

## Amigo Brothers

Short Story by Piri Thomas

VIDEO TRAILER



KEYWORD: HML7-322

# What happens when friends **COMPETE?**



**READING 3** Analyze and make inferences about theme and genre in different cultural and contemporary contexts. **3C** Analyze how place and time influence the theme or message of a literary work.

We face competition all the time, whether we are competing for someone's attention or for the best grade. And while some competitions are friendly and even fun, others can be brutal. In "Amigo Brothers," best friends Antonio and Felix find out if their deep friendship can survive an explosive competition.

**QUICKWRITE** Jot down a list of times when you competed with one or more friends. When you are done, review your list. Decide which of those experiences helped or hurt your friendship. Reflect on one of those experiences in a journal entry.



### LITERARY ANALYSIS: THEME AND SETTING

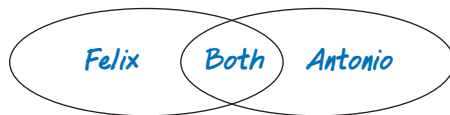
A story's **theme** is a message about life or human nature that the writer wants readers to understand. The **setting**, or the time and place of the action, is often a key element of the theme. To determine how the setting influences the theme, note the following:

- details that give clues to time and place
- the way the setting affects the thoughts and actions of the characters
- the importance of the setting in the conflict and how the conflict is resolved

As you read "Amigo Brothers," keep these tips in mind in order to identify the story's theme.

### READING SKILL: COMPARE AND CONTRAST

Comparing and contrasting characters can help you better understand a story. When you **compare** two or more people or things, you look for ways they are similar. When you **contrast** them, you look for ways they are different. As you read "Amigo Brothers," note similarities and differences between Felix and Antonio in a Venn diagram like the one shown.



### VOCABULARY IN CONTEXT

The boldfaced terms help tell this story about **competition**. Restate each sentence, using a different word or words.

1. He received a **barrage** of criticism for his comments.
2. The report shows the **devastating** effects of the illness.
3. She considered the offer **pensively**.
4. The crowd burst into a **torrent** of laughter.
5. He can't stand her **perpetual** complaining.
6. We were surprised at their **unbridled** enthusiasm.
7. They worked hard to **dispel** my concerns.
8. It was a noisy classroom, where **bedlam** reigned.
9. His arms began to **flail** as he lost his balance.
10. She has remarkable **clarity** for a person her age.



Complete the activities in your **Reader/Writer Notebook**.

## Piri Thomas

born 1928

### A Troubled Beginning

In the 1950s, Piri Thomas realized that he was getting into too much trouble with the law and needed to turn his life around. He said to himself, "Man, where am I at? I got a mind; let's see if I can use it." He says he then "jumped into books." For him, writing became a tool to discover who he really was and to portray his Puerto Rican and African-American heritage.

### A Rich Heritage

Thomas's writings are all set where he grew up, in New York City. He writes about neighborhoods that are heavily populated with Puerto Ricans and African Americans, such as Spanish Harlem and the Lower East Side of Manhattan. Thomas's writing celebrates the strength and determination of the people in his community.

### BACKGROUND TO THE STORY

#### Golden Gloves

In this story, Felix and Antonio compete to participate in a Golden Gloves tournament, a famous amateur boxing competition. Past winners who went on to fame and fortune include Sugar Ray Robinson, George Foreman, and Muhammad Ali.

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# Amigo BROTHERS

PIRI THOMAS

## Analyze Visuals ▶

What do the colors in this painting make you think of?

**A**ntonio Cruz and Felix Vargas were both seventeen years old. They were so together in friendship that they felt themselves to be brothers. They had known each other since childhood, growing up on the lower east side of Manhattan in the same tenement building<sup>1</sup> on Fifth Street between Avenue A and Avenue B.

Antonio was fair, lean, and lanky, while Felix was dark, short, and husky. Antonio's hair was always falling over his eyes, while Felix wore his black hair in a natural Afro style.

Each youngster had a dream of someday becoming lightweight champion  
10 of the world. Every chance they had the boys worked out, sometimes at the Boys Club on 10th Street and Avenue A and sometimes at the pro's gym on 14th Street. Early morning sunrises would find them running along the East River Drive, wrapped in sweatshirts, short towels around their necks, and handkerchiefs Apache style around their foreheads. **A**

While some youngsters were into street negatives, Antonio and Felix slept, ate, rapped, and dreamt positive. Between them, they had a collection of *Fight* magazines second to none, plus a scrapbook filled with torn tickets to every boxing match they had ever attended and some  
20 clippings of their own. If asked a question about any given fighter, they would immediately zip out from their memory banks divisions,<sup>2</sup> weights, records of fights, knockouts, technical knockouts, and draws or losses.

Each had fought many bouts representing their community and had won two gold-plated medals plus a silver and bronze medallion. The difference was in their style. Antonio's lean form and long reach made him the better boxer, while Felix's short and muscular frame

## **A** COMPARE AND CONTRAST

Reread lines 1–14 and use your Venn diagram to note similarities and differences between the two boys. Add more notes to your diagram as you continue reading.

1. **tenement building:** a rundown apartment building in which mostly poor families live.

2. **divisions:** weight groups into which boxers are separated.





made him the better slugger. Whenever they had met in the ring for sparring sessions,<sup>3</sup> it had always been hot and heavy.

Now, after a series of elimination bouts,<sup>4</sup> they had been informed that they were to meet each other in the division finals that were scheduled for the seventh of August, two weeks away—the winner to represent the Boys Club in the Golden Gloves Championship Tournament.

The two boys continued to run together along the East River Drive. But even when joking with each other, they both sensed a wall rising between them.

One morning less than a week before their bout, they met as usual for their daily workout. They fooled around with a few jabs at the air, slapped skin, and then took off, running lightly along the dirty East River's edge.

Antonio glanced at Felix, who kept his eyes purposely straight ahead, pausing from time to time to do some fancy leg work while throwing one-twos followed by upper cuts to an imaginary jaw. Antonio then beat the air with a **barrage** of body blows and short **devastating** lefts with an overhand, jawbreaking right.

After a mile or so, Felix puffed and said, “Let’s stop for awhile, bro. I think we both got something to say to each other.”

Antonio nodded. It was not natural to be acting as though nothing unusual was happening when two ace boon buddies were going to be blasting each other within a few short days.

They rested their elbows on the railing separating them from the river. Antonio wiped his face with his short towel. The sunrise was now creating day.

Felix leaned heavily on the river’s railing and stared across to the shores of Brooklyn. Finally, he broke the silence.

“Man. I don’t know how to come out with it.”

Antonio helped. “It’s about our fight, right?”

“Yeah, right.” Felix’s eyes squinted at the rising orange sun.

“I’ve been thinking about it too, *panín*.<sup>5</sup> In fact, since we found out it was going to be me and you, I’ve been awake at night, pulling punches<sup>6</sup> on you, trying not to hurt you.”

“Same here. It ain’t natural not to think about the fight. I mean, we both are *cheverote*<sup>7</sup> fighters, and we both want to win. But only one of us can win. There ain’t no draws in the eliminations.”

## SOCIAL STUDIES CONNECTION



Antonio and Felix grew up on the Lower East Side of Manhattan.

**barrage** (bə-rāzh') *n.*  
a rapid, heavy attack

**devastating**  
(dēv'ə-stā'ting) *adj.*  
very effective in causing pain or destruction  
**devastate** *v.*

3. **sparring sessions**: practice boxing matches.

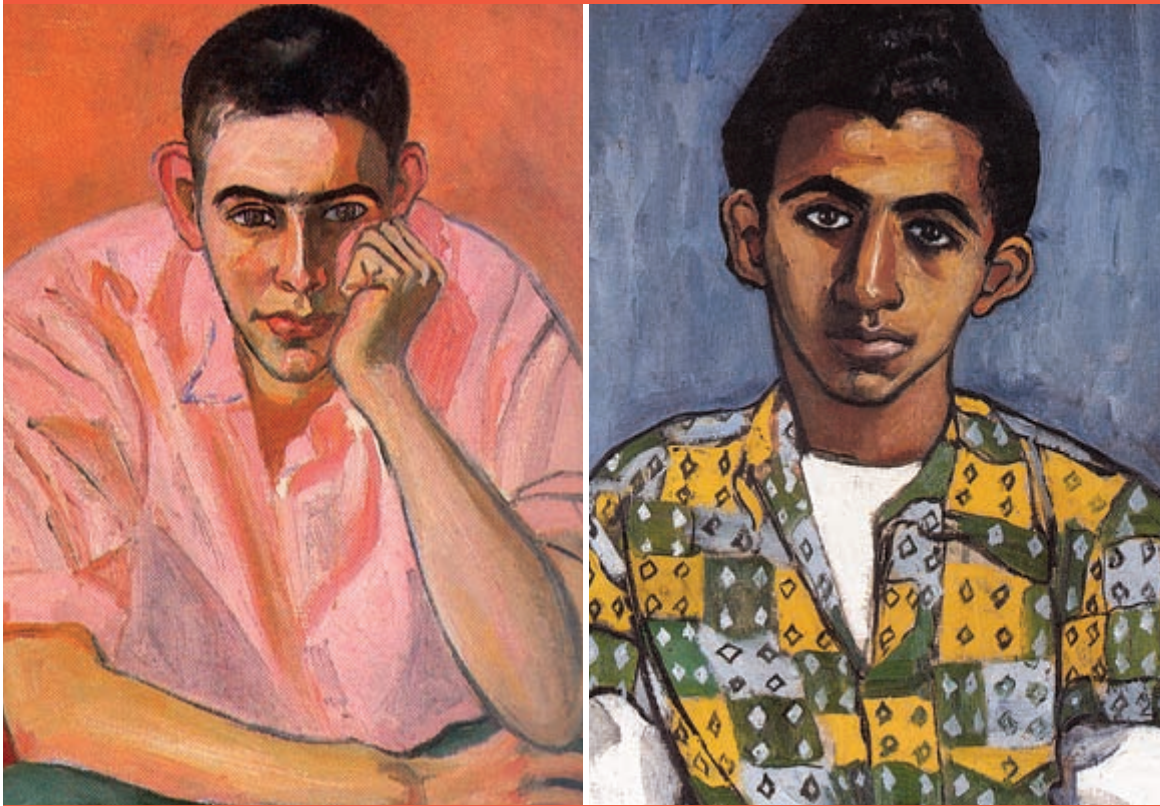
4. **elimination bouts**: matches to determine which boxers advance in a competition.

5. **panín** (pā-nēn') *American Spanish*: pal; buddy.

6. **pulling punches**: holding back in delivering blows.

7. **cheverote** (chě-vě-rô'tě) *American Spanish*: great or fantastic.





Left Detail of *Moose*, (1956), Alice Neel. © Estate of Alice Neel. Courtesy Robert Miller Gallery, New York. Right Detail of *Call Me Joe* (1955), Alice Neel. Oil on canvas, 34" x 32". © Estate of Alice Neel. Courtesy Robert Miller Gallery, New York.

Felix tapped Antonio gently on the shoulder. “I don’t mean to sound like I’m bragging, bro. But I wanna win, fair and square.”

Antonio nodded quietly. “Yeah. We both know that in the ring the better man wins. Friend or no friend, brother or no . . .”

Felix finished it for him. “Brother. Tony, let’s promise something right here. Okay?”

“If it’s fair, *hermano*,<sup>8</sup> I’m for it.” Antonio admired the courage of a tugboat pulling a barge five times its welterweight<sup>9</sup> size.

70 “It’s fair, Tony. When we get into the ring, it’s gotta be like we never met. We gotta be like two heavy strangers that want the same thing, and only one can have it. You understand, don’tcha?”

“Sí, I know.” Tony smiled. “No pulling punches. We go all the way.”

“Yeah, that’s right. Listen, Tony. Don’t you think it’s a good idea if we don’t see each other until the day of the fight? I’m going to stay with my Aunt Lucy in the Bronx.<sup>10</sup> I can use Gleason’s Gym for working out. My manager says he got some sparring partners with more or less your style.” **B**

8. **hermano** (ě-r-mă’nhô) *Spanish*: brother.

9. **welterweight**: one of boxing’s weight divisions, with a maximum weight of 147 pounds.

10. **the Bronx**: a borough of New York City, north of Manhattan.

### ▲ Analyze Visuals

**Compare and contrast** these pictures with your own mental images of Felix and Antonio.



TEKS 3C

### **B** THEME AND SETTING

The **setting** of a story is when and where it takes place. The setting can offer clues about a story’s theme. What details offer clues to the setting? What does the setting have to do with the action in this story?

**pensively** (pĕn'siv-lē)  
*adv.* thoughtfully

Tony scratched his nose **pensively**. “Yeah, it would be better for our heads.” He held out his hand, palm upward. “Deal?”

80 “Deal.” Felix lightly slapped open skin.

“Ready for some more running?” Tony asked lamely.

“Naw, bro. Let’s cut it here. You go on. I kinda like to get things together in my head.”

“You ain’t worried, are you?” Tony asked. ◆

“No way, man.” Felix laughed out loud. “I got too much smarts for that. I just think it’s cooler if we split right here. After the fight, we can get it together again like nothing ever happened.”

The *amigo*<sup>11</sup> brothers were not ashamed to hug each other tightly.

90 “Guess you’re right. Watch yourself, Felix. I hear there’s some pretty heavy dudes up in the Bronx. *Suavecito*,<sup>12</sup> okay?”

“Okay. You watch yourself too, *sabe*?”<sup>13</sup>

Tony jogged away. Felix watched his friend disappear from view, throwing rights and lefts. Both fighters had a lot of psyching up to do before the big fight.

The days in training passed much too slowly. Although they kept out of each other’s way, they were aware of each other’s progress via the ghetto grapevine.<sup>14</sup>

The evening before the big fight, Tony made his way to the roof of his tenement. In the quiet early dark, he peered over the ledge.

100 Six stories below, the lights of the city blinked, and the sounds of cars mingled with the curses and the laughter of children in the street.

He tried not to think of Felix, feeling he had succeeded in psyching his mind. But only in the ring would he really know. To spare Felix hurt, he would have to knock him out, early and quick.

Up in the South Bronx, Felix decided to take in a movie in an effort to keep Antonio’s face away from his fists. The flick was *The Champion* with Kirk Douglas, the third time Felix was seeing it.

110 The champion was getting beat, his face being pounded into raw, wet hamburger. His eyes were cut, jagged, bleeding, one eye swollen, the other almost shut. He was saved only by the sound of the bell.

Felix became the champ and Tony the challenger. ●

The movie audience was going out of its head, roaring in blood lust at the butchery going on. The champ hunched his shoulders, grunting and sniffing red blood back into his broken nose. The challenger, confident that he had the championship in the bag, threw a left. The champ countered with a dynamite right that exploded into the challenger’s brains.

### ◆ GRAMMAR IN CONTEXT

Reread lines 80–84. Notice the placement of the **quotation marks**. What does Felix say in these lines?

### ● THEME AND SETTING

An **internal conflict** is a struggle within a character’s mind. Setting can be important even to this type of conflict. Read lines 102–111. What is Antonio’s internal conflict? How does the setting influence his struggle?

11. *amigo* (ä-mē'gô) *Spanish*: friend.

12. *Suavecito* (swā-vĕ-sĕ'tô) *American Spanish*: Take it easy.

13. *sabe* (sä'bĕ) *Spanish*: you know.

14. **ghetto grapevine**: the chain of gossip that spreads through the neighborhood.

Felix's right arm felt the shock. Antonio's face, superimposed on the screen, was shattered and split apart by the awesome force of the killer blow. Felix saw himself in the ring, blasting Antonio against the ropes. 120 The champ had to be forcibly restrained. The challenger was allowed to crumble slowly to the canvas, a broken, bloody mess.

When Felix finally left the theatre, he had figured out how to psyche himself for tomorrow's fight. It was Felix the Champion vs. Antonio the Challenger.

He walked up some dark streets, deserted except for small pockets of wary-looking kids wearing gang colors. Despite the fact that he was Puerto Rican like them, they eyed him as a stranger to their turf. Felix did a last shuffle, bobbing and weaving, while letting loose a **torrent** of blows that would demolish whatever got in its way. It seemed to 130 impress the brothers, who went about their own business.

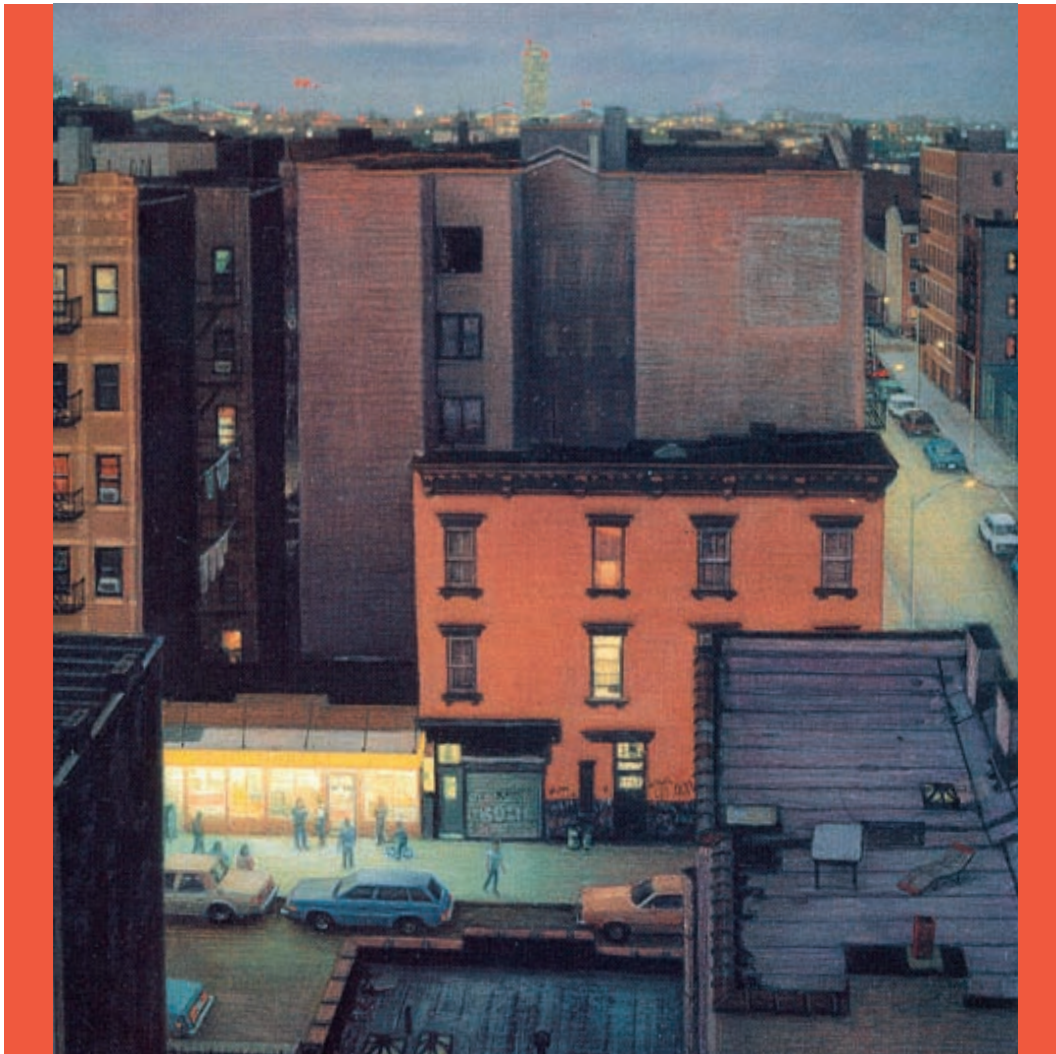
## Language Coach

### Multiple Meanings

Many English words have more than one meaning. Reread line 119. The word *ring* often refers to the sound created by a bell. It is also an area set off by ropes in which boxing events are held. Use **context clues** to determine the meaning in line 119.

**torrent** (tôr'ənt) *n.* a violent, rushing stream

Still Open (1994), Douglas Safranek. Egg tempera on panel, 4 5/8' x 4'. © Museum of the City of New York (95.6).



## ◀ Analyze Visuals

How does this picture **compare** with the description of the **setting** given in lines 98–101?



Finding no takers, Felix decided to split to his aunt's. Walking the streets had not relaxed him, neither had the fight flick. All it had done was to stir him up. He let himself quietly into his Aunt Lucy's apartment and went straight to bed, falling into a fitful sleep with sounds of the gong for Round One.

Antonio was passing some heavy time on his rooftop. How would the fight tomorrow affect his relationship with Felix? After all, fighting was like any other profession. Friendship had nothing to do with it. A gnawing doubt crept in. He cut negative thinking real quick by doing  
140 some speedy fancy dance steps, bobbing and weaving like mercury. The night air was blurred with **perpetual** motions of left hooks and right crosses. Felix, his *amigo* brother, was not going to be Felix at all in the ring. Just an opponent with another face. Antonio went to sleep, hearing the opening bell for the first round. Like his friend in the South Bronx, he prayed for victory via a quick, clean knockout in the first round.

**perpetual**  
(pə-r-pĕch'ōō-əl) *adj.*  
continual; unending

Large posters plastered all over the walls of local shops announced the fight between Antonio Cruz and Felix Vargas as the main bout.

The fight had created great interest in the neighborhood. Antonio and Felix were well liked and respected. Each had his own loyal following.  
150 Betting fever was high and ranged from a bottle of Coke to cold, hard cash on the line.

Antonio's fans bet with **unbridled** faith in his boxing skills. On the other side, Felix's admirers bet on his dynamite-packed fists.

**unbridled** (ŭn-brīd'id)  
*adj.* lacking restraint  
or control

Felix had returned to his apartment early in the morning of August 7th and stayed there, hoping to avoid seeing Antonio. He turned the radio on to salsa music sounds and then tried to read while waiting for word from his manager.

**T**he fight was scheduled to take place in Tompkins Square Park. It had been decided that the gymnasium of the Boys Club was not  
160 large enough to hold all the people who were sure to attend. In Tompkins Square Park, everyone who wanted could view the fight, whether from ringside or window fire escapes or tenement rooftops.

The morning of the fight, Tompkins Square was a beehive of activity with numerous workers setting up the ring, the seats, and the guest speakers' stand. The scheduled bouts began shortly after noon, and the park had begun filling up even earlier.

The local junior high school across from Tompkins Square Park served as the dressing room for all the fighters. Each was given a separate classroom, with desktops, covered with mats, serving as resting tables. Antonio  
170 thought he caught a glimpse of Felix waving to him from a room at the far end of the corridor. He waved back just in case it had been him. **D**

**D THEME AND SETTING**

What can you **infer** about Antonio's attitude toward Felix on the day of the fight?

The fighters changed from their street clothes into fighting gear. Antonio wore white trunks, black socks, and black shoes. Felix wore sky blue trunks, red socks, and white boxing shoes. Each had dressing gowns to match their fighting trunks with their names neatly stitched on the back.

The loudspeakers blared into the open window of the school. There were speeches by dignitaries, community leaders, and great boxers of yesteryear. Some were well prepared, some improvised on the spot.

They all carried the same message of great pleasure and honor at being  
180 part of such a historic event. This great day was in the tradition of champions emerging from the streets of the lower east side.

Interwoven with the speeches were the sounds of the other boxing events. After the sixth bout, Felix was much relieved when his trainer, Charlie, said, “Time change. Quick knockout. This is it. We’re on.”

Waiting time was over. Felix was escorted from the classroom by a dozen fans in white T-shirts with the word FELIX across their fronts.

Antonio was escorted down a different stairwell and guided through a roped-off path.

As the two climbed into the ring, the crowd exploded with a roar.  
190 Antonio and Felix both bowed gracefully and then raised their arms in acknowledgment.

Antonio tried to be cool, but even as the roar was in its first birth, he turned slowly to meet Felix’s eyes looking directly into his. Felix nodded his head and Antonio responded. And both as one, just as quickly, turned away to face his own corner. **E**

Bong, bong, bong. The roar turned to stillness.

“Ladies and Gentlemen, *Señores y Señoras*.”<sup>15</sup>

The announcer spoke slowly, pleased at his bilingual efforts.

“Now the moment we have all been waiting for—the main event between  
200 two fine young Puerto Rican fighters, products of our lower east side.”

“*Loisaida*,”<sup>16</sup> called out a member of the audience.

“In this corner, weighing 131 pounds, Felix Vargas. And in this corner, weighing 133 pounds, Antonio Cruz. The winner will represent the Boys Club in the tournament of champions, the Golden Gloves. There will be no draw. May the best man win.”

The cheering of the crowd shook the windowpanes of the old buildings surrounding Tompkins Square Park. At the center of the ring, the referee was giving instructions to the youngsters.

“Keep your punches up. No low blows. No punching on the back  
210 of the head. Keep your heads up. Understand. Let’s have a clean fight. Now shake hands and come out fighting.”

### **E** THEME AND SETTING

Reread lines 192–195. How do you think the boys feel at this moment? How does the setting influence the way the boys feel?

15. *Señores y Señoras* (sě-nyô'rěs ē sě-nyô'rās) *Spanish*: Ladies and Gentlemen.

16. *Loisaida* (loi-sī'dä) *American Spanish*: Lower East Side.

Both youngsters touched gloves and nodded. They turned and danced quickly to their corners. Their head towels and dressing gowns were lifted neatly from their shoulders by their trainers' nimble fingers. Antonio crossed himself. Felix did the same.

BONG! BONG! ROUND ONE. Felix and Antonio turned and faced each other squarely in a fighting pose. Felix wasted no time. He came in fast, head low, half hunched toward his right shoulder, and lashed out with a straight left. He missed a right cross as Antonio slipped the punch and countered with one-two-three lefts that snapped Felix's head back, sending a mild shock coursing through him. If Felix had any small doubt about their friendship affecting their fight, it was being neatly **dispelled**.

Antonio danced, a joy to behold. His left hand was like a piston pumping jabs one right after another with seeming ease. Felix bobbed and weaved and never stopped boring in. He knew that at long range he was at a disadvantage. Antonio had too much reach on him. Only by coming in close could Felix hope to achieve the dreamed-of knockout. **F**

Antonio knew the dynamite that was stored in his *amigo* brother's fist. He ducked a short right and missed a left hook. Felix trapped him against the ropes just long enough to pour some punishing rights and lefts to Antonio's hard midsection. Antonio slipped away from Felix, crashing two lefts to his head, which set Felix's right ear to ringing.

*Bong!* Both *amigos* froze a punch well on its way, sending up a roar of approval for good sportsmanship.

**F**elix walked briskly back to his corner. His right ear had not stopped ringing. Antonio gracefully danced his way toward his stool none the worse, except for glowing glove burns, showing angry red against the whiteness of his midribs.

"Watch that right, Tony." His trainer talked into his ear. "Remember Felix always goes to the body. He'll want you to drop your hands for his overhand left or right. Got it?"

Antonio nodded, spraying water out between his teeth. He felt better as his sore midsection was being firmly rubbed.

Felix's corner was also busy.

"You gotta get in there, fella." Felix's trainer poured water over his curly Afro locks. "Get in there or he's gonna chop you up from way back."

*Bong! Bong!* Round two. Felix was off his stool and rushed Antonio like a bull, sending a hard right to his head. Beads of water exploded from Antonio's long hair.

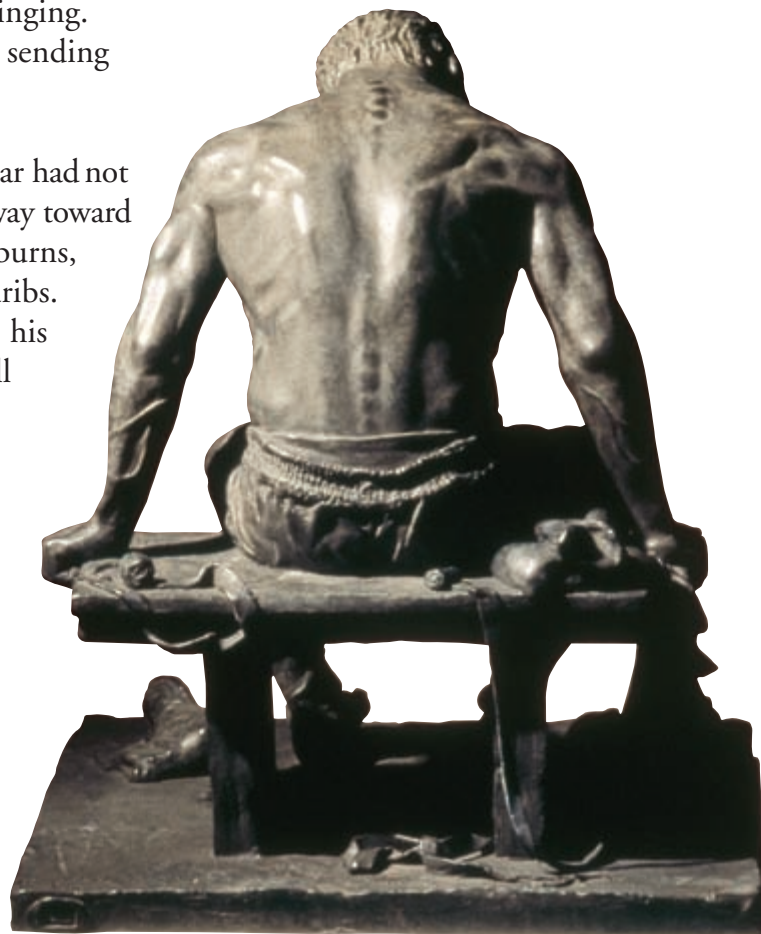
**dispel** (dĭ-spĕl') v.  
to get rid of

**F COMPARE AND CONTRAST**

Reread lines 223–227. Compare and contrast the boys' boxing styles.

**▼ Analyze Visuals**

Describe the feeling this sculpture conveys.



*Seated Fighter* (1985), Joseph Sheppard. Bronze, height 21".



Antonio, hurt, sent back a blurring barrage of lefts and rights that only meant pain to Felix, who returned with a short left to the head followed by a looping right to the body. Antonio countered<sup>17</sup> with his own flurry, forcing Felix to give ground. But not for long.

Felix bobbed and weaved, bobbed and weaved, occasionally punching his two gloves together.

260 Antonio waited for the rush that was sure to come. Felix closed in and fainted<sup>18</sup> with his left shoulder and threw his right instead. Lights suddenly exploded inside Felix's head as Antonio slipped the blow and hit him with a pistonlike left, catching him flush on the point of his chin.

**Bedlam** broke loose as Felix's legs momentarily buckled. He fought off a series of rights and lefts and came back with a strong right that taught Antonio respect.

Antonio danced in carefully. He knew Felix had the habit of playing possum when hurt, to sucker an opponent within reach of the powerful bombs he carried in each fist.

270 A right to the head slowed Antonio's pretty dancing. He answered with his own left at Felix's right eye that began puffing up within three seconds.

Antonio, a bit too eager, moved in too close, and Felix had him entangled into a rip-roaring, punching toe-to-toe slugfest that brought the whole Tompkins Square Park screaming to its feet.

Rights to the body. Lefts to the head. Neither fighter was giving an inch. Suddenly a short right caught Antonio squarely on the chin. His long legs turned to jelly, and his arms **flailed** out desperately. Felix, grunting like a bull, threw wild punches from every direction. Antonio, groggy, bobbed and weaved, evading most of the blows.

280 Suddenly his head cleared. His left flashed out hard and straight catching Felix on the bridge of his nose.

Felix lashed back with a haymaker,<sup>19</sup> right off the ghetto streets. At the same instant, his eye caught another left hook from Antonio. Felix swung out, trying to clear the pain. Only the frenzied screaming of those along ringside let him know that he had dropped Antonio. Fighting off the growing haze, Antonio struggled to his feet, got up, ducked, and threw a smashing right that dropped Felix flat on his back.

Felix got up as fast as he could in his own corner, groggy but still game.<sup>20</sup> He didn't even hear the count. In a fog, he heard the roaring of the crowd,  
290 who seemed to have gone insane. His head cleared to hear the bell sound at the end of the round. He was very glad. His trainer sat him down on the stool.

**bedlam** (bĕd'ləm) *n.*  
a noisy confusion

**flail** (flā) *v.* to wave  
wildly

17. **countered**: gave a blow after receiving or blocking his opponent's blow.

18. **fainted**: made a pretend attack to draw attention from his real purpose.

19. **haymaker**: a powerful blow.

20. **groggy but still game**: unsteady and shaky but willing to proceed.

In his corner, Antonio was doing what all fighters do when they are hurt. They sit and smile at everyone.

The referee signaled the ring doctor to check the fighters out. He did so and then gave his okay. The cold-water sponges brought **clarity** to both *amigo* brothers. They were rubbed until their circulation ran free.

**clarity** (klär'ĭ-tē) *n.*  
clearness of mind

*Bong!* Round three—the final round. Up to now it had been tick-tack-toe, pretty much even. But everyone knew there could be  
300 no draw and that this round would decide the winner.

This time, to Felix's surprise, it was Antonio who came out fast, charging across the ring. Felix braced himself but couldn't ward off the barrage of punches. Antonio drove Felix hard against the ropes.

The crowd ate it up. Thus far the two had fought with *mucho corazón*.<sup>21</sup> Felix tapped his gloves and commenced his attack anew. Antonio, throwing boxer's caution to the winds, jumped in to meet him.

Both pounded away. Neither gave an inch, and neither fell to the canvas. Felix's left eye was tightly closed. Claret red blood poured from Antonio's nose. They fought toe-to-toe.

310 **T**he sounds of their blows were loud in contrast to the silence of a crowd gone completely mute. The referee was stunned by their savagery.

*Bong! Bong! Bong!* The bell sounded over and over again. Felix and Antonio were past hearing. Their blows continued to pound on each other like hailstones.


Finally the referee and the two trainers pried Felix and Antonio apart. Cold water was poured over them to bring them back to their senses. **G**

They looked around and then rushed toward each other. A cry of alarm surged through Tompkins Square Park. Was this a fight to the death  
320 instead of a boxing match?

The fear soon gave way to wave upon wave of cheering as the two *amigos* embraced.

No matter what the decision, they knew they would always be champions to each other.

*Bong! Bong! Bong!* "Ladies and Gentlemen. *Señores* and *Señoras*. The winner and representative to the Golden Gloves Tournament of Champions is . . ."

The announcer turned to point to the winner and found himself alone. Arm in arm, the champions had already left the ring. 

**G THEME AND SETTING**

Reread lines 313–317. Why do such good friends keep fighting after the bell rings?

21. *mucho corazón* (mōō'chō kō-rā-sōn') *Spanish*: a lot of heart; great courage.



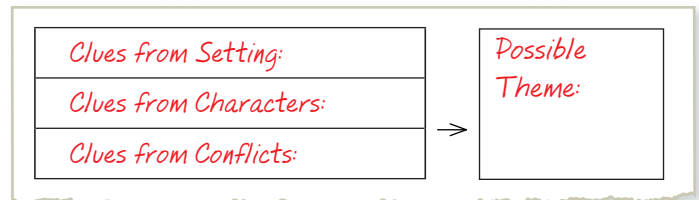
**READING 3** Analyze and make inferences about theme and genre in different cultural and contemporary contexts. **3C** Analyze how place and time influence the theme or message of a literary work.

## Comprehension

- 1. Recall** Why is this fight so important to Felix and Antonio?
- 2. Recall** What happens at the end of the fight?
- 3. Summarize** Describe how the two boys fight during the boxing match. What strengths does each boy demonstrate?

## Literary Analysis

- 4. Make Inferences** Felix draws an **analogy**, or point-by-point comparison, between *The Champion* and his upcoming fight with Antonio. How does this analogy help Felix deal with his **internal conflict**?
- 5. Compare and Contrast Characters** Look back at the Venn diagram you created as you read “Amigo Brothers.” Which are more important, the similarities or the differences? Why?
- 6. Draw Conclusions** What effect does the boxing competition have on Felix and Antonio’s relationship? Support your answer with examples from the story.
- 7. Identify Theme** Draw a chart like the one shown to help you identify clues that the writer provides about the theme of the story. What do you think the theme is?
- 8. Analyze Setting** How important is the setting to the theme of “Amigo Brothers”? Use examples from the story to support your response.



## Extension and Challenge

- 9. Creative Project: Music** Filmmakers often use music to enhance a movie’s **theme**. Suppose you were asked to pick five songs for a film version of “Amigo Brothers.” What would they be? Present your list to the class. Explain how each song reflects a theme of the selection.
- 10. Inquiry and Research** Find out about the early life of a Golden Gloves champion who later became a professional boxer, such as Oscar de la Hoya or Muhammad Ali. How was the person you researched like Felix and Antonio? Present your findings to the class.



Oscar de la Hoya

### What happens when friends **COMPETE**?

How would you act toward a friend during and after a competition?

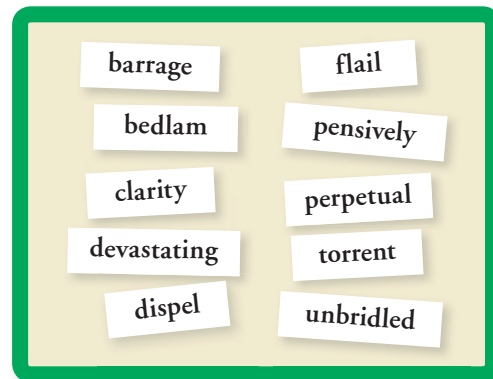


## Vocabulary in Context

### ▲ VOCABULARY PRACTICE

For each sentence, choose the vocabulary word that is similar in meaning to the boldfaced word or phrase.

1. In the ring, both fighters threw blows that were **extremely good at causing pain**.
2. Felix was in **continual** motion on his feet.
3. Antonio’s fans cheered with **uncontrolled** emotion.
4. The **noise** in the gym was so loud that Felix couldn’t hear himself think.
5. The trainer sat **deep in thought**.
6. Antonio began to **wave his arms crazily** about.
7. Felix came at Antonio with a **concentrated attack** of punches.
8. Antonio responded with a **wild, never-ending stream** of blows.
9. At times, both fighters almost lost their **ability to think clearly**.
10. Felix was able to **get rid of** any doubts about his friend.



### ACADEMIC VOCABULARY IN WRITING

• clause • context • cultural • symbol • theme

The setting in “Amigo Brothers” is very important to the **theme**. Write a paragraph in which you describe how the setting in the story influences the theme. Use one of the Academic Vocabulary words in your response.

### VOCABULARY STRATEGY: THE LATIN ROOT *pel*

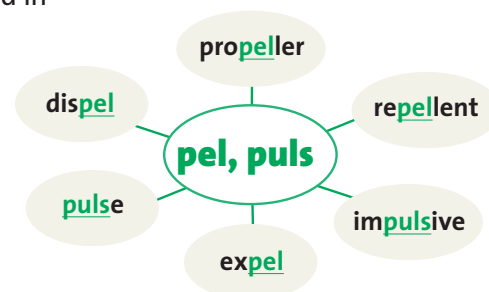
The vocabulary word *dispel* contains the Latin root *pel*, which means “drive” or “push.” This root, which is sometimes spelled *puls*, is found in many English words. To understand the meaning of words with *pel* or *puls*, use context clues and your knowledge of the root’s meaning.

**PRACTICE** Choose the word from the web that best completes each sentence.

1. Use insect \_\_\_\_\_ before you hike through the woods.
2. A person who is \_\_\_\_\_ often doesn’t think before acting.
3. She threatened to \_\_\_\_\_ any club member who missed more than two meetings.
4. A plane’s \_\_\_\_\_ helps it move through the air.



**READING 2** Understand new vocabulary and use it when reading and writing. **2A** Determine the meaning of grade-level academic English words derived from Latin roots.



Interactive Vocabulary **THINK** central

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## Conventions in Writing

### ◆ GRAMMAR IN CONTEXT: Punctuate Dialogue Correctly

Review the Grammar in Context note on page 328. Dialogue is a conversation between two or more speakers. If you don't punctuate it correctly, readers might be confused about who is speaking. To avoid confusion, use **quotation marks** at the beginning and end of a speaker's words. Place end marks, such as **periods**, inside closing quotation marks. Use **commas** to set off a speaker's words from the rest of a sentence. Notice the placement of the comma and quotation marks in the revised sentence.

*Original:* Antonio said Felix, you will always be my *amigo* brother.

*Revised:* Antonio said, "Felix, you will always be my *amigo* brother."

**PRACTICE** Fix the misplaced punctuation marks in the following dialogue and insert any missing marks.

1. Felix replied, Same here, bro. No way I would let anything come between us.
2. "So, I feel good about our decision", Antonio said.
3. Felix shrugged and said Yeah. Me, too.
4. "Brother, boxing will never mean more to me than our friendship does".

*For more help with punctuating dialogue, see page R50 in the Grammar Handbook.*



**ORAL AND WRITTEN CONVENTIONS 20B** Recognize and use punctuation marks including commas after introductory words, phrases, and clauses.

### READING-WRITING CONNECTION



Increase your understanding of "Amigo Brothers" by responding to this prompt. Then use the **revising tip** to improve your writing.

#### WRITING PROMPT

##### Extended Response: Write Dialogue

What do you suppose Antonio and Felix talk about as they walk away from the boxing ring? Keep in mind the big question about **competition** on page 322 and what you know about the boys' friendship. Write their conversation as a **one-page dialogue**.

#### REVISING TIP

Review your dialogue. Add any missing commas and quotation marks.

Interactive  
Revision



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