

TEACHER'S GUIDE

ALIGNED WITH COMMON CORE STANDARDS

Gabi, a Girl in Pieces

by Isabel Quintero

As Gabi prepares for her senior year of high school, she hopes to go to college, kiss a boy, pass her math class and (maybe) lose some weight. When the school year starts out with interesting confessions from her best friends, Cindy and Sebastian, Gabi realizes that her life is full of surprises, drama, and change. Gabi overcomes the challenges of becoming a woman with the support of her family, friends, and through a newfound love of writing—especially poetry. While her relationships are often full of conflict, Gabi learns to stand up for what she believes in and to fight for herself and those she cares about.



The following questions are aligned with CCSS standards for literature for grades 8-9. You will find the corresponding standard after each question.

Whole Text Questions

1. Gabi often uses words such as “fucking” and “shit” in her entries. How does this affect the tone of the narrative? How does it develop her character? Why do you think she chose these words instead of more socially acceptable vocabulary to express herself? (CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.9-10.4, CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.11-12.4)
2. Choose one of Gabi's poems from her August to October entries and compare it to one from her entries near the end of school year. How do Gabi's poems change from the beginning of the book to the end? How do the differences in the poems reveal how she changes as a person and as a poet? (CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.9-10.3, CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.11-12.3)
3. Why does Gabi use both English and Spanish in her journal entries? What does the use of two languages reveal about the plot, themes and characters presented in the book? (CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.9-10.2, CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.11-12.2)
4. Explain the metamorphosis of Gabi's relationship with Martin from her September 1 entry until the end of the book. How did she see him at the beginning, middle and end of the narrative? What events, conversations, and encounters led her to feel this way about him? How has each character changed throughout the text and what caused these changes? Which of these changes is most surprising? Support your response with evidence from the text. (CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.9-10.5, CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.11-12.5)
5. How does Gabi's self image change throughout the book, and how do others affect how she sees herself? Include several examples from the text that support your response. (CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.9-10.2, CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.11-12.2)

6. Choose two themes from the book (such as family relationships, love, self-worth, drug abuse, etc) and explain how the two themes rely on one another. How does the author craft the story so that these themes correspond to one another? Cite specific examples from the text that reveal the themes' interdependence. (CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.9-10.

July and August

1. Gabi is afraid her mother will think she is “trying to be white.” What does this mean, and why is Gabi concerned with this? How are Gabi's concerns different from her mother's? (CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.9-10.6, CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.11-12.6)
2. Why doesn't Gabi's mother want Cindy to come over? Do you think her mom's feelings toward Cindy are hypocritical? Support your answer using specific events from the text. (CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.9-10.1, CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.11-12.1)
3. Why does Gabi react to Sebastian's news with kindness and to Cindy's news with frustration? How does this reveal her moral values concerning homosexuality and premarital sex? (CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.9-10.3, CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.11-12.3)
4. What does the dress represent to Cindy? Why doesn't she want to wear it? Support your response with evidence from the text. (CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.9-10.1, CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.11-12.1)
5. What is the tone/mood of the text so far? Does Gabi use an informal or formal tone in her journal to talk about the events of the summer? Why? Support your response with evidence from the text. (CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.9-10.5, CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.11-12.5)

September and October

1. Why does Gabi point out race when she comments that she has a crush on a “super hot white boy”? How is this related with her comments concerning being “too white” at the beginning of the book? Based on Gabi's observations thus far in the text, would you argue that race and ethnicity are important issues for the main character? Explain your response using evidence from the text. (CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.9-10.4, CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.11-12.4)
2. After introducing her father, Gabi writes a letter to him. How does the letter affect the structure of the text? Does the letter help develop her father's character? (CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.9-10.3, CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.11-12.3)
3. Gabi debates whether or not she is jealous of Sandra in her September 15 entry. How does Gabi define jealousy? According to her definition and dictionary definitions for jealousy, do you think Gabi is jealous of Sandra? How do you think this will affect Gabi in the future? (CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.9-10.4, CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.11-12.4)
4. Why does Gabi feel uncomfortable with the stereotypes associated with Mexico's Independence Day as it is celebrated at her school? How does this affect her identity as a Mexican American girl? How and why is her viewpoint different from those of her friends, family and classmates? (CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.9-10.6, CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.11-12.6)

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5. Why does Gabi refer to her father as a “beast”? (CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.9-10.4, CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.11-12.4)
6. How do the flashbacks that the reader sees of Gabi's father in her journal writing affect how the reader understands his character in the current moment? (CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.9-10.5, CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.11-12.5)
7. Why doesn't Tia Bertha like Catholics? Use specific evidence from the text to support your response. (CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.9-10.1, CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.11-12.1)
8. How does Gabi's inclusion of poetry she has written and read affect the text up to this point? How does it develop her character or help the reader understand the events that are happening? Do you think that the inclusion of the poetry helps make the entries more beautiful or relatable? (CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.9-10.9, CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.9-10.6, CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.11-12.5)

November and December

1. Beto is presented as a bothersome little brother at the beginning of the book. How does his character change in November? In what ways does he stay the same? (CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.9-10.3, CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.11-12.3)
2. When Gabi finds out her mom is pregnant, she is surprised. How does what Gabi has told us about her mother's statements and actions also create a sense of surprise in the reader. Use specific actions and statements from the text to support your answer. (CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.9-10.5, CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.11-12.5)
3. At the beginning of Gabi's relationship with Eric, she really likes and admires him. Throughout several events in November and December, she feels this admiration falter. Which events help us understand Gabi's gradual disenchantment with Eric? Drawing from Gabi's journal and your own experience, do you think that she tells us about every encounter with him? Why or why not? (CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.9-10.5, CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.11-12.5)
4. Gabi's mother says that girls are never free. What motivates her to say this? Use specific examples from the text to support your response. Do you agree or disagree? (CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.9-10.1, CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.11-12.1)
5. What does the conversation included in Gabi's journal between herself and Martin reveal about each character? How would the story be different if instead of including exactly what each person said, Gabi told the reader about the conversation in her own words? (CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.9-10.3, CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.11-12.6)

6. In her poem about her dad, Gabi writes:

“It is not enough,
his own breath to inhale
he will take yours.
I've seen it happen.
Just ask my mom.”

Summarize this stanza in your own words. Which specific words create the tone of the stanza? (CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.9-10.4, CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.11-12.4)

January and February

1. What are Gabi's expectations concerning her interactions with Martin? How do those expectations change between the end of December until she meets him at the poetry reading? How do those expectations change after the poetry reading? How does the rising and falling of Gabi's hopes affect the narrative? (CCSS.ELA-Literacy.9-10.3, CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.11-12.3)
2. What is a *didgeridoo*? Why do you think it was used at the poetry reading? How would a didgeridoo affect the mood of the reading? (CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.9-10.4, CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.11-12.4)
3. How does the poetry reading affect the viewpoints that Gabi and her friends have concerning sex? Cite specific evidence from the text to support your response. (CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.9-10.1, CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.11-12.1)
4. Gabi makes a list of questions she would like to ask her mother. What does this list reveal about their relationship? What does it reveal about Gabi? Do you think that Gabi will ever ask her mother the questions on the list? Why? Support your response with evidence from the text. (CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.9-10.3, CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.11-12.3)
5. The term “loose woman” has a negative connotation in American culture, yet Gabi hopes that both she and her mother were like the woman in the poem with this title written by Sandra Cisneros. What does this tell you about Gabi and her mother? In what ways are Gabi or her mother already like the woman in the poem? In what ways is each different? (CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.9-10.9, CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.11-12.9)
6. In Gabi's entry on February 3rd, she recounts the events concerning her father's death. When Gabi retells these events, she uses short sentences and phrases to do so. Why might the author have chosen to craft Gabi's reaction in this way? What effect does the length of the sentences in this entry have on the reader? What mood do the short sentences evoke? (CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.9-10.5, CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.11-12.5)
7. Why is it ironic that Gabi's father is dressed in a white suit at his funeral? Use specific evidence from the text to support your response (CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.9-10.5, CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.11-12.6)
8. Why does slapping Georgina make Gabi feel better? (CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.9-10.1, CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.11-12.1)
9. Explain what the term *heartache soup* from Gabi's poem on February 28 means. Use examples from previous entries to support your response. (CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.9-10.4, CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.11-12.4)

March and April

1. How do Beto's actions affect Gabi, her mother and Ernesto? Whose fault is it that Gabi's mom

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goes into labor early? Use specific evidence from the text to support your response. (CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.9-10.1, CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL11-12.1)

2. Gabi describes feeling “euphoria” after she runs for the first time. What does “euphoria” mean in this context? Does this word indicate that running a positive or negative experience for Gabi? Explain your answer using evidence from the text. (CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL9-10.4, CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL11-12.4)
3. How does each of the members of Gabi's family change after the death of her father? Are these changes positive or negative? (CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.9-10.3, CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.11-12.3)
4. How and why does Georgina's character and attitude change toward Gabi and Cindy after Sebastian Gabriel is born? (CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.9-10.3, CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.11-12.3)
5. Explain why Georgina's situation is both surprising and ironic. Given past interactions, do you think Gabi should help Georgina? Use specific examples from the text to support your response. (CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL, 9-10.5, CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.11-12.5)
6. How does being “Mexican” affect Gabi's ability and desire to go to college? Choose one word to describe how she is feeling about this situation and explain why you chose this word, using evidence from the text. (CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.9-10.6, CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL11-12.4)
7. Why did the author choose to include a flashback of Gabi's experience with sex education in fifth grade in the text? How does this past experience influence Gabi's current ideas concerning sex? (CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.9-10.5, CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.11-12.5)
8. Why does Martin initially believe Ian over Gabi? How are issues of socioeconomic class and gender raised in Gabi's encounter with Ian and subsequent conversation with Martin? (CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.9-10.1, CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL11-12.1)

May and June

1. Why does Cindy wait so long to tell Gabi that German raped her? Why is Gabi's response surprising? (CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.9-10.5, CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL11-12.5)
2. How is Tia Bertha's response to seeing Gabi in the drug store surprising? How would you expect her to react in this situation? Give specific examples from previous entries that support your response. (CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.9-10.3, CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL11-12.3)
3. How do Ms. Abernand's actions in the text contradict Gabi's view of what teachers are like? Cite specific examples of Ms. Abernand's thoughts, actions and words are different from what Gabi expects. (CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.9-10.1, CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.11-12.1)
4. Is Sebastian and Cindy justified in their anger toward Gabi after she hits German? Why? What would you if you were in Gabi's position? (CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.9-10.6, CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL11-12.6)
5. How does Tia Bertha change over the course of the text? Who or what causes her to change? (CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.9-10.3, CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL11-12.3)