

 **Active Reading SkillBuilder**

Understanding Generalizations

A **generalization** is a broad statement about a number of people or things. Valid generalizations are based on a wide range of evidence. Generalizations can be faulty if they are overgeneralized, lack the support of evidence, or contain the words *all*, *one*, *every*, or *never*. Generalizations are also faulty when they are stereotyped, or based on fixed, unfair ideas about all members of ethnic, racial, or other groups. As you read "Only Daughter," use the chart below to judge the accuracy of generalizations in the story about females and their roles. Write each generalization in the first column, then put a check in one of the other columns to classify it.

Generalization	Valid	Over-generalized	Stereotyped

Only Daughter (page 694)**Literary Analysis SkillBuilder****Theme**

A story's **theme** is the central idea or ideas the writer wishes to share with the reader. The idea may be a lesson that the story conveys about life or about people and their actions. Sometimes the theme of a work of literature is directly stated; at other times it is implied, and the reader must infer the theme. One way to interpret the theme is to think about what happens to the central characters. The importance of those events, stated in terms that apply to all human beings, is often the theme. In the chart below, write what you think is the theme of "Only Daughter." Then identify several passages in the essay that support that theme.

Theme:

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Supporting Passages:

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Only Daughter (page 694)**Words to Know SkillBuilder****Words to Know**

anthology

embroider

fulfill

nostalgia

trauma

A. Decide which word from the word list belongs in each numbered blank. Then write the word on the blank line on the right.

I wanted to fill up the tub and ran
The faucet so I could (1) this plan.

_____ (1)

The Thanksgiving dinner the year I was ten
Was better than any I've eaten since then,
And when I think back on that glorious meal,
I guess that (2)'s the feeling I feel.

_____ (2)

I gathered poems and stories about their search for mice,
Their scratching (very naughty) and their purring (very nice),
Their whiskers and their little feet, their harmonies
and spats,
And published this (3) of writings about cats.

_____ (3)

She simply cannot tell the truth, so it is my prediction
That she'll (4) this event and change the facts to fiction.
Although she only scratched her knee, I think the tale
she'll tell

_____ (4)

Will make it seem she suffered quite a (5) when she fell.

_____ (5)

B. Fill in each blank with the correct word from the word list.

1. An emergency room is also called a _____ center.
2. Memories of childhood often produce _____ if the childhood was a happy one.
3. How can you _____ your dreams if you never open the door when opportunity knocks?
4. The author has chosen to _____ the story of Shakespeare's life by inventing dialogues that never actually took place.
5. *A Child's Garden of Verses* is a famous _____ of poems that appeal to the young and the young at heart.

C. Writers often dedicate their work to someone by saying something like, "For X, because . . ." Imagine that Cisneros had dedicated to her father the story she gave him to read. Write a few sentences that she might have used to compose that dedication. Use at least **two** of the Words to Know.

Only Daughter (page 694)**Selection Quiz**

Recall the events and ideas in Cisneros's personal essay. Then answer the questions in phrases or sentences.

1. When Cisneros was a young girl, how did her brothers' attitude toward girls help her to become a writer?

2. Once she was in college, how did her father's attitude toward women help her become a writer?

3. Aside from his general attitude toward women, what kept Cisneros's father from appreciating her writing?

4. Why did Cisneros's family move several times as she was growing up?

5. What did Cisneros think was the most wonderful thing that happened to her all year?

Only Daughter (page 694)**Selection Test**

A. Think about the ideas about life and human nature that Cisneros expresses in the selection. In the box at the top, note what you think the theme of the selection is. In each box at the bottom, note a detail from the selection that supports the theme.

(20 points)

Theme	
Note a detail that supports this theme.	Note a detail that supports this theme.

B. Write the letter of the best answer. This exercise is continued on the next page.

(6 points each)

- _____ 1. As a child, growing up as the only daughter in a family of six sons made Cisneros feel
- lucky.
 - lonely.
 - secure.
 - superior.
- _____ 2. Cisneros worries that her father views her writing as
- trivial.
 - boring.
 - depressing.
 - overemotional.
- _____ 3. More than anything else, Cisneros wants her father to feel
- proud of her.
 - sorry for treating her badly.
 - humbled by her achievements.
 - at peace with their relationship.

- _____ 4. When Cisneros's father says, "Use this, and not this," he means that he wants his children to
- pursue a profession like his.
 - make raising a family their chief occupation.
 - find more rewarding work than he has found.
 - follow their own dreams, whatever they may be.
- _____ 5. At the end of the selection, Cisneros's father's reaction to her story suggests that he feels
- proud.
 - puzzled.
 - shocked.
 - embarrassed.

C. Words to Know. Write the letter of the best answer. (4 points each)

- _____ 1. An anthology is a good place to look if you want to find something to
- eat.
 - wear.
 - read.
- _____ 2. If you embroider your story, you make it more
- detailed.
 - humorous.
 - to the point.
- _____ 3. A person who experiences trauma **most** probably needs to go
- home.
 - to a restaurant.
 - to a hospital.
- _____ 4. Nostalgia is something that adults are likely to feel toward their
- childhood.
 - weaknesses.
 - strengths.
- _____ 5. When you fulfill a goal, you
- set it.
 - work toward it.
 - achieve it.

D. Answer one of the following questions based on your understanding of the selection. Write your answer on a separate sheet of paper. (15 points)

1. Think about how Cisneros responds to her father's ideas about what she should become. How do his ideas make her feel? How do they affect the decisions she makes about her education and occupation? Support your answers with details from the selection and your own ideas.
2. How might Cisneros's experiences as "the only daughter" and "only a daughter" affect her as a writer? Support your ideas with details from the selection and your own ideas about writers.

E. Linking Literature to Life. Answer the following question based on your own experience and knowledge. Write your answer on a separate sheet of paper. (15 points)

Why do you think the need for approval is important in many people's lives? Give at least two possible reasons.