

Shells By : Mrs. Crosby

Have you ever lost a loved one? Losing someone you love is very painful. It may take a long time for your heart to heal. But if you let the people around you help, you can find happiness once again. In the story Shells, by Eve Bunting, the main character Michael has a broken heart because he lost both of his parents. This is a story about how a person can heal and learn to open up and love again.

In the beginning, Michael is sad and his heart is closed. He is sad because he lost both of his parents and had to move in with his Aunt Esther. At first, they did not get along at all. For example, Aunt Esther and Michael yelled at each other. Aunt Esther said, "You hate it here and you hate me!" This shows that both of them were upset about the situation and were not getting along. The truth is, Michael did hate her. She was nothing like his parents. He thought she was selfish, prejudice, and complained a lot. I think he was just missing his parents and was taking his anger out on her. At school he didn't have any friends and his teachers didn't even notice him. His heart was closed to everyone around him.

Later in the story, Michael's heart slowly starts to open. For example, one day Michael came home with a hermit crab. I think

he did this because he was lonely. When he got home, he didn't find Aunt Esther on the phone complaining about him. Instead, she was drinking tea and seemed cheerful. This shows that Aunt Esther heart might be ready to start opening too! Michael wanted to show someone, so he shared his hermit crab with his aunt. Her reaction surprised him. She acted interested and said, "It's fine with me if you keep him." I think this proves that both characters are slowly letting go of their hurt and moving on.

Finally, Michael and Aunt Esther are both ready to open their hearts! For example, Michael came home from school one day and found Aunt Esther in his room staring at his hermit crab Sluggo. She surprised him when she said, "I think he needs a companion. Where is the pet store?" I think this symbolizes that she is changing. She is talking with Michael and doing something fun. I also think that this symbolizes that they both need a companion themselves, and that they are ready to care for and love something again. They went to the pet store and came home with a 30 gallon tank and twenty hermit crabs, and different size shells. Still in shock and overwhelmed at the new Aunt Esther and what just happened, Michael gets busy getting everything together. When that was all done, Aunt Esther flopped down onto the couch next to Michael and said, "Oh, what would your mother think, Michael, if she could see this mess

we've gotten ourselves into!" At the mention of his mother's name, Michael gets sad. Aunt Esther quickly apologizes, hugs him and says, "Oh, you must hate me." Michael responds by saying, "No, Aunt Esther, I don't hate you." In the beginning, he did hate her, and now he honestly doesn't. This proves that Michael's heart is healing and is open and ready to let love in again!

In Shells, the author show us that a broken heart can heal over time. Life is hard, and is sometimes unfair. Losing a loved one can be devastating. This story gives us hope. If your heart is broken, learn from Michael. Let those around you who are trying to help you in. At the end of the story, Sluggo the hermit was coming out of his shell. Michael did, and if you are hurting, I hope that you can come out of your shell too.

Follow Your Dreams
A Literary Essay about Dancing in the Wings
By Mrs. Cole's Class

It is important to have big dreams to follow across your life. However, just because you have big dreams doesn't mean it will be easy to achieve them. There may be times when you have to persevere and your dreams might seem far away or impossible. Sassy, in *Dancing in the Wings*, is a character who wants to achieve her dream of being a dancer on a big stage in a summer festival. Some people might think *Dancing in the Wings* is a story about a girl who wants to be a dancer but I believe it is a message about how people should never give up on achieving their dreams no matter how much they may struggle.

One way the story *Dancing in the Wings*, teaches us that people should never give up on their dreams is how Sassy gets embarrassed but she doesn't let it stop her from dancing. In the story *Dancing in the Wings* the text says, "I couldn't hide the tears I felt welling up in my eyes, so I just grabbed my dance bag and ran into the parking lot." This proves that even though Sassy was embarrassed during dance class she continued to dance and pursue her dream of becoming a dancer. The story *Dancing in the Wings* teaches us that we should never give up on our dreams even when we get embarrassed. One example of this is when Sassy gets made fun of in dance class. She runs out of the dance class as quickly as possible. This shows that even though she gets embarrassed she still returns to dance class and ends up trying out at the audition. Sassy didn't let getting embarrassed stop her from dancing.

Another way the story *Dancing in the Wings*, teaches us that people should never give up on their dreams is how Sassy makes mistakes but she continues to dance. Sassy makes the mistake of wearing a yellow tutu, Sassy makes the mistake of holding her leg up too high, and Sassy makes the mistake of leaping in the air beyond the counts of the music. Even though Sassy made these mistakes she still stayed through the entire try out. This proves that Sassy is focused on making her dreams come true. Sassy makes many mistakes in dance class. The other students notice and sometimes even comment on her mistakes. Sassy did not just give up or let the other girls get to her. She continues to dance even though she made mistakes. This shows that even though Sassy makes mistakes she continues to dance.

The last way, the story, *Dancing in the Wings*, teaches us that people should never give up on their dreams is how Sassy is teased but she never stops dancing. Sassy felt so embarrassed during dance class. She went to bed that night dreaming of her big day on the real stage and wakes up the next morning excited to audition. Other student dancers might not have the courage to audition after being embarrassed. Even though Sassy is embarrassed about her size she keeps her dream alive by showing up for her audition. This shows that Sassy is learning that keeping dreams alive might be hard but letting them die might be even harder. In the text *Dancing in the Wings*, Mona said, "Oh please, she'll never make it. They said talent, not a tyrannosaurus." This is evidence that Sassy gets teased but she never gives up on her dream of becoming a dancer.

Some people might think *Dancing in the Wings* is a story about a girl who wants to be a dancer but I believe it is a message about how people should never give up on achieving their dreams no matter how much they may struggle.

A Literary Essay
Based on the Short Story
"Taco Head" from The Tequila Worm By Viola Canales

In the short story, "Taco Head" by Viola Canales, a girl named Sofia wants to be like the other kids at school, but she is embarrassed because she is different. She likes who she is, but wants to fit in at school. Sofia learns an important lesson from Coach Clarke that above all, you need to believe in yourself.

One time Sofia learns to believe in herself is when Coach Clarke eats lunch with her in the cafeteria. For example, Sofia is very embarrassed and afraid to eat her taco lunch at school. She wants to eat school lunches or sandwiches on white bread. Kids at her school call Mexican Americans "beaners." When Sofia tries to hid her tacos, a girl notices her and starts yelling, "Taco Head, Taco Head!" Sofia wishes the ground would open up and swallow her. When Coach Clarke hears what is happening, she tells Sofia not to pay attention to them. She invites Sofia to eat lunch with her in the cafeteria. Coach Clarke shares her white bread sandwich, and Sofia realizes that her tacos taste better. In this way, Coach Clarke helps Sofia feel like she can believe in herself.

Another time Sofia learns to believe in herself is when Coach Clarke inspires Sofia to beat the bully with her brains. For example, Sofia already gets good grades at school, but she wants to study even harder. Coach Clarke arranges for Sofia to study in the library after lunch instead of going to the playground. Even though she wants to get back at the girl who teases her, Coach Clarke inspires Sofia to do it by using her brains instead. If she works hard and learns to be the best she can be, she will have the advantage. In this way, Sofia learns to believe in herself.

In conclusion, Sofia learns to believe in herself. Coach Clarke helps Sofia to realize that she can eat her lunch proudly and be the best student she can be, and she will be able to stand up for herself. Believing in yourself is important. In my life I want to be the kind of person who takes pride in who I am, who always reaches to do my best, and who believes in myself.

Introduction:

Have you ever sat there, with a crowd of people singing "Happy Birthday" to you, and you just don't feel any older? That's how Rachel feels in the short story, "Eleven" by Sandra Cisneros. Rachel is eleven, but is struggling to stand up for herself.

First reason with evidence:

Rachel struggles to stand up for herself because she is feeling all of the ages inside of eleven. Rachel said, "When you're eleven, you're also ten, and nine, and eight, and six, and five, and four, and three and two, and one." Rachel says this because you can still have many emotions inside of you from those ages, even though you are eleven. Rachel also feels all of the ages inside of eleven when she says, "Some days you might need to sit on your mama's lap because you're scared, and that's the part of you that's five." Rachel proves that sometimes you might struggle to act and feel grown up. She's already feeling unconfident herself at the start of the story.

Second reason with evidence:

She struggles to stand up for herself when Sylvia Saldivar says, "I think the sweater is Rachel's. A moment that explains this, is when Rachel opened her mouth but nothing came out. She also said, "That's not, I don't, you're not...Not mine," I finally say in a little voice that was maybe me when I was four.

Third reason with evidence:

Rachel struggles to stand up for herself when the teacher made her put the sweater on. Rachel struggles to stand up for herself when she is forced to put the sweater on. Instead of telling Mrs. Price that the sweater is not hers, Rachel reluctantly puts on the sweater. She put the itchy, germey, cottage-cheese smelling sweater on one sleeve at a time. Rachel felt that the sweater was actually hurting her. If she would have stood up for herself, she would not have had to endure this torture. "Not mine, not mine, not mine" This proves that Rachel still struggles to stand up for herself, even to the teacher.

Conclusion:

Like I said before, Rachel struggles to stand up for herself. Don't be like Rachel.