Name:

Date:

“Oranges” by Gary Soto

The first time I walked

With a girl, I was twelve,

Cold, and weighted down

With two oranges in my jacket.

December. Frost cracking

Beneath my steps, my breath

Before me, then gone,

As I walked toward

Her house, the one whose

Porch light burned yellow

Night and day, in any weather.

A dog barked at me, until

She came out pulling

At her gloves, face bright

With rouge. I smiled,

Touched her shoulder, and led

Her down the street, across

A used car lot and a line

Of newly planted trees,

Until we were breathing

Before a drugstore. We

Entered, the tiny bell

Bringing a saleslady

Down a narrow aisle of goods.

I turned to the candies

Tiered like bleachers,

And asked what she wanted -

Light in her eyes, a smile

Starting at the corners

Of her mouth. I fingered

A nickle in my pocket,

And when she lifted a chocolate

That cost a dime,

I didn’t say anything.

I took the nickle from

My pocket, then an orange,

And set them quietly on

The counter. When I looked up,

The lady’s eyes met mine,

And held them, knowing

Very well what it was all

About.

Outside,

A few cars hissing past,

Fog hanging like old

Coats between the trees.

I took my girl’s hand

In mine for two blocks,

Then released it to let

Her unwrap the chocolate.

I peeled my orange

That was so bright against

The gray of December

That, from some distance,

Someone might have thought

I was making a fire in my hands.

1. Summarize what happens in the poem. Support any interpretations made with specific details from the poem.
2. Interpret the following lines: “The lady’s eyes met mine, / And held them, knowing /Very well what it was all / About.” What does each character in the poem understand at this moment? How does the poet establish the significance of this moment?How does this moment contribute to the development of a theme?
3. Explain how the language explains the setting. How does the setting affect the characters?How do they respond to the setting? Consider both literal and figurative interactions.
4. How does the author use contrasting images (light / color vs. dark dull and warm vs. cold) to develop a theme? Cite specific images and the lines on which you find them.
5. Interpret the following lines: “…from some distance / Someone might have thought / I was making a fire in my hands.” How does the poet use figurative language in these lines?
6. What is a theme of the poem and how does the author develop the theme?