn’t eleven, because all the years inside of me—ten, nine, eight, seven, six, five, four, three, two, and one—are pushing at the back of my eyes when I put one arm through one sleeve  
70 of the sweater that smells like cottage cheese, and then the other arm through the other and stand there with my arms apart like if the sweater hurts me and it does, all itchy and full of germs that aren’t even mine.

That’s when everything I’ve been holding in since this morning, since when Mrs. Price put the sweater on my desk, finally lets go, and all of a sudden I’m crying in front of everybody. I wish I was **invisible** but I’m not. I’m eleven and it’s my birthday today and I’m crying like I’m three in front of everybody. I put my head down on the desk and bury my face in my stupid clown-sweater arms. My face all hot and spit coming out of my mouth because I can’t stop the little animal noises from coming out of  
80 me, until there aren’t any more tears left in my eyes, and it’s just my body shaking like when you have the hiccups, and my whole head hurts like when you drink milk too fast. **D**

But the worst part is right before the bell rings for lunch. That stupid Phyllis Lopez, who is even dumber than Sylvia Saldívar, says she remembers the red sweater is hers! I take it off right away and give it to her, only Mrs. Price pretends like everything’s okay. **E**

Today I’m eleven. There’s a cake Mama’s making for tonight, and when Papa comes home from work we’ll eat it. There’ll be candles and presents and everybody will sing Happy birthday, happy birthday to you, Rachel,  
90 only it’s too late.

I’m eleven today. I’m eleven, ten, nine, eight, seven, six, five, four, three, two, and one, but I wish I was one hundred and two. I wish I was anything but eleven, because I want today to be far away already, far away like a runaway balloon, like a tiny *o* in the sky, so tiny-tiny you have to close your eyes to see it. 

**C FIRST-PERSON POINT OF VIEW**

What impression of Mrs. Price does Rachel give the reader?

**invisible** (in-vīz’ə-bəl)  
*adj.* not able to be seen

**D CONNECT**

Reread lines 67–82. Which of your own experiences help you to understand why Rachel gets so upset?

**E FIRST-PERSON POINT OF VIEW**

Reread lines 83–86. How does the first-person point of view affect what you know about Sylvia and Phyllis?



## Comprehension

- 1. Recall** Rachel uses many different comparisons to describe what it is like to grow older. Name one of the comparisons she makes.
- 2. Recall** What thoughts does Rachel have about the sweater as she is putting it on?
- 3. Clarify** How is the issue of the sweater finally settled?

## Literary Analysis

- 4. Make Inferences** What is it about growing older that Rachel finds disappointing? Use examples from the story to support your answer.
- 5. Connect** Look at the chart you filled in as you read. How do the connections you made help you to understand Rachel's thoughts and experiences?
- 6. Analyze Plot** Reread lines 35–41. Imagine that Rachel is bold instead of timid. How might she have reacted when Mrs. Price put the sweater on her desk?
- 7. Analyze a Minor Character** Minor characters help carry out the action of a story. Mrs. Price is a minor character in "Eleven," but she plays an important part in the story. How do you think Mrs. Price would describe the incident with the sweater? Use details from the story to support your answer.
- 8. Evaluate First-Person Point of View** As the **narrator** of the story, Rachel shares many of her thoughts and feelings. However, she is not able to tell us the thoughts and feelings of the other characters. Using a chart like the one shown, note what you learned through the story's first-person point of view and what you would still like to know.

<i>What I Learned from Rachel</i>	<i>What I Would Like to Know</i>

## Extension and Challenge

- 9. Creative Project: Art** The red sweater is an important part of "Eleven." How did you picture it in your mind as you read the story? Using colored pencils, markers, or crayons, create a picture of the sweater as you imagined it.
- 10. Big Question Activity** Revisit the activity on page 182. This time, think about how Rachel might have filled out a web about her **age**. Use details from the story to complete Rachel's web.

# Vocabulary in Context

## VOCABULARY PRACTICE

Choose the letter of the word or phrase that is most closely related to the boldfaced word.

1. **except:** (a) not including, (b) with, (c) as well as, (d) plus
2. **invisible:** (a) impossible, (b) white, (c) unseen, (d) unwell
3. **alley:** (a) highway, (b) narrow path, (c) parking lot, (d) freeway
4. **raggedy:** (a) shabby, (b) tidy, (c) elegant, (d) beautiful



## VOCABULARY IN WRITING

What surprised you more in this story, the way Mrs. Price behaved or the way Rachel behaved? Write a paragraph explaining what you think. Use at least two vocabulary words. You could start this way.

### EXAMPLE SENTENCE

*I was surprised that Mrs. Price caused so much trouble over a **raggedy** sweater.*

## VOCABULARY STRATEGY: EASILY CONFUSED WORDS

Some words sound or look so similar that it is easy to misuse them. An example of a confusing pair of words is the vocabulary word *except* and the word *accept*. Though these words have different meanings, you may have to be careful to choose the correct one. Other confusing pairs have similar meanings as well as similar spellings. If you are not sure which word you should be using, it is a good idea to check definitions in a dictionary.

**PRACTICE** Choose the word or phrase in parentheses that correctly completes each sentence.

1. The (affect, effect) of the hurricane was felt 150 miles away.
2. My father offered me some good (advise, advice), but I didn't listen to him.
3. Luis was (all ready, already) to have his photograph taken.
4. Washington's (capital, capitol) building is a beautiful sight.
5. Corinne's family moved (farther, further) away from the city.



### READING STANDARD

**1.6.03** Determine the meaning of a word using word, sentence, and cross-sentence clues

