

LITERARY ANALYSIS: PLOT

Everything in a story happens for a reason. The series of events is the story's **plot**. The plot usually follows a pattern.

- **Exposition** introduces the characters and **setting**. It may also hint at what the **conflict**, or problem, will be.
- **Rising action** shows how the conflict develops.
- The most exciting part, or turning point of the story, is the **climax**. The outcome of the conflict is decided at this time.
- Tension eases during the **falling action**, and events unfold as a result of the climax.
- The **resolution** is the final point in the plot, in which the reader learns how everything turns out.

As you read "The School Play," notice what occurs in each stage of the story's plot.

READING STRATEGY: MONITOR

Have you ever read halfway through a story and realized you've forgotten what you just read? To avoid this problem, **monitor** your reading by pausing occasionally to check your understanding. One way to monitor is to ask yourself questions about what you are reading. Sometimes you'll need to reread to find the answer. Other times you'll find the answer later on in the story.

As you read "The School Play," record questions about what is happening in a chart like the one shown.

My Questions

Answers

What is inside the cardboard box?

VOCABULARY IN CONTEXT

Gary Soto uses the boldfaced words to help relate a student's experience in a school play. To see how many words you know, replace each boldfaced word with a different word or phrase.

1. Robert's friend gives the **narrative** about the background.
2. The audience's **relentless** talking distracts the actors.
3. A map of the West is the main **prop** in the play.
4. Belinda wanted to **smirk** when the actor forgot his lines.

Author Online

True to Life Gary Soto draws upon his childhood memories of his family and growing up in Fresno, California, as an inspiration for his writing. He is often asked what his family thinks about his writing. He jokes that they don't read much of his work, "so they're not fully aware of how they've been brought to the page."



Gary Soto
born 1952

A Star Is Born At age ten, Soto was cast in his school play. He had to remember one line: "I have the glasses." But he was so fascinated with the fake beard he was wearing that he forgot what to say.

MORE ABOUT THE AUTHOR

For more on Gary Soto, visit the Literature Center at ClassZone.com.

Background

The Donner Party In the spring of 1846, a group of men, women, and children from Illinois and nearby states set out for California. George and Jacob Donner led the group.

While trying to cross the Sierra Nevada Mountains in eastern California, the Donner Party was trapped in a snowstorm. The travelers ran out of food, and members of the group began dying of starvation. In desperation, some of them ate the bodies of the dead. Only half the people made it through that grim winter.