

Text Connection 3

The House on Mango Street

by Sandra Cisneros

- 1 *You remember periods in your own childhood, periods that affected you in different ways. As you read these segments from Sandra Cisneros' The House on Mango Street, think about the storyteller's childhood experiences, and see if you*
- 5 *can relate to any of them. Have you ever had to move? What's it like to move into a new neighborhood? How does moving into a new neighborhood translate to moving into a new passage of your life?*

Use the Clues A:

- Read lines 1–8.
- Reread the underlined word, **move**.
- Check the box that best defines the underlined word. What does the word **move** mean in this context?
 - dance
 - relocate
 - make progress
- What clues did you use to choose this answer?

The House on Mango Street

- 10 We didn't always live on Mango Street. Before that we lived on Loomis on the third floor, and before that we lived on Keeler. Before Keeler it was Paulina, and before that I can't remember. But what I remember most is moving a lot. Each time it seemed there'd be one more of us. By the time we got
- 15 to Mango Street we were six—Mama, Papa, Carlos, Kiki, my sister Nenny and me.

(continued)

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Text Connection 3 (continued)

Take Note

As you review the “**The House on Mango Street**,” you should:

1. Underline information about the real house on Mango Street.

2. Circle information about the family’s dream house.

The house on Mango Street is ours, and we don’t have to pay rent to anybody, or share the yard with the people downstairs, or be careful not to make too much noise, and there isn’t a landlord banging on the ceiling with a broom.

20 But even so, it’s not the house we’d thought we’d get.

We had to leave the flat on Loomis quick. The water pipes broke and the landlord wouldn’t fix them because the house was too old. We had to leave fast. We were using the washroom next door and carrying water over in empty milk
25 gallons. That’s why Mama and Papa looked for a house, and that’s why we moved into the house on Mango Street, far away, on the other side of town.

Use the Clues B:

- Read lines 22–28.
- Reread the underlined word, **flat**.
- Check the box that best defines the underlined word. What does the word **flat** mean in this context?
 - deflated
 - level
 - apartment on one floor
- What clues did you use to choose this answer?

They always told us that one day we would move into a house, a real house that would be ours for always so we
30 wouldn’t have to move each year. And our house would have running water and pipes that worked. And inside it would have real stairs, not hallway stairs, but stairs inside like the houses on TV. And we’d have a basement and at least three washrooms so when we took a bath we wouldn’t have to tell
35 everybody. Our house would be white with trees around it, a great big yard and grass growing without a fence. This was

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Text Connection 3 (continued)

the house Papa talked about when he held a lottery ticket and this was the house Mama dreamed up in the stories she told us before we went to bed.

40 But the house on Mango Street is not the way they told it at all. It's small and red with tight steps in front and windows so small you'd think they were holding their breath. Bricks are crumbling in places, and the front door is so swollen you have to push hard to get in. There is no front yard, only four
45 little elms the city planted by the curb. Out back is a small garage for the car we don't own yet and a small yard that looks smaller between the two buildings on either side. There are stairs in our house, but they're ordinary hallway stairs, and the house has only one washroom. Everybody has to share a
50 bedroom—Mama and Papa, Carlos and Kiki, me and Nenny.

Once when we were living on Loomis, a nun from my school passed by and saw me playing out front. The laundromat downstairs had been boarded up because it had been robbed two days before and the owner had painted on
55 the wood YES WE'RE OPEN so as not to lose business.

Use the Clues C:

- Read lines 52–56.
- Reread the underlined word, **lose**.
- Check the box that best defines the underlined word. What does the word **lose** mean in this context?
 - decrease
 - move
 - misplace
- What clues did you use to choose this answer?

Where do you live? she asked.

There, I said pointing up to the third floor.

You live *there*?

(continued)

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Text Connection 3 (continued)

Comprehend It

How did the nun make Esperanza feel about her house?

Write a short summary of the story "The House on Mango Street."

There. I had to look to where she pointed—the third
60 floor, the paint peeling, wooden bars Papa had nailed on the windows so we wouldn't fall out. You live *there*? The way she said it made me feel like nothing. *There.* I lived *there*. I nodded.

I knew then I had to have a house. A real house. One I
65 could point to. But this isn't it. The house on Mango Street isn't it. For the time being, Mama says. Temporary¹, says Papa. But I know how those things go.

Boys & Girls

The boys and the girls live in separate worlds. The boys
70 in their universe and we in ours. My brothers for example. They've got plenty to say to me and Nenny inside the house. But outside they can't be seen talking to girls. Carlos and Kiki are each other's best friend . . . not ours.

Nenny is too young to be my friend. She's just my sister
75 and that was not my fault. You don't pick your sisters, you just get them and sometimes they come like Nenny.

She can't play with those Vargas kids or she'll turn out just like them. And since she comes right after me, she is my responsibility.

80 Someday I will have a best friend all my own. One I can tell my secrets to. One who will understand my jokes without my having to explain them. Until then I am a red balloon, a balloon tied to an anchor.

¹ **temporary:** for a limited time; short-term

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Text Connection 3 (continued)**Laughter**

Nenny and I don't look like sisters . . . not right away.

85 Not the way you can tell with Rachel and Lucy who have the same fat popsicle lips like everybody else in their family. But me and Nenny, we are more alike than you would know. Our laughter for example. Not the shy ice cream bells' giggle of Rachel and Lucy's family, but all of a sudden and surprised
90 like a pile of dishes breaking. And other things I can't explain.

One day we were passing a house that looked, in my mind, like houses I had seen in Mexico. I don't know why.

There was nothing about the house that looked exactly like
95 the houses I remembered. I'm not even sure why I thought it, but it seemed to feel right.

Look at that house, I said, it looks like Mexico.

Rachel and Lucy look at me like I'm crazy, but before they can let out a laugh, Nenny says: Yes, that's Mexico all right.

100 That's what I was thinking exactly.

Meme Ortiz

Meme Ortiz moved into Cathy's house after her family moved away. His name isn't really Meme. His name is Juan. But when we asked him what his name was he said Meme,

105 and that's what everybody calls him except his mother.

Meme has a dog with gray eyes, a sheepdog with two names, one in English and one in Spanish. 1 The dog is big, like a man dressed in a dog suit, and runs the same way its owner does, clumsy and wild with the limbs flopping all over

110 the place like untied shoes.

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Cathy's father built the house Meme moved into. It is wooden. Inside the floors slant. Some rooms uphill. Some down. And there are no closets. ² Out front there are twenty-one steps, all lopsided ² and jutting like crooked
115 teeth (made that way on purpose, Cathy said, so the rain will slide off), and when Meme's mama calls from the doorway, Meme goes scrambling up the twenty-one wooden stairs with the dog with two names scrambling after him.

Around the back is a yard, mostly dirt, and a greasy
120 bunch of boards that used to be a garage. But what you remember most is this tree, huge, with fat arms and mighty families of squirrels in the higher branches. All around, the neighborhood of roofs, black-tarred and A-framed, and in their gutters, the balls that never came back down to earth.

125 ³ Down at the base of the tree, the dog with two names barks into the empty air, and there at the end of the block, looking smaller still, our house with its feet tucked under like a cat.

This is the tree we chose for the First Annual Tarzan
130 Jumping Contest. Meme won. And broke both arms.

Bums in the Attic

I want a house on a hill like the ones with the gardens where Papa works. We go on Sundays, Papa's day off. I used to go. I don't anymore. You don't like to go out with us, Papa
135 says. Getting too old? Getting too stuck-up, says Nenny.

⁴ I don't tell them I am ashamed ³—all of us staring out the window like the hungry. I am tired of looking at what we can't have. When we win the lottery . . . Mama begins, and then I stop listening.

140 People who live on hills sleep so close to the stars they forget those of us who live too much on earth. They don't look down at all except to be content to live on hills. They have nothing to do with last week's garbage or fear of rats. Night comes. Nothing wakes them but the wind.

² **lopsided:** sagging; leaning to one side

³ **ashamed:** embarrassed

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Text Connection 3 (continued)

145 One day I'll own my own house, but I won't forget who I am or where I came from. 5 Passing bums will ask, Can I come in? I'll offer them the attic⁴, ask them to stay, because I know how it is to be without a house.

Some days after dinner, guests and I will sit in front of a
150 fire. Floorboards will squeak upstairs. The attic grumble.

Rats? they'll ask.

Bums, I'll say, and I'll be happy.

Identify It: Participles and Participial Phrases.

Read each numbered sentence. Look at the underlined phrase in it.

Check the correct column to indicate whether the participle in the phrase is acting alone as an adjective (**A**), or is part of a participial phrase (**PP**).

Write the noun or pronoun that is being described on the line.

| | A | PP | |
|----|--------------------------|--------------------------|-------|
| 1. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | _____ |
| 2. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | _____ |
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| 4. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | _____ |
| 5. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | _____ |

A Smart Cookie

I could've been somebody, you know? my mother says and
155 sighs. She has lived in this city her whole life. She can speak two languages. She can sing an opera. She knows how to fix a TV. But she doesn't know which subway train to take to get downtown. I hold her hand very tight while we wait for the right train to arrive.

160 She used to draw when she had time. Now she draws with a needle and thread, little knotted rosebuds, tulips made of silk thread. Someday she would like to go to the ballet. Someday she would like to see a play. She borrows opera

⁴ **attic**: space under the roof of a house

(continued)

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Text Connection 3 (continued)

records from the public library and sings with velvety lungs
165 powerful as morning glories.

Today while cooking oatmeal she is Madame Butterfly
until she sighs and points the wooden spoon at me. I could've
been somebody, you know? Esperanza, you go to school.
Study hard. That Madame Butterfly was a fool. She stirs the
170 oatmeal. Look at my *comadres*. She means Izaura whose
husband left and Yolanda whose husband is dead. Got to take
care all your own, she says shaking her head.

Then out of nowhere:

Shame is a bad thing, you know. It keeps you down. You
175 want to know why I quit school? Because I didn't have nice
clothes. No clothes, but I had brains.

Yup, she says disgusted, stirring again. I was a smart
cookie then.

180 **Alicia & I Talking on Edna's Steps**

I like Alicia because once she gave me a little leather
purse with the word GUADALAJARA stitched on it, which is
home for Alicia, and one day she will go back there. But today
she is listening to my sadness because I don't have a house.

You live right here, 4006 Mango, Alicia says and points to
185 the house I am ashamed of.

No, this isn't my house I say and shake my head as if shaking
could undo the year I've lived here. I don't belong. I don't ever
want to come from here. You have a home, Alicia, and one day
you'll go there, to a town you remember, but me I never had a
190 house, not even a photograph . . . only one I dream of.

No, Alicia says. Like it or not you are Mango Street, and
one day you'll come back too.

Not me. Not until somebody makes it better.

Who's going to do it? The mayor?

195 And the thought of the mayor coming to Mango Street
makes me laugh out loud.

Who's going to do it? Not the mayor.

(continued)

Text Connection 3 (continued)

200 **A House of My Own**

Not a flat. Not an apartment in back. Not a man’s house.
Not a daddy’s. A house all my own. With my porch⁵ and my
pillow, my pretty purple petunias. My books and my stories.
My two shoes waiting beside the bed. Nobody to shake a

205 stick at. Nobody’s garbage to pick up after.

Only a house quiet as snow, a space for myself to go, clean
as paper before the poem.

Mango Says Goodbye Sometimes

I like to tell stories. I tell them inside my head. I tell them
210 after the mailman says, Here’s your mail. Here’s your mail
he said.

I make a story for my life, for each step my brown shoe
takes. I say, “And so she trudged up the wooden stairs, her
sad brown shoes taking her to the house she never liked.”

215 I like to tell stories. I am going to tell you a story about a
girl who didn’t want to belong.

We didn’t always live on Mango Street. Before that we
lived on Loomis on the third floor, and before that we lived
on Keeler. Before Keeler it was Paulina, but what I remember
220 most is Mango Street, sad red house, the house I belong but
do not belong to.

I put it down on paper and then the ghost does not
ache⁶ so much. I write it down and Mango says goodbye
sometimes. She does not hold me with both arms. She sets
225 me free.

One day I will pack my bags of books and paper. One day
I will say goodbye to Mango. I am too strong for her to keep
me here forever. One day I will go away.

230 Friends and neighbors will say, What happened to that
Esperanza? Where did she go with all those books and paper?
Why did she march so far away?

They will not know I have gone away to come back. For
the ones I left behind. For the ones who cannot out.

From *The House on Mango Street* by Sandra Cisneros

⁵ **porch:** a covered structure outside the entrance to a house

⁶ **ache:** a dull, lasting pain

Comprehend It

Write a short summary of “A House of My Own.”

Why do you think Esperanza would come back to her neighborhood?

Unit 26

Text Connection 4

Rules of the Game

by Amy Tan

1 *Like Sandra Cisneros' The House on Mango Street, Amy Tan's "Rules of the Game," an excerpt from The Joy Luck Club, deals with childhood memories that involve movement.*

In addition to being highly respected for their writing
5 *abilities, both writers are famous for their focus and keen insights into their own cultures. Sandra Cisneros writes about Latino culture; Amy Tan writes about Chinese Americans.*

As you read these selections, think about what the word "movement" means in each selection. What did it mean in
10 *The House on Mango Street? Does "movement" have more than one layer of meaning?*

Section 1

I was six when my mother taught me the art of invisible strength. It was a strategy for winning arguments, respect from others, and eventually, though neither of us knew it at
15 the time, chess games.

"Bite back your tongue," scolded my mother when I cried loudly, yanking her hand toward the store that sold bags of salted plums.

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Text Connection 4 (continued)

Use the Clues A:

- Read lines 16–18.
- Reread the underlined idiom **bite back your tongue**.
- Check the box that best defines the underlined phrase. What does the idiom **bite back your tongue** mean in this context?
 - eat
 - stop crying or talking
 - sticking out your tongue
- What clues did you use to help you choose this answer?

Take Note

Summarize information about the setting below.

At home, she said, “Wise guy, he not go against wind. In Chinese we say, Come from South, blow with wind—poom!—
 20 North will follow. Strongest wind cannot be seen.”

The next week I bit back my tongue as we entered the store with the forbidden candies. When my mother finished her shopping, she quietly plucked a small bag of plums from the rack and put it on the counter with the rest of the items.
 25 My mother imparted her daily truths so she could help my older brothers and me rise above our circumstances. We lived in San Francisco’s Chinatown. Like most of the other Chinese children who played in the back alleys of restaurants and curio shops, I didn’t think we were poor. My bowl was
 30 always full, three five-course meals every day, beginning with a soup full of mysterious things I didn’t want to know the names of.

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Unit 26

Text Connection 4 (continued)

Take Note

Summarize information about the setting below.

Use the Clues B:

- Read lines 26–33.
- Reread the underlined idiom **rise above our circumstances**.
- Check the box that best defines the underlined phrase. What does the phrase **rise above our circumstances** mean in this context?
 - stand up
 - have a better life
 - eat well
- What clues did you use to help you choose this answer?

We lived on Waverly Place, in a warm, clean, two-bedroom flat that sat above a small Chinese bakery specializing in steamed pastries and dim sum. In the early morning, when the alley was still quiet, I could smell fragrant red beans as they were cooked down to a pasty sweetness. By daybreak, our flat was heavy with the odor of fried sesame balls and sweet curried chicken crescents. From my bed, I would listen as my father got ready for work, then lock the door behind him, one-two-three clicks.

At the end of our two-block alley was a small sandlot playground with swings and slides well-shined down the middle with use. The play area was bordered by wood-slat benches where old-country people sat cracking roasted watermelon seeds with their golden teeth and scattering the husks to an impatient gathering of gurgling pigeons. The best playground, however, was the dark alley itself. It was crammed with daily mysteries and adventures. My brothers and I would peer into the medicinal herb shop, watching old Li dole out onto a stiff sheet of white paper the right amount of insect shells, saffron-colored seeds, and pungent leaves for

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Text Connection 4 (continued)

his ailing customers. It was said that he once cured a woman dying of an ancestral curse that had eluded the best of
 55 American doctors. Next to the pharmacy was a printer who specialized in gold-embossed wedding invitations and festive red banners.

Farther down the street was Ping Yuen Fish Market. The front window displayed a tank crowded with doomed fish
 60 and turtles struggling to gain footing on the slimy green-tiled sides. A hand-written sign informed tourists, "Within this store, is all for food, not for pet." Inside, the butchers with their bloodstained white smocks deftly gutted the fish while customers cried out their orders and shouted, "Give me
 65 your freshest," to which the butchers always protested, "All are freshest." On less crowded market days, we would inspect the crates of live frogs and crabs which we were warned not to poke, boxes of dried cuttlefish, and row upon row of iced prawns, squid, and slippery fish. The sanddabs made
 70 me shiver each time; their eyes lay on one flattened side and reminded me of my mother's story of a careless girl who ran into a crowded street and was crushed by a cab. "Was smash flat," reported my mother.

At the corner of the alley was Hong Sing's, a four-table
 75 café with a recessed stairwell in front that led to a door marked "Tradesmen." My brothers and I believed the bad people emerged from this door at night. Tourists never went to Hong Sing's, since the menu was printed only in Chinese. A Caucasian man with a big camera once posed me and my
 80 playmates in front of the restaurant. He had us move to the side of the picture window so the photo would capture the roasted duck with its head dangling from a juice-covered rope. After he took the picture, I told him he should go into Hong Sing's and eat dinner. When he smiled and asked
 85 me what they served, I shouted, "Guts and duck's feet and octopus gizzards!" Then I ran off with my friends, shrieking with laughter as we scampered across the alley and hid in the entryway grotto of the China Gem Company, my heart pounding with hope that he would chase us.

Take Note

Summarize information about the setting below.

(continued)

Unit 26

Text Connection 4 (continued)

Comprehend It

How did Waverly get her name?

Describe Waverly's mother.

Describe Waverly's motivation for asking her mother about Chinese torture.

90 My mother named me after the street we lived on:
Waverly Place Jong, my official name for important American
documents. But my family called me Meimei, "Little Sister."
I was the youngest, the only daughter. Each morning before
school, my mother would twist and yank on my thick black
95 hair until she had formed two tightly wound pigtails. One
day, as she struggled to weave a hard-toothed comb through
my disobedient hair, I had a sly thought.

I asked her, "Ma, what is Chinese torture?" My mother
shook her head. A bobby pin was wedged between her lips.
100 She wetted her palm and smoothed the hair above my ear, then
pushed the pin in so that it nicked sharply against my scalp.

"Who say this word?" she asked without a trace of
knowing how wicked I was being. I shrugged my shoulders
and said, "Some boy in my class said Chinese people do
105 Chinese torture."

"Chinese people do many things," she said simply.
"Chinese people do business, do medicine, do painting. Not
lazy like American people. We do torture. Best torture."

My older brother Vincent was the one who actually got
110 the chess set. We had gone to the annual Christmas party
held at the First Chinese Baptist Church at the end of the
alley. The missionary ladies had put together a Santa bag of
gifts donated by members of another church. None of the
gifts had names on them. There were separate sacks for boys
115 and girls of different ages.

One of the Chinese parishioners had donned a Santa
Claus costume with a stiff paper beard with cotton balls
glued to it. I think the only children who thought he was the
real thing were too young to know that Santa Claus was not
120 Chinese. When my turn came up, the Santa man asked me
how old I was. I thought it was a trick question; I was seven
according to the American formula and eight by the Chinese
calendar. I said I was born on March 17, 1951. That seemed to
satisfy him. He then solemnly asked me if I had been a very,
125 very good girl this year and did I obey my parents. I knew the
only answer to that. I nodded back with equal solemnity.

Having watched the other children opening their gifts, I
already knew that the big gifts were not necessarily the nicest

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Text Connection 4 (continued)

ones. One girl my age got a large coloring book of biblical
130 characters, while a less greedy girl who selected a smaller
box received a glass vial of lavender toilet water. The sound of
the box was also important. A ten-year-old boy had chosen
a box that jangled when he shook it. It was a tin globe of the
world with a slit for inserting money. He must have thought
135 it was full of dimes and nickels, because when he saw that
it had just ten pennies, his face fell with such undisguised
disappointment that his mother slapped the side of his head
and led him out of the church hall, apologizing to the crowd
for her son who had such bad manners he couldn't appreciate
140 such a fine gift.

As I peered into the sack, I quickly fingered the
remaining presents, testing their weight, imagining what
they contained. I chose a heavy, compact one that was
wrapped in shiny silver foil and a red satin ribbon. It was a
145 twelve-pack of Life Savers and I spent the rest of the party
arranging and rearranging the candy tubes in the order of
my favorites. My brother Winston chose wisely as well. His
present turned out to be a box of intricate plastic parts; the
instructions on the box proclaimed that when they were
150 properly assembled he would have an authentic miniature
replica of a World War II submarine.

Vincent got the chess set, which would have been a very
decent present to get at a church Christmas party, except it
was obviously used and, as we discovered later, it was missing
155 a black pawn and a white knight. My mother graciously
thanked the unknown benefactor¹, saying, "Too good. Cost
too much." At which point, an old lady with fine white, wispy
hair nodded toward our family and said with a whistling
whisper, "Merry, merry Christmas."

160 When we got home, my mother told Vincent to throw the
chess set away. "She not want it. We not want it," she said,
tossing her head stiffly to the side with a tight, proud smile. My
brothers have deaf ears. They were already lining up the chess
pieces and reading from the dog-eared instruction book.

¹ **benefactor:** a donor; person who gives something to another

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Unit 26

Text Connection 4 (continued)

Section 2

165 I watched Vincent and Winston play during Christmas week. The chess board seemed to hold elaborate secrets waiting to be untangled. The chessmen were more powerful than Old Li's magic herbs that cured ancestral curses. And my brothers wore such serious faces that I was sure something was at stake that was greater than avoiding the tradesmen's door to Hong Sing's.

"Let me! Let me!" I begged between games when one
170 brother or the other would sit back with a deep sigh of relief and victory, the other annoyed, unable to let go of the outcome. Vincent at first refused to let me play, but when I offered my Life Savers as replacements for the buttons that filled in for the missing pieces, he relented. He chose the
175 flavors: wild cherry for the black pawn and peppermint for the white knight. Winner could eat both.

As our mother sprinkled flour and rolled out small doughy circles for the steamed dumplings that would be our dinner that night, Vincent explained the rules, pointing to
180 each piece. "You have sixteen pieces and so do I. One king and queen, two bishops, two knights, two castles, and eight pawns. The pawns can only move forward one step, except on the first move. Then they can move two. But they can only take men by moving crossways like this, except in the beginning,
185 when you can move ahead and take another pawn."

"Why?" I asked as I moved my pawn. "Why can't they move more steps?"

"Because they're pawns," he said.

"But why do they go crossways to take other men. Why
190 aren't there any women and children?"

"Why is the sky blue? Why must you always ask stupid questions?" asked Vincent. "This is a game. These are the rules. I didn't make them up. See. Here. In the book." He jabbed a page with a pawn in his hand. "Pawn. P-A-W-N.
195 Pawn. Read it yourself."

My mother patted the flour off her hands. "Let me see book," she said quietly. She scanned the pages quickly, not

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Text Connection 4 (continued)

reading the foreign English symbols, seeming to search deliberately for nothing in particular.

200 “This American rules,” she concluded at last. “Every time people come out from foreign country, must know rules. You not know, judge say, Too bad, go back. They not telling you why so you can use their way go forward. They say, Don’t know why, you find out yourself. But they knowing all the time. Better you take it, find out why yourself.” She tossed her head back with a satisfied smile.

I found out about all the whys later. I read the rules and looked up all the big words in a dictionary. I borrowed books from the Chinatown library. I studied each chess piece, 210 trying to absorb the power it contained.

I learned about opening moves and why it’s important to control the center early on; the shortest distance between two points is straight down the middle. I learned about the middle game and why tactics² between two adversaries³ 215 are like clashing ideas; the one who plays better has the clearest plans for both attacking and getting out of traps. I learned why it is essential in the endgame to have foresight, a mathematical understanding of all possible moves, and patience; all weaknesses and advantages become evident to 220 a strong adversary and are obscured to a tiring opponent. I discovered that for the whole game one must gather invisible strengths and see the endgame before the game begins.

I also found out why I should never reveal “why” to others. A little knowledge withheld is a great advantage one 225 should store for future use. That is the power of chess. It is a game of secrets in which one must show and never tell.

I loved the secrets I found within the sixty-four black and white squares. I carefully drew a handmade chessboard and pinned it to the wall next to my bed, where at night I would 230 stare for hours at imaginary battles. Soon I no longer lost any games or Life Savers, but I lost my adversaries. Winston and Vincent decided they were more interested in roaming the streets after school in their Hopalong Cassidy cowboy hats.

² **tactics:** plans; strategies

³ **adversaries:** opponents; foes

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Unit 26

Text Connection 4 (continued)

On a cold spring afternoon, while walking home from
235 school, I detoured through the playground at the end of our
alley. I saw a group of old men, two seated across a folding
table playing a game of chess, others smoking pipes, eating
peanuts, and watching. I ran home and grabbed Vincent's
chess set, which was bound in a cardboard box with rubber
240 bands. I also carefully selected two prized rolls of Life Savers.
I came back to the park and approached a man who was
observing the game.

"Want to play?" I asked him. His face widened with
surprise and he grinned as he looked at the box under my arm.
245 "Little sister, been a long time since I play with dolls," he
said, smiling benevolently. I quickly put the box down next to
him on the bench and displayed my **retort**⁴.

Lau Po, as he allowed me to call him, turned out to
be a much better player than my brothers. I lost many
250 games and many Life Savers. But over the weeks, with each
diminishing roll of candies, I added new secrets. Lau Po gave
me the names. The Double Attack from the East and West
Shores. Throwing Stones on the Drowning Man. The Sudden
Meeting of the Clan. The Surprise from the Sleeping Guard.
255 The Humble Servant Who Kills the King. Sand in the Eyes of
Advancing Forces. A Double Killing Without Blood.

There were also the fine points of chess etiquette. **1** Keep
captured men in neat rows, as well-tended prisoners. Never
announce "Check" with vanity, lest someone with an unseen
260 sword slit your throat. **2** Never hurl pieces into the sandbox
after you have lost a game, because then you must find them
again, by yourself, after apologizing to all around you. By the
end of the summer, Lau Po had taught me all he knew, and I
had become a better chess player.

265 A small weekend crowd of Chinese people and tourists
would gather as I played and defeated my opponents one
by one. **3** My mother would join the crowds during these
outdoor exhibition games. **4** She sat proudly on the bench,
telling my admirers with proper Chinese **humility**⁵, "Is luck."

⁴ **retort**: a quick reply or answer

⁵ **humility**: meekness; modesty

(continued)

Text Connection 4 (continued)

270 **5** A man who watched me play in the park suggested that my mother allow me to play in local chess tournaments. My mother smiled graciously, an answer that meant nothing. I desperately wanted to go, but I bit back my tongue. I knew she would not let me play among strangers. So as we walked
 275 home I said in a small voice that I didn't want to play in the local tournament. They would have American rules. If I lost, I would bring shame on my family.

Identify It: Adverbs, Adverbial Phrases, and Adverbial Clauses

Read each numbered sentence on the previous page.

Decide if the underlined words contain an adverb (Adv.), adverbial phrase (Adv. Phrase), or an adverbial clause (Adv. Clause).

Check the column below.

| | Adv. | Adv. Phrase | Adv. Clause |
|----|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 2. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 3. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 4. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 5. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

“Is shame you fall down nobody push you,” said my mother.

280 During my first tournament, my mother sat with me in the front row as I waited for my turn. I frequently bounced my legs to unstick them from the cold metal seat of the folding chair. When my name was called, I leapt up. My mother unwrapped something in her lap. It was her *chang*, a
 285 small tablet of red jade which held the sun's fire. “Is luck,” she

Comprehend It

How does Waverly convince her mother to let her play in a tournament?

(continued)

Unit 26

Text Connection 4 (continued)

Comprehend It

Describe Waverly's mother's feelings about Waverly's success in chess.

whispered, and tucked it into my dress pocket. I turned to my opponent, a fifteen-year-old boy from Oakland. He looked at me, wrinkling his nose.

As I began to play, the boy disappeared, the color ran out
290 of the room, and I saw only my white pieces and his black ones waiting on the other side. A light wind began blowing past my ears. It whispered secrets only I could hear.

“Blow from the South,” it murmured. “The wind leaves no trail.” I saw a clear path, the traps to avoid. The crowd
295 rustled. “Shhh! Shhh!” said the corners of the room. The wind blew stronger. “Throw sand from the East to distract him.” The knight came forward ready for the sacrifice. The wind hissed, louder and louder. “Blow, blow, blow. He cannot see. He is blind now. Make him lean away from the wind so he is
300 easier to knock down.”

“Check,” I said, as the wind roared with laughter. The wind died down to little puffs, my own breath.

My mother placed my first trophy next to a new plastic chess set that the neighborhood Tao society had given to me.
305 As she wiped each piece with a soft cloth, she said, “Next time win more, lose less.”

“Ma, it’s not how many pieces you lost,” I said.

“Sometimes you need to lose pieces to get ahead.”

“Better to lose less, see if you really need.”

310 At the next tournament, I won again, but it was my mother who wore the triumphant⁶ grin.

“Lose eight piece this time. Last time was eleven. What I tell you? Better off lose less!” I was annoyed, but I couldn’t say anything.

⁶ **triumphant:** victorious; conquering

(continued)

Text Connection 4 (continued)

315 I attended more tournaments, each one farther away from home. I won all games, in all divisions. The Chinese bakery downstairs from our flat displayed my growing collection of trophies in its window, amidst the dust-covered cakes that were never picked up. The day after I won an

320 important regional tournament, the window encased a fresh sheet cake with whipped-cream frosting and red script saying, “Congratulations, Waverly Jong, Chinatown Chess Champion.” Soon after that, a flower shop, headstone engraver, and funeral parlor offered to sponsor me in

325 national tournaments. That’s when my mother decided I no longer had to do the dishes. Winston and Vincent had to do my chores.

“Why does she get to play and we do all the work,” complained Vincent.

330 “Is new American rules,” said my mother. “Meimei play, squeeze all her brains out for win chess. You play, worth squeeze towel.”

By my ninth birthday, I was a national chess champion. I was still some 429 points away from grand-master status, but

335 I was touted as the Great American Hope, a child prodigy and a girl to boot. They ran a photo of me in *Life* magazine next to a quote in which Bobby Fischer said, “There will never be a woman grand master.” “Your move, Bobby,” said the caption.

Comprehend It

Write a short summary of lines 166-366.

(continued)

Unit 26

Text Connection 4 (continued)

340 The day they took the magazine picture I wore neatly
plaited braids clipped with plastic barrettes trimmed with
rhinestones. I was playing in a large high school auditorium
that echoed with phlegmy coughs and the squeaky rubber
345 knobs of chair legs sliding across freshly waxed wooden
floors. Seated across from me was an American man, about
the same age of Lau Po, maybe fifty. I remember that his
sweaty brow seemed to weep at my every move. He wore a
dark, malodorous suit. One of his pockets was stuffed with
a great white kerchief on which he wiped his palm before
350 sweeping his hand over the chosen chess piece with great
flourish.

In my crisp pink-and-white dress with scratchy lace at
the neck, one of two my mother had sewn for these special
occasions, I would clasp my hands under my chin, the
355 delicate points of my elbows poised lightly on the table in
the manner my mother had shown me for posing for the
press. I would swing my patent leather shoes back and forth
like an impatient child riding on a school bus. Then I would
pause, suck in my lips, twirl my chosen piece in midair as if
360 undecided, and then firmly plant it in its new threatening
place, with a triumphant smile thrown back at my opponent
for good measure.

Section 3

365 I no longer played in the alley of Waverly Place. I never
visited the playground where the pigeons and old men
gathered. I went to school, then directly home to learn new
chess secrets, cleverly concealed advantages, more escape
routes.

370 But I found it difficult to concentrate at home. My mother
had a habit of standing over me while I plotted out my
games. I think she thought of herself as my protective ally.
Her lips would be sealed tight, and after each move I made, a
soft “Hmmpmph” would escape from her nose.

375 “Ma, I can’t practice when you stand there like that,” I
said one day. She retreated to the kitchen and made loud
noises with the pots and pans. When the crashing stopped, I

(continued)

Text Connection 4 (continued)

could see out of the corner of my eye that she was standing in the doorway. “Hmmp!” Only this one sound came out of
380 her tight throat.

My parents made many concessions to allow me to practice. One time I complained that the bedroom I shared was so noisy that I couldn’t think. Thereafter, my brothers slept in a bed in the living room facing the street. I said I
385 couldn’t finish my rice; my head didn’t work right when my stomach was too full. I left the table with half-finished bowls and nobody complained. But there was one duty I couldn’t avoid. I had to accompany my mother on Saturday market days when I had no tournament to play. My mother would
390 proudly walk with me, visiting many shops, buying very little. “This my daughter Wave-ly Jong,” she said to whoever looked her way.

One day, after we left a shop I said under my breath, “I wish you wouldn’t do that, telling everybody I’m your
395 daughter.” My mother stopped walking. Crowds of people with heavy bags pushed past us on the sidewalk, bumping into first one shoulder, then another.

“Aiii-ya. So shame be with mother?” She grasped my hand even tighter as she glared at me.

400 I looked down. “It’s not that, it’s just so obvious. It’s just so embarrassing.”

“Embarrass you be my daughter?” Her voice was cracking with anger.

“That’s not what I meant. That’s not what I said.”

405 “What you say?”

I knew it was a mistake to say anything more, but I heard my voice speaking. “Why do you have to use me to show off? If you want to show off, then why don’t you learn to play chess.”

410 My mother’s eyes turned into dangerous black slits. She had no words for me, just sharp silence.

I felt the wind rushing around my hot ears. I jerked my hand out of my mother’s tight grasp and spun around, knocking into an old woman. Her bag of groceries spilled to
415 the ground.

(continued)

Unit 26

Text Connection 4 (continued)

Comprehend It

Explain how tension between Waverly and her mother builds.

“Aii-ya! Stupid girl!” my mother and the woman cried. Oranges and tin cans careened down the sidewalk. As my mother stopped to help the old woman pick up the escaping food, I took off.

420 I raced down the street, dashing between people, not looking back as my mother screamed shrilly, “Meimei! Meimei!” I fled down an alley, past dark curtained shops and merchants washing the grime off their windows. I sped into the sunlight, into a large street crowded with tourists
425 examining trinkets and souvenirs. I ducked into another dark alley, down another street, up another alley. I ran until it hurt and I realized I had nowhere to go, that I was not running from anything. The alleys contained no escape routes.

My breath came out like angry smoke. It was cold. I sat
430 down on an upturned plastic pail next to a stack of empty boxes, cupping my chin with my hands, thinking hard. I imagined my mother, first walking briskly down one street or another looking for me, then giving up and returning home to await my arrival. After two hours, I stood up on creaking
435 legs and slowly walked home.

The alley was quiet and I could see the yellow lights shining from our flat like two tiger’s eyes in the night. I climbed the sixteen steps to the door, advancing quickly up each so as not to make any warning sounds. I turned the
440 knob; the door was locked. I heard a chair moving, quick steps, the locks turning—click! click! click!—and then the door opened.

“About time you got home,” said Vincent. “Boy, are you in trouble.”

445 He slid back to the dinner table. On a platter were the remains of a large fish, its fleshy head still connected to

(continued)

Text Connection 4 (continued)

bones swimming upstream in vain escape. Standing there
 450 waiting for my punishment, I heard my mother speak in a
 dry voice.

“We not concerning this girl. This girl not have
 concerning for us.”

Nobody looked at me. Bone chopsticks clinked against
 455 the insides of bowls being emptied into hungry mouths.

I walked into my room, closed the door, and lay down on
 my bed. The room was dark, the ceiling filled with shadows
 from the dinnertime lights of neighboring flats.

In my head, I saw a chessboard with sixty-four black and
 460 white squares. Opposite me was my opponent, two angry
 black slits. She wore a triumphant smile. “Strongest wind
 cannot be seen,” she said.

Her black men advanced across the plane, slowly
 marching to each successive level as a single unit. My white
 465 pieces screamed as they scurried and fell off the board one by
 one. As her men drew closer to my edge, I felt myself growing
 light. I rose up into the air and flew out the window. Higher
 and higher, above the alley, over the tops of tiled roofs, where
 I was gathered up by the wind and pushed up towards the
 470 night sky until everything below me disappeared and I was
 alone.

I closed my eyes and pondered my next move.

“The Rules of the Game,” from *The Joy Luck Club* by Amy Tan

Comprehend It

What does the narrator
 compare to a game of chess?
