

The School Play

Gary Soto

In the school play at the end of his sixth-grade year, all Robert Suarez had to remember to say was, “Nothing’s wrong. I can see,” to a pioneer woman, who was really Belinda Lopez. Instead of a pioneer woman, Belinda was one of the toughest girls since the beginning of the world. She was known to slap boys and grind their faces into the grass so that they bit into chunks of wormy earth. More than once Robert had witnessed Belinda staring down the janitor’s pit bull, who licked his frothing chops but didn’t dare mess with her. **A**

The class rehearsed for three weeks, at first without costumes. Early one morning Mrs. Bunnin wobbled into the classroom lugging a large cardboard box. She wiped her brow and said, “Thanks for the help, Robert.”

Robert was at his desk scribbling a ballpoint tattoo that spelled DUDE on the tops of his knuckles. He looked up and stared, blinking at his teacher. “Oh, did you need some help?” he asked.

ANALYZE VISUALS

Examine the art on page 33. In what way do the exaggerated **details** create a humorous effect?

A PLOT: EXPOSITION

What background information have you learned about Robert?