Reading Skill

**Predictions** are logical guesses about what is most likely to happen next. Base your predictions on details in from the story and your own experience.

Literary Analysis

The **narrator** is the voice that tells a true or imagined story. **Point of view** is the perspective from which the story is told. The following two points of view are the most common:

- **first-person point of view:** “ME ME ME”
  The narrator participates in the action of the story and refers to himself or herself as “I.”
  Readers know only what the narrator sees, thinks, and feels.

- **third-person point of view:** “FLY ON THE WALL”
  The narrator does not participate in the action of the story. As an outside observer, a third-person narrator can share information that the characters do not know.
  Readers CAN know what everyone sees, thinks and feels.

Most true stories about a writer’s life are told in the first person.

Vocabulary Builder

**The Drive-In Movies**

- **prelude** *n.* introduction to a main event *We sang the school song as aprelude to the big game.*
- **evident** *adj.* easy to see; very clear *Her happiness was evident in her cheery smile.*
- **winced** *v.* drew back slightly, as if in pain; cringed *The boy winced as the nurse gave him a shot.*

Build Understanding

**The Drive-In Movies**

Background

“**Drive-Ins**” A drive-in is an outdoor movie theater in which people watch the movie from their cars. The first drive-in movie theater opened in Camden, New Jersey, in 1933. In the late 1950s, when their popularity was at its peak, there were 5,000 drive-ins.

Connecting to the Literature

**Reading/Writing Connection** In The Drive-In Movies, a boy works hard to earn a special privilege—a family outing to the drive-in. Make a list of ways that you earn privileges. Use at least three of the following words: accomplish, assist, cooperate, demonstrate, respond.

Meet The Author  **Gary Soto** *(b. 1952)*

As a child, Gary Soto loved the bustle and energy of his Fresno, California, neighborhood. When Soto was six years old, however, a government program changed his neighborhood by replacing many rundown buildings with new ones. “It didn’t work in our area,” Soto declares today. “The houses were bulldozed, and in their place grew weeds.” As he grew older, Soto continued to feel a sense of loss over his old neighborhood. Today, he believes that his pain and sadness led him to become a writer. Writing helped him to get his feelings down on paper, where he could see them and think about them.

**Fast Facts**

- Soto was once a farm worker in California’s San Joaquin Valley.
- Today, he is an award-winning author of fiction, short stories, poems, and children’s picture books.
- *Much of Soto’s work is based on his own experiences and the settings of his childhood.*
For our family, movie going was rare. But if our mom, tired from a week of candling eggs, woke up happy on a Saturday morning, there was a chance we might later scramble to our blue Chevy and beat nightfall to the Starlight Drive-In. My brother and sister knew this. I knew this. So on Saturday we tried to be good. We sat in the cool shadows of the TV with the volume low and watched cartoons, a prelude of what was to come.

One Saturday I decided to be extra good. When she came out of the bedroom tying her robe, she yawned a hat-sized yawn and blinked red eyes at the weak brew of coffee I had fixed for her. I made her toast with strawberry jam spread to all the corners and set the three boxes of cereal in front of her. If she didn’t care to eat cereal, she could always look at the back of the boxes as she drank her coffee.

I went outside. The lawn was tall but too wet with dew to mow. I picked up a trowel and began to weed the flower bed. The weeds were really bermuda grass, long stringers that ran finger-deep in the ground. I got to work quickly and in no time crescents of earth began rising under my fingernails. I was sweaty hot. My knees hurt from kneeling, and my brain was dull from making the trowel go up and down, dribbling crumbs of earth. I dug for half an hour, then stopped to play with the neighbor’s dog and pop ticks from his poor snout.

I then mowed the lawn, which was still beaded with dew and noisy with bees hovering over clover. This job was less dull because as I pushed the mower over the shaggy lawn, I could see it looked tidier. My brother and sister watched from the window. Their faces were fat with cereal, a third helping. I made a face at them when they asked how come I was working. Rick pointed to part of the lawn. “You missed some over there.” I ignored him and kept my attention on the windmill of grassy blades.

While I was emptying the catcher, a bee stung the bottom of my foot. I danced on one leg and was ready to cry when Mother showed her face at the window. I sat down on the grass and examined my foot: the stinger was pulsating. I pulled it out quickly, ran water over the sting and packed it with mud, Grandmother’s remedy.

Hobbling, I returned to the flower bed where I pulled more stringers and again played with the dog. More ticks had migrated to his snout. I swept the front steps, took out the garbage, cleaned the lint filter to the dryer (easy), plucked hair from the industrial wash basin in the garage (also easy), hosed off the patio, smashed three snails sucking paint from the house (disgusting but fun), tied a bundle of newspapers, put away toys, and, finally, seeing that almost everything was done and the sun was not too high, started waxing the car.

My brother joined me with an old gym sock, and our sister watched us while sucking on a cherry Kool-Aid ice cube. The liquid wax drooled onto the sock, and we began to swirl the white slop on the chrome. My arms ached from buffing, which though less boring than weeding, was harder. But the beauty was evident. The shine, hurting our eyes and glinting like an armful of dimes, brought Mother out. She looked around the yard and said, “Pretty good.” She winced at the grille and returned inside the house.

We began to wax the paint. My brother applied the liquid and I followed him rubbing hard in wide circles as we moved around the car. I began to hurry because my arms were hurting and my stung foot looked like a water balloon. We were working around the trunk when Rick pounded on the bottle of wax. He squeezed the bottle and it sneezed a few more white drops.

We looked at each other. “There’s some on the sock,” I said. “Let’s keep going.”

We polished and buffed, sweat weeping on our brows. We got scared when we noticed that the gym sock was now blue. The paint was coming off. Our sister fit ice cubes into our mouths and we worked harder, more intently, more dedicated to the car and our mother. We ran the sock over the chrome, trying to pick up extra wax. But there wasn’t enough to cover the entire car. Only half got waxed, but we thought it was better than nothing and went inside for lunch. After lunch, we returned outside with tasty sandwiches.

Rick and I nearly jumped. The waxed side of the car was foggy white. We took a rag and began to polish vigorously and nearly in tears, but the fog wouldn’t come off. I blamed Rick and he blamed me. Debra stood at the window, not wanting to get involved. Now, not only would we not go to the movies, but Mom would surely snap a branch from the plum tree and chase us around the yard.

Mom came out and looked at us with hands on her aproned hips. Finally, she said, “You boys worked so hard.” She turned on the garden hose and washed the car. That night we did go to the drive-in. The first feature was about nothing, and the second feature, starring Jerry Lewis, was Cinderella. I tried to stay awake. I kept a wad of homemade popcorn in my cheek and laughed when Jerry Lewis fit golf tees in his nose. I rubbed my watery eyes. I laughed and looked at my mom. I promised myself I would remember that scene with the golf tees and promised myself not to work so hard the coming Saturday. Twenty minutes into the movie, I fell asleep with one hand in the popcorn.