

GRADE 8
Reading
STAAR Alternate 2

Administered April 2016

RELEASED

READING

A First-Place Surprise

Gilberto played the last chords of the song on his guitar at his grandmother's party. The guests went wild with applause. Gilberto's grandmother proudly said to her friends, "I told you my grandson is a musical genius!"



"I'm so lucky that he would play at my party!" said Grandma. "He won the middle school talent show when he was just a sixth grader. He's in eighth grade now. I hope he'll enter again. I'm sure he'll bring home that first-place trophy. No one is as talented as Gilberto!"



Gilberto had won the middle school talent show when he was a sixth grader. He had missed the talent show as a seventh grader because he had the flu. Now he was in eighth grade and hoped to win again this year.

Marisol, his younger sister, also planned to enter the talent show. She was in sixth grade, so this would be her first talent show. Gilberto didn't think she really had a chance of winning—especially not over him.

A couple of days later, Gilberto was in his room listening to music when Marisol walked in. He was irritated that she had bothered him. He took off his headphones and asked, "What do you want?"



"I'm trying to learn a new song on my violin," Marisol said. "Would you help me?"

"I'm busy," Gilberto said. "I need to experience the work of other musicians, so go practice outside and don't bother me again." Without waiting for her to leave, he put his headphones back on and closed his eyes.

As the weeks passed, Gilberto spent many days listening instead of practicing. Sometimes he just sat and smiled as he pictured himself being named the winner of the talent show.

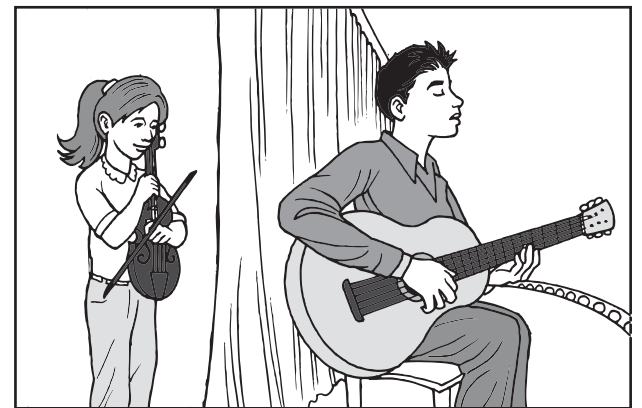
Gilberto wants to learn a new song.

Gilberto won the talent show in sixth grade.

Gilberto wants to experience the work of other musicians.

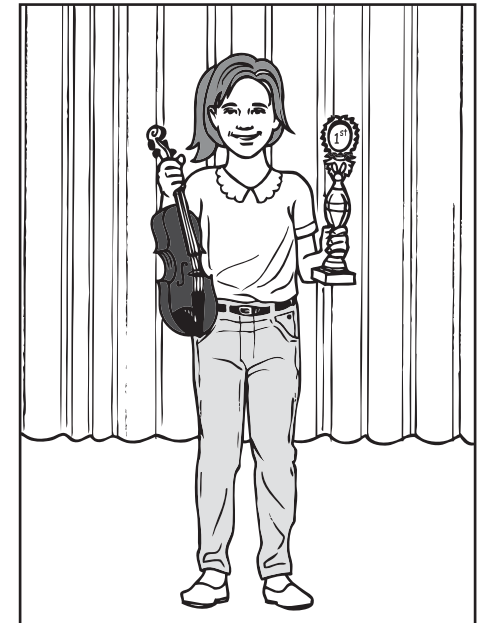
The day of the talent show, Gilberto and the other kids waited backstage for their turn to perform. Gilberto saw Marisol. Her knuckles were white, and she was holding on to her violin as if it might float away. Touching her arm, he smiled and said, "Hey, don't worry. You'll do fine." He felt a little guilty that he had not listened to Marisol practice her new song. She wasn't as used to performing as he was. He hoped she wouldn't embarrass herself. But if she did, Gilberto thought it would be a learning experience for her.

Gilberto had chosen to sing while he played a slow, sad song on his guitar. He sat down and sang his song. When it was over, the audience clapped politely.



Then Marisol walked onstage. She had chosen to perform a lively folk song on her violin. At first her playing was unsure. Gilberto felt bad for her. But then Marisol seemed to find her courage. Her bow began to fly over the strings of the violin. Someone in the audience began to clap with her song. Soon everyone was clapping. Gilberto watched in amazement as Marisol finished playing.

Gilberto was shocked at the end of the show when the judges awarded the first-place prize to Marisol. He stood at the edge of the stage as his younger sister received her trophy. He could not move when her friends rushed onstage to congratulate her.



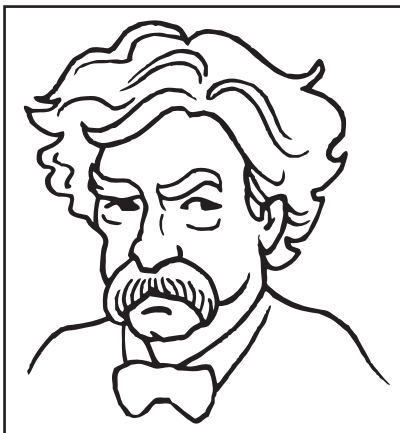
Gilberto is thankful that someone from his family won the talent contest.

Gilberto is surprised that he did not win the talent contest.

Gilberto is happy that Marisol's friends rushed onstage.

Tom and the Whitewashed Fence

This drama is about something that happened during my childhood. At that time there were many chores and very few toys. In this drama Tom Sawyer is the main character. He is a boy who does not like to work.





TOM: [*Enters carrying a fishing rod.*] At last! Saturday! Finally I don't have to suffer in school!



POLLY: [*Enters through a gate in the fence.*] Tom! Tom! Don't forget that today's the day to whitewash the fence.



TOM: [*Sadly.*] But Aunt Polly, it's Saturday.

[*Aunt Polly puts paintbrushes and a can of white paint into Tom's hands.*]



TOM:

[*Sighing.*] That fence is huge—about a million miles long.

[*Tom slowly picks up the paintbrush, dips it in the paint, and spreads the paint on the fence.*]



6b



[Tom is carefully whitewashing the fence, not looking up from his work.]

BEN: *[Enters eating an apple.]* Hi, Tom! Too bad for you. Got to work on Saturday!

TOM: It all depends on what you call work, you know.

BEN: Isn't that work? *[Ben points to the fence.]*

TOM: Maybe it is, and maybe it isn't. All I know is it suits me fine.

BEN: You like whitewashing?

[Tom continues to move the paintbrush slowly and carefully. He steps back to study his work.]



TOM: Not everyone gets to whitewash every day.

BEN: [*Stops eating his apple.*] Hey, Tom! Let me have a turn.

TOM: No way, Ben. Aunt Polly needs the job done right. This is the front fence, after all. She's really picky about how it looks. There's not one boy in a thousand, maybe two thousand, that can complete this job the way it's got to be done.

BEN: Aw, please, Tom! I'll give you my toy soldier! [*Ben shows Tom the toy soldier.*]

7a

TOM: I don't know, Ben. Well, all right. Just for a minute.

[Ben hands Tom the toy soldier and picks up the paintbrush. Tom sits down and plays with the toy.]

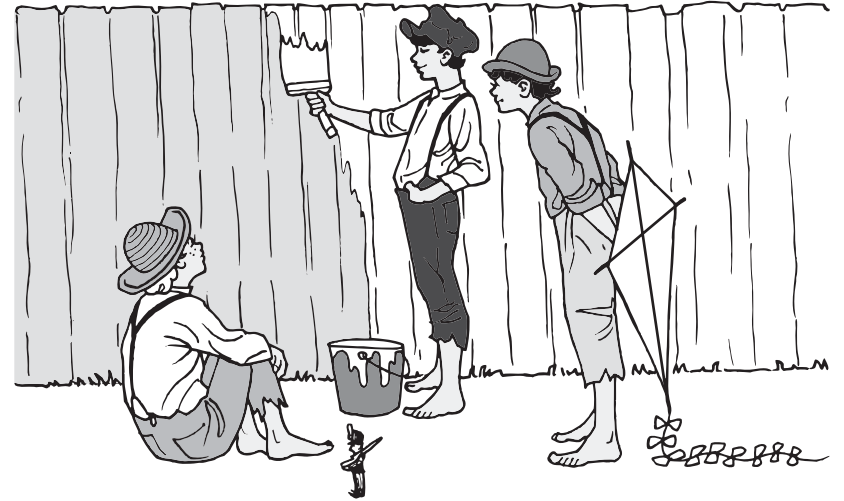


Tom makes his friend think that whitewashing the fence is fun.

Tom begs his friend to go fishing.

Tom talks his friend into giving him his toy.

[Ben is whitewashing the fence. Tom is sitting on the ground playing with the toy soldier. Billy enters. Billy is carrying a kite.]



BILLY: Hey, guys! What's happening?

BEN: *[Proudly.]* Look at me! I'm whitewashing! Everyone in the whole town is going to see how bright and white I am painting this fence!

[Ben paints a section of the fence carefully and then stands back to admire his work.]

BILLY: Wow! I want a turn! Let me whitewash, too!

BEN: [*To Billy.*] No, it's my turn. I traded Tom a toy soldier so I could get to whitewash.

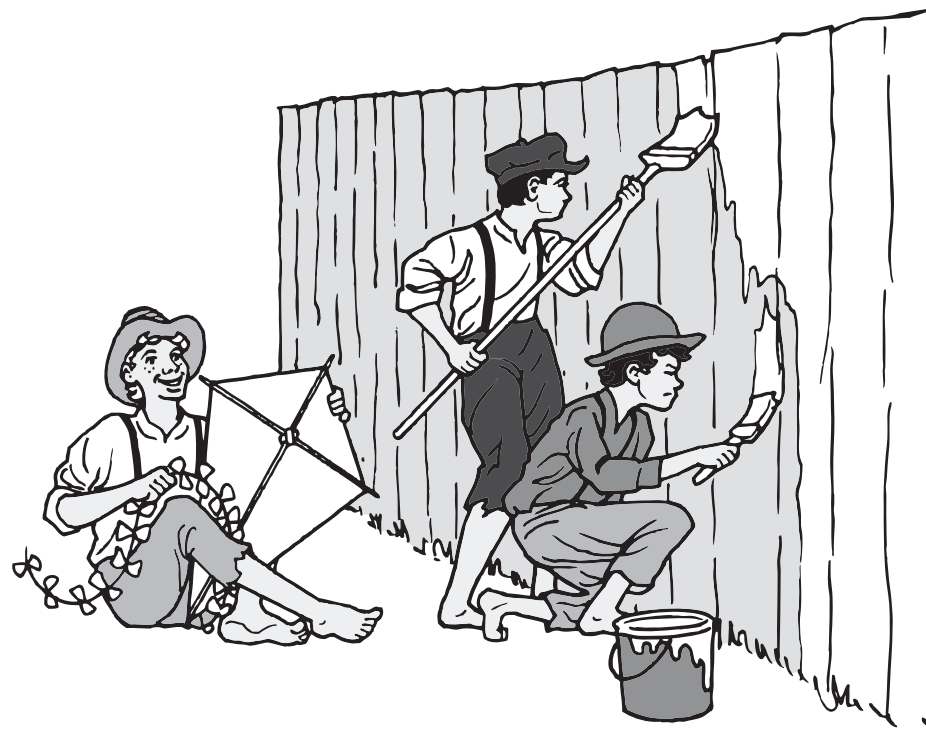
TOM: [*To Billy.*] I'm not sure, Billy. Aunt Polly needs this fence to look professional—really clean and smooth and white.

BILLY: Please, Tom. I'll trade you for my new kite!

8a

TOM: Well, O.K. I guess. Here are some paintbrushes.

[Billy gives Tom the kite. Tom sits down on the ground to play with it, a smile on his face.]



Tom is helpful and kind.

Tom is messy and hardworking.

Tom is smart and tricky.

Challenging Tradition and Winning



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Mariachi bands are part of Mexico's culture. They play a special style of music. They wear charro suits and wide-brimmed hats.



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Mariachi bands play a special style of music. For many years only men could play in a mariachi band. Now there are all-female mariachi bands. They also wear charro suits and wide-brimmed hats.



Courtesy of Mariachi Las Altenas



© iStockphoto.com/Alija

Women were not allowed to play mariachi music. It was thought that women could not handle some of the instruments.

In the United States, Laura Sobrino is a well-known mariachi band member. While she was studying the violin at college, she became interested in mariachi music. Though her family did not like the idea, Laura decided to become a mariachi musician. Her love for mariachi music gave her the will to enter a profession that had only been open to men. She quickly became a leader in her band. This upset some of the men who had to follow her lead. She became the director of the first all-female mariachi band in the United States.



11a

In 2008 she performed at the Olympic opening ceremonies in China. She still tours with her band as a violinist and director.

Laura's family encouraged her to play mariachi music.

Laura wanted to play mariachi music at the Olympics.

Laura loved playing mariachi music.

12a

Today there are many successful all-female mariachi bands in Mexico and the United States. One band from San Antonio, Texas, has performed several times in Hollywood to huge crowds. Mariachi Las Alteñas is thought to be one of the finest female mariachi bands in the country.



Courtesy of Mariachi Las Alteñas

Although there are not as many female mariachi bands as male mariachi bands, the all-female bands continue to be as good as the all-male bands. The all-female bands are proof of the changing attitudes about mariachi music. This music is no longer a tradition passed down only from father to son. Now it is music for mothers, fathers, sons, and daughters.

Mariachi music has a different sound.

Mariachi music provides opportunities for women.

Mariachi music is played by fewer men.

converse—to talk



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These two girls are conversing. They are talking about their homework assignment.

These two girls are conversing about their homework assignment.





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spectate—to look at



© Cynthia Farmer/Dreamstime.com

Mom loved baseball. Whenever I was pitching, I knew Mom was a spectator in the stands cheering for our team to win.

In this sentence, the word spectator means a person who —

watches a game

keeps score at a game

announces the players at a game

It was time to plan for the school's end-of-year party. Kendra asked Libby to take photographs during the event. "Sure!" Libby said with a big smile. "I'm sure I can take some great photographs."



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"I know you're fantastic with a camera," Kendra said. "You always take great pictures."

"I'll catch students in some funny poses," Libby added. "And I'll take pictures of the teachers too. It would be nice to have mementos of them as well."

In this sentence, mementos are items that —

reward someone for a great job

tell someone how to plan a party

remind someone of a special event

Wednesday, February 10

Dear Principal Patterson,

Junk food should not be served at lunch in the school cafeteria.







Junk food is served all the time at school, but healthy food is hard to find. That's why I'm asking that you ban junk food and offer healthy food choices for a healthier student body.



My friends fall asleep in class after eating a burger and drinking a soda at lunch. Without healthy food, their brains and bodies are not working at their best.



Thankfully, there are changes happening, and some schools are banning junk food from their lunch menu.



It has been proved that students will make better drink choices if given the chance. In some schools sugary soft drinks have been replaced with milk, fruit juice, and bottled water.



Some schools are serving more healthy foods like vegetarian pizza, raisins, and nuts. Other schools are serving fresh fruits and vegetables.



Olivia states that sugary sodas are good for you.

Olivia writes that healthy foods make students sleepy.

Olivia lists healthy foods that other schools serve.



Making healthy food choices now helps children become healthier adults. Students who eat junk food every day are more likely to have health problems in the future.



Eating healthy food is important for many reasons. Please, Principal Patterson, take action to improve the school's menu so that students can have healthy foods now and grow to be healthy adults.

Thank you,
Olivia Jones



to persuade the principal to change the menu in the cafeteria

to explain the difference between junk food and healthy food

to invite the principal to eat in the school cafeteria

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