

Comprehension

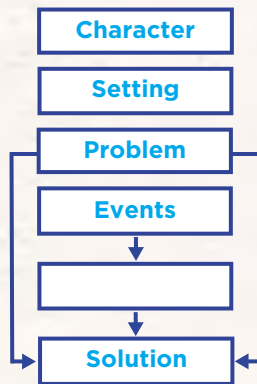
Genre

Fiction tells a story about characters and events that are not real.

Summarize

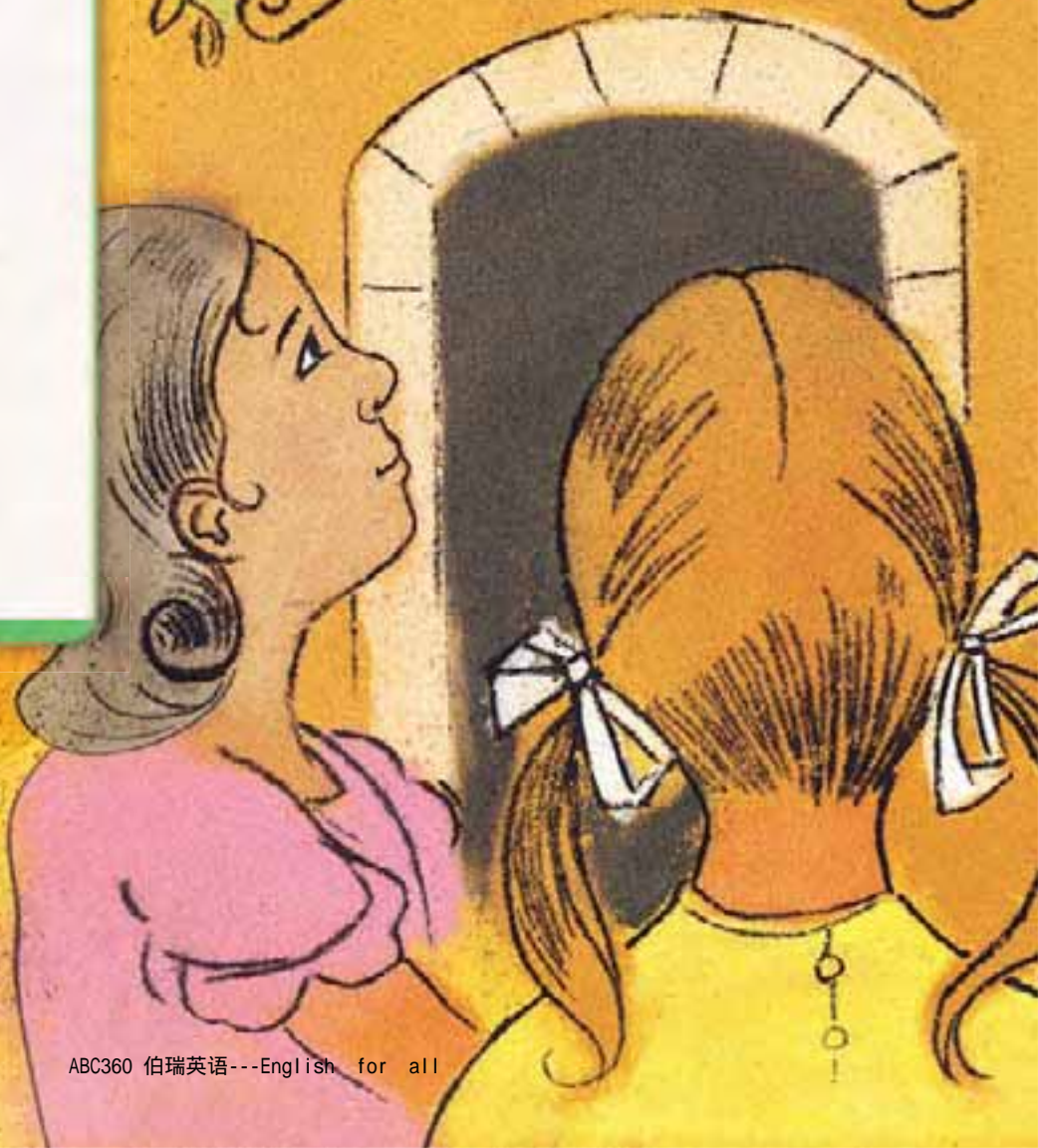
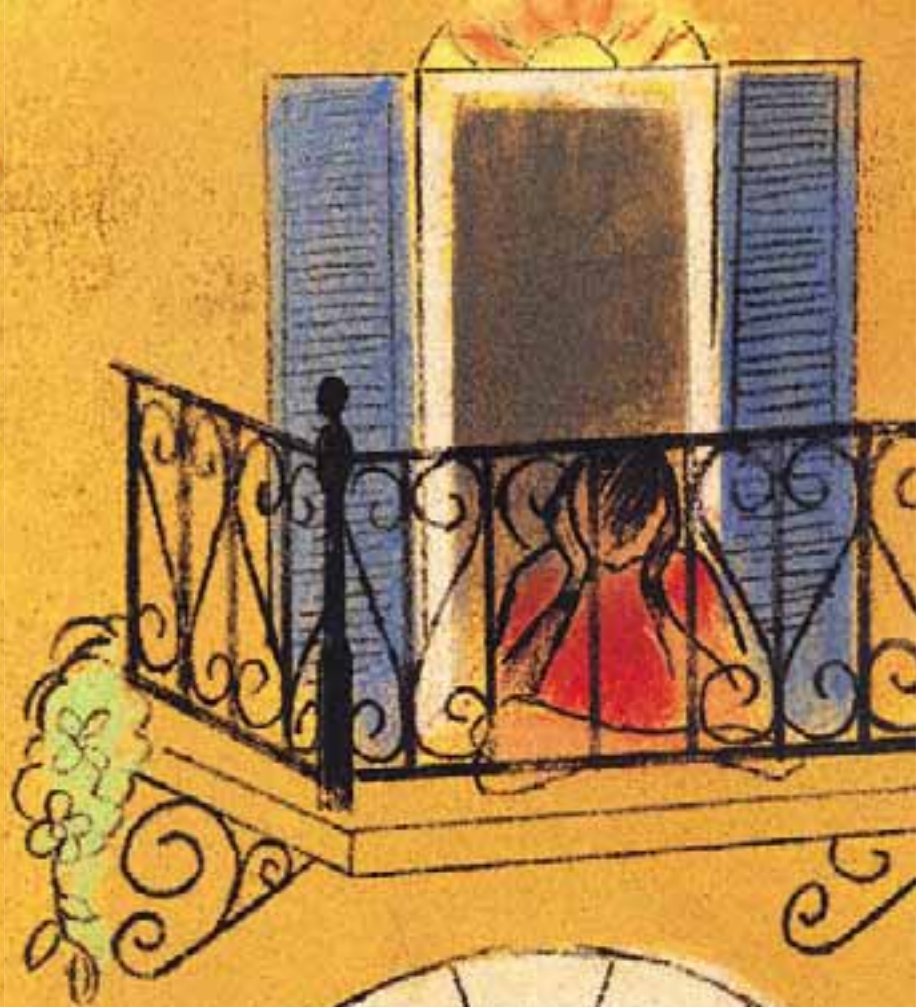
Problem and Solution

As you read, use your Story Map.



Read to Find Out

How do the sisters help their friend José Manuel?





The Night of San Juan

written by Lulu Delacre
illustrated by Edel Rodriguez




Award
Winning
Selection

Back in the 1940s, in Puerto Rico's walled city of Old San Juan, everybody knew everybody else. We neighborhood children played freely together on the narrow streets, while from windows and balconies adults kept a watchful eye on us. It was only my lonely friend José Manuel who was **forbidden** from joining us.

"Look, Evelyn," whispered Amalia. "He's up there again, watching us play."

Aitza and I looked up. There he was, sitting on his balcony floor. He peered sadly down at us through the wrought iron railing, while his grandma's soap opera **blared** from the radio inside. No matter how hard José Manuel tried, he could not convince his grandma to let him play out on the street.

"Too many crazy drivers! Too hard, the cobblestones! ¡*Muy peligroso!*" His grandma would shake her head and say, "Too dangerous!"



Besides her fear of danger on the street, José Manuel's grandma kept to herself and never smiled, so most of us were afraid of her. That is, until my sisters and I changed all that.

"One day," Amalia suddenly announced, "I'm going to ask his grandma to let him come down and play." If anyone would have the courage to do that, it was my little sister Amalia. Even though she was only seven, she was also the most daring of the three of us.

We never knew what she would do next. In fact, at that very moment I could see a **mischievous** grin spreading across her freckled face as two **elegant** women turned the corner of Calle Sol. Once they strolled down the street in front of us, Amalia swiftly snuck up behind them and flipped their skirts up to expose their lace-trimmed slips.

"¡Sinvergüenza!" the women cried out. "Little rascal!"

We could hardly hold our laughter in. We all looked up to make sure none of the neighbors had seen her. If anyone had, we would surely have been scolded as soon as we got home. News traveled fast in our neighborhood.

Luckily, only José Manuel was watching us with amusement in his wistful eyes. Grateful for an audience, Amalia smiled at him, curtsied, and ran down the street toward the old cathedral with us chasing after her. I couldn't help but feel sorry for my friend as we left him behind.



Problem and Solution

How do you think Aitza, Amalia, and Evelyn will try and solve José Manuel's problem?







There was hardly any sea breeze that day, and running in the humidity made us quite hot.

“Let’s get some coconut sherbet,” said Amalia, peeling her damp red curls away from her sweaty neck.

“*Sí, sí!*” we agreed, and we chattered excitedly about our plans for that night all the way to the ice-cream vendor’s wooden cart by the harbor.

It was June twenty-third, and that night was the Night of San Juan. For this holiday, the tradition was to go to the beach, and at exactly midnight, everyone would walk backward into the sea. People say that doing this three times on the Night of San Juan brings good luck. I thought of my friend José Manuel. Perhaps if he did this with us, his luck would change, and his grandma would allow him to play with us outside on the street.

I thought about this as we bought our coconut sherbet and then ate it perched on the knobby roots of the ancient tree above the port. Excitement stirred in me while the distant ships disappeared over the horizon.

“How can we get José Manuel to go to the beach tonight?” I asked my sisters.

“Evelyn, you know very well his grandma will never let him go,” Aitza said. “You know what she will say—”

“*¡Muy peligroso!*” Aitza and Amalia teased at once. “Too dangerous!”

It was getting close to dinnertime, and we knew we had to be home soon if we wanted our parents to take us to the beach that night. So we took the shortcut back across the main square. In the plaza, groups of men played dominoes while the women sat by the fountain and **gossiped**. Back on the street we heard the vegetable vendor chanting:

“*¡Vendo yuca, plátanos, tomates!*”

He came around every evening to sell his fresh cassava, plantains, tomatoes, and other fruits and vegetables.

Leaning from her balcony, a big woman lowered a basket that was tied by a cord to the rail. In it was the money that the vendor replaced with two green plantains. As we approached our street I saw José Manuel and his grandma on the second floor. She gave José Manuel money and went back inside. He was about to lower his basket when I had an idea. Maybe there was a way we could ask him to join us.



“What if we send José Manuel a note in his grandma’s basket inviting him to go to the beach with us tonight?” I offered.

“It will never work,” Aitza said. “His grandma will not like it. We could get into trouble.”

“Then we could ask her personally,” I said.

“But what excuse could we use to go up there?” said Aitza. “Nobody ever shows up uninvited at José Manuel’s house.”

“Wait! I know what we can do,” Amalia said, jumping up and down. “We’ll tell him to drop something. Then we’ll go up to return it.”

Even though Aitza was very **reluctant**, we convinced her to try our plan. We wrote the note and asked the vegetable vendor to please place it in José Manuel’s basket next to the vegetables. We impatiently waited on the corner as we watched. When he opened the note, he looked puzzled. He took the tomatoes he had purchased in to his grandmother. Soon he returned with his little red ball. He had just sat down to play when suddenly the ball fell from the balcony. It bounced several times, rolled down the hill, and bumped into a wall. Amalia flew after it. “I got it!” she called triumphantly, offering me her find.

With José Manuel’s ball in my hand we climbed up the worn stairs of his pink apartment house. And while Aitza and I stood nervously outside his apartment trying to catch our breath, Amalia knocked loudly on the wooden door. With a squeaking sound it slowly opened, and there stood José Manuel’s grandma wearing a frown as grim as her black widow’s dress.





“¿Sí?” she said. “How can I help you?”

Aitza and I looked at each other. She looked as afraid as I felt. But without **hesitation**, Amalia took the little ball from my hand and proudly showed it to José Manuel’s grandma. I wanted to run, but a glimpse of José Manuel’s hopeful expression made me stay.

“This belongs to José Manuel,” Amalia declared. “We came to return it.” Amalia took a deep breath, then took a step forward. “We also wanted to know if he could come to the beach tonight with our family.”

Aitza and I meekly stood behind Amalia.

“The beach?” José Manuel’s grandma asked, surprised, as she took the little ball from Amalia’s palm.

“Y-y-yes,” I stuttered. “Tonight is the Night of San Juan, and our parents take us to the beach every year.”

José Manuel’s grandma scowled at us. How silly to think she would ever let him go. I suddenly felt embarrassed and turned to leave, pulling both sisters with me by their arms.

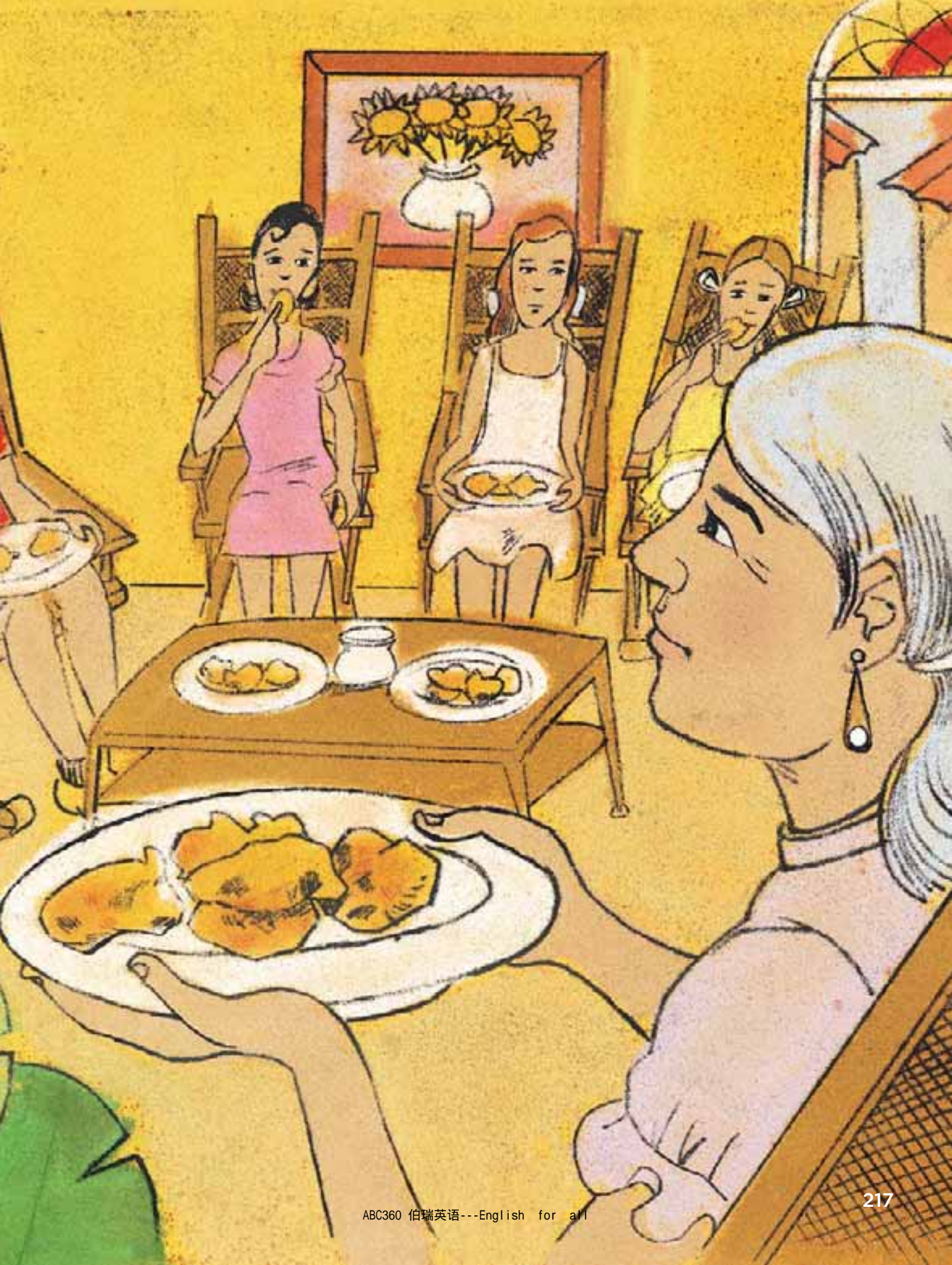
“Wait,” we heard her raspy voice behind us. “Come inside for a *surullito de maíz*.”

It was then that I smelled the aroma of the corn fritters that was escaping from the kitchen. José Manuel’s grandma was making *surullitos* for dinner.

“Oh, yes!” Amalia followed her in without a thought. And before we knew it, we were all seated in the living room rocking chairs next to José Manuel, eating the most delicious corn fritters that we dipped in garlicky sauce. Somehow, sitting there with José Manuel, his grandma seemed less scary. After we finished, José Manuel’s grandma thanked us for our invitation and said she would let us know.

José Manuel smiled.







When we got home we found Mami waiting with her hands on her hips. She had just hung up the phone with José Manuel’s grandma. She had reason to be upset. Not only were we late for supper, but in our excitement we had forgotten to ask for permission before inviting José Manuel to the beach. We all looked down, not knowing what to do or say.

“It wasn’t my fault. It was Evelyn and Amalia’s idea,” volunteered Aitza, the coward.

“*Bendito*, Mami,” I said. “Don’t punish us, we forgot.”

“Forgot?” Mami asked.

“*Sí*, Mami,” we all said at once. “We are sorry.”

“Actually it was very nice of you girls to invite him,” said Mami. “But please remember to ask me first next time.”



Problem and Solution

What is the problem the girls face when they return home? How is it solved?

Late that night the whole family went to the beach as was our tradition on the Night of San Juan. But this time was special, for we had José Manuel with us.

The full moon shone against the velvet sky. The tide was high, and the beach swarmed with young revelers who, like us, had waited all year for this night's **irresistible** dip in the dark ocean. The moment we reached the water we all turned around, held hands, and jumped backward into the rushing waves. Amalia stumbled forward, Aitza joyfully splashed back, and so did I as I let go of my sister's hand. But my other hand remained tightly clasped to José Manuel's. When my friend and I took our third plunge into the sea, I wished good luck would come to him, and that from then on, his grandma would allow him to play with us out on the street. And as a wave lifted us high in the water, I suddenly knew this wish would come true.



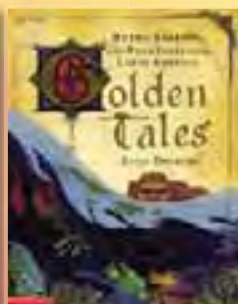
Travel with Lulu Delacre



Lulu Delacre was born in Puerto Rico. While her parents were at work, she stayed with her grandmother in an old pink house. She drew pictures on sheets of white paper, and saved them in the corner of her closet. When Lulu was ten, she had her first real art lesson, and she has been writing and drawing ever since. Lulu is happiest when she is telling stories about growing up on an island of blazing sunshine, and of warm summer nights surrounded by friends, family, and traditions.

Other books by Lulu Delacre:

The Bossy Gallito and *Golden Tales: Myths, Legends, and Folktales from Latin America*



Find out more about
Lulu Delacre at

www.macmillanmh.com

Author's Purpose

What was the author's main purpose for writing this story? Did Lulu Delacre want to entertain readers or inform them about the Night of San Juan and its traditions? Explain.

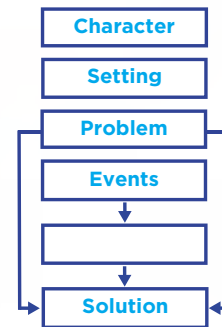


Comprehension Check



Summarize

Use your Story Map to create a summary of *The Night of San Juan*. Explain Evelyn's problem and the steps she and her sisters took to solve it.



Think and Compare

1. What was the biggest problem Evelyn had to overcome to get José Manuel to join her and her sisters? Explain your answer.
Summarize: Problem and Solution
2. Reread page 219. Why does Evelyn hold onto José Manuel's hand during their **irresistible** dip in the ocean? Include details from the story to support your answer. **Analyze**
3. Would you choose a person like Evelyn to be your friend? Why or why not? Explain your answer. **Evaluate**
4. Amalia and the other children fear José Manuel's grandmother, yet Amalia finds the courage to ask her an important question. Describe why sometimes it is important to speak up in a difficult situation. **Analyze**
5. Reread "Johanna in Jamaica" on pages 206–207. Both Evelyn and Johanna want to change an adult's mind about something. Compare the strategies each of them uses. Use details from both selections.

Reading/Writing Across Texts

