

The Tortilla Curtain

By T. Coraghessan Boyle

Teacher's Guide

Written By Matthew Jewell

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Synopsis

Part I: Arroyo Blanco

Chapter 1: Delaney Mossbacher, a nature writer, hits Cándido Rincón, an illegal Mexican immigrant, with his car. Though Cándido is obviously seriously injured, he refuses medical treatment, instead asking Delaney for money. (Cándido knows that if he goes to a hospital, he may be deported.) Delaney gives Cándido twenty dollars, then leaves to drop off his recycling and have the superficial damage to his car repaired at the Acura dealership.

Chapter 2: After being hit by Delaney, Cándido tries to hike back to his camp in the canyon but collapses on the trail. América, his young wife, discovers him on her way back from an unsuccessful search for work. She helps him to the camp and tends his wounds as best she can. He heals slowly and their supplies run desperately low, so América resolves to look for work at the labor exchange across the street from the post office. He forbids her to go, shamed at his inability to provide for his family, but she insists.

Chapter 3: As the Mossbachers eat breakfast, a coyote jumps the fence to their yard and snatches Sacheverell, one of their dogs. After an unsuccessful search for the pet, Kyra, Delaney's wife, leaves for work. Delaney finds one of the dog's legs, confirming its death. That night he attends a neighborhood meeting convened to discuss the erection of a manned gate at the entrance to the subdivision. Though he is opposed to the gate on principle, he does not speak to the subject. Instead, he attempts to address the growing coyote problem, brandishing the dog's severed leg and generally making a fool of himself publicly to no avail. After the meeting, he briefly speaks with Jack Jardine, Jr., who had overheard

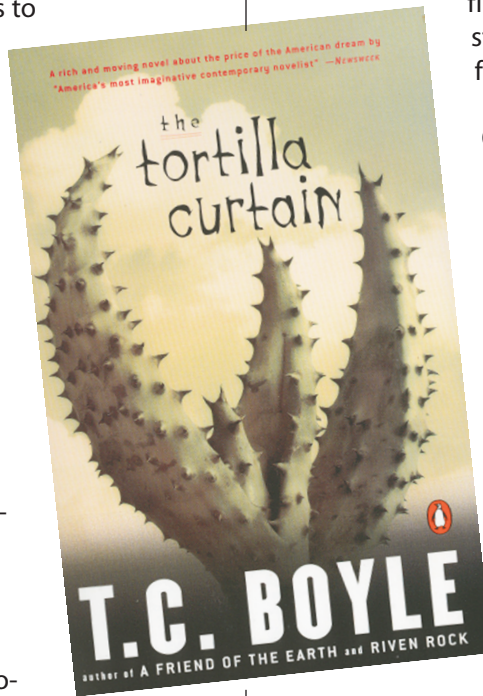
Delaney confide in his father about hitting Cándido. Jack, Jr. asks Delaney where the man was camping.

Chapter 4: Every day América climbs up to the labor exchange and waits for work while Cándido slowly recovers from his wounds at the camp. One day while she is gone, two white teenagers, presumably Jack, Jr., and a friend, descend upon the camp. Cándido hides from them, thinking they might be immigration officials. They demolish the encampment, flinging their every possession into the stream. At the labor exchange, América finds no work.

Chapter 5: Delaney returns home from the meeting and hides the dog's leg in the freezer. Kyra is waiting up for him, dressed seductively and wanting a "therapeutic" sexual encounter. Mid-coitus she demands Delaney tell her the truth about the dog's fate, then dashes to the kitchen to see the leg for herself. The next morning, she awakes in a funk, unable to muster her usual enthusiasm for her work as a real estate agent. At the end of the day, she locks up the Da Ros property, her prized listing, finding solace in her favorite house. Meanwhile, Delaney buries Sacheverell's leg and writes his

monthly nature column, "Pilgrim at Topanga Creek."

Chapter 6: Cándido tries to prevent América from going to the labor exchange, slapping her, but the food is nearly gone. At the labor exchange, a man gives her a cup of coffee and introduces himself as José Navidad. He makes unwanted and menacing advances to her, which she rebuffs, saying she is a married woman. Later, a car arrives and a fat, bearded man hires América to scrub statues of The Buddha for the day. While she works, Cándido relocates the camp to a safer, more remote site. As he climbs out of the canyon to look for her, he encounters José, who seems intent on moving into the area.



Chapter 7: Delaney drives to the store to fetch pasta for dinner, bringing his stepson, Jordan, along with him. In the market, he runs into Jack Jardine and his son. They discuss immigration and the proposed gate, Delaney opining that the idea of the gate is undemocratic. Outside, they witness a short altercation as a man accosts Cándido. The next day, Delaney goes hiking. Not far from the road, he spots a camp. As he fumes over the perceived desecration of nature, he encounters José and another man. Spooked, he returns to the road to find that his car has been stolen.

Chapter 8: After the altercation, Cándido hides outside the store, waiting for América. When she arrives, she is bursting with pride, having earned her first wages. They buy food and hike back to the new camp, where they share a meager feast. Early the next morning, they go together to the labor exchange, Cándido having recovered enough to work. América spends another day scrubbing Buddhas. Afterwards, she goes to the store to meet Cándido, but he doesn't appear. After a long wait, she ventures alone towards their camp. On the way, she encounters José and his friend, who rob and rape her.

Part II: El Tenksgeev

Chapter 1: Delaney picks up his new car at the dealership, then meets Kyra for lunch at an Indian restaurant. Afterwards, she notices that someone has left their dog locked in their car in the parking lot. Infuriated, she confronts the man when he arrives. He insults her and speeds off. Delaney goes hiking, and she goes back to work. She stops at a 7-11 where a large number of immigrants have gathered to wait for work, and she resolves to report them because their presence is bad for property values. After checking in on the workers building a new chain-link fence around her yard, she shows a house to prospective buyers and then checks on the Da Ros property. Outside the house, she is confronted by José and his friend. She pretends that she has male relatives nearby, and they leave.

Chapter 2: Al Lopez, the man building the Mossbachers' fence, hires Cándido to fill in for a sick man on his crew. While he works, Cándido reminisces on his previous experiences working in America. He comes back to the camp elated to have found employment. América is waiting for him. She tells him that she was robbed by the two men, whom he recognizes from her description. He suspects that she was sexually assaulted, but she denies it. Over the next three weeks, Cándido makes nearly three hundred dollars. He forbids América to continue working, sequestering her at the camp. She has

contracted a sexually transmitted disease from José or his friend, though she does not realize why she feels a burning sensation when she urinates. The sick man on Al Lopez's crew recovers and resumes his place, leaving Cándido out of work again.

Chapter 3: The Mossbachers barbeque, enjoying a return to normalcy. As they eat, Kyra reveals that she's arranged for the workers at the 7-11 to be dispersed. Delaney is apparently appalled, believing that everyone has a right to earn a living and to congregate in public, but Kyra changes the subject and his thoughts roam back to a recent social gathering to which Jack Jardine had taken him. Jack had accompanied Delaney to the home of Dominick Flood, who is under house arrest for illegal investments. They meet with a group of other men from the neighborhood and discuss the "problem" of illegal immigrants and closing the labor exchange. As the flashback ends, a coyote climbs their new fence, snatches Osbert, their remaining dog, and flees.

Chapter 4: Cándido has found work five days continuously clearing brush, though the man cheats him out of his last day's wages. He is unable to find a job over the ensuing days and traps birds to conserve their food and money. The next day, he finds that the labor exchange has disappeared. He is told that it has been permanently closed and that immigration officials will be making sweeps of the area. The next day, América sews their remaining money into his pants and they walk into the city, where she is cheered by the sight of so much prosperity. They have lunch, then look for work. On a street corner, they find two hundred men also waiting for work that will not come. That night, unable to find a place to stay, they are approached by a man who offers inexpensive accommodations at his aunt's home. Cándido leaves América on the sidewalk while he follows the man.

Chapter 5: This chapter consists of Delaney's "Pilgrim at Topanga Creek" article in which he discusses the growing conflict between coyotes and humans.

Chapter 6: Two days after the death of Osbert the dog, Jack Jardine calls to offer his condolences and recruit Kyra in his campaign to have a wall built around the subdivision. Delaney is firmly opposed to the idea, and they've been fighting about it at home. As she closes down the Da Ros house for the night, Kyra discovers vulgar graffiti in Spanish. Elsewhere, Delaney overhears a bigoted misogynist conversation about Mexican girls between Jack, Jr. and a friend. Disturbed, he goes for a

walk and encounters Todd Sweet, who had spoken out against the construction of the gate at the community meeting. He entreats Delaney to help him write an article opposing the proposed wall. He reluctantly agrees. As he returns home, he accosts José, demanding to know what he is doing in the neighborhood. To Delaney's shame, José is there legitimately, delivering fliers.

Chapter 7: América waits for Cándido, but he fails to return. After an unsuccessful search for him, she resumes her vigil. She wakes to a battered Cándido who has been beaten and robbed of their remaining funds. He washes off the blood in a gas station bathroom, then digs fried chicken from a dumpster.

Chapter 8: In the name of domestic tranquility, Delaney has refused to campaign against the neighborhood wall. Workers arrive to begin its construction behind his house, disturbing his daily writing time. That night, Kyra gives him a stepladder so that he can climb the wall and go on hikes. He is only vaguely mollified by the peace offering.

América has become nearly catatonic in her misery, refusing to speak to Cándido or leave the camp. On the bright side, he finds work at a good wage and has begun to replenish their savings. On the way back to camp on Thanksgiving, he buys two beers. The store is giving away a free turkey to patrons who spend more than one hundred dollars. The men in front of him don't want theirs and gift it to Cándido. Overjoyed, he races down to the camp and begins roasting it over a fire, but the wind drives the blaze out of control.

Part III: Socorro

Chapter 1: Delaney, Kyra, and Kyra's mother, Kit, attend a cocktail party at Dominick Flood's home on Thanksgiving. While Dominick is oddly friendly to Kit, Delaney and Jack discuss the erection of the wall and the reaction to Delaney's article on coyotes. As Delaney begins to consider going home for the dinner he's prepared, a wildfire is reported. They rush home and discuss evacuating as they watch the news coverage of the fire.

Chapter 2: Though she is despondent, América begins to cheer up when Cándido returns with the turkey. When the fire breaks out, they scramble for their lives, leaving everything behind. As airplanes begin dropping fire retardant chemicals, Cándido comes to the wall around Arroyo Blanco. He finds a shed nearby and brings

América. She begins to go into labor.

Chapter 3: Arroyo Blanco is evacuated. The Mossbachers pack their essentials and valuables into the car and join their neighbors at the top of Topanga Canyon to watch the fire's progress. José and his friend hike out of the canyon. Delaney recognizes them and tells the police officer that he suspects they started the fire. They are arrested amid a suddenly vicious and racist mob.

The fire dies down and Arroyo Blanco is spared. The Mossbachers spend the night in a Holiday Inn. In the morning, they return home and can't find Dame Edith, their cat. Kit finds Dominick Flood's monitoring device in her purse and realizes that he used her to make good his escape.

Chapter 4: In the night, América gives birth to a girl, whom she names Socorro. At dawn, Cándido scavenges tools and supplies with which to make a rudimentary shack to which he brings his wife and daughter. Realizing that his wife needs protein, he kills and stews Dame Edith.

Chapter 5: Kyra goes to check on the Da Ros property and finds it burnt to the ground. She returns home, and she and Delaney go on a walk to search for Dame Edith, who has been missing for three days. Jack Jardine picks them up in his car, wanting to show them something. On the drive, he mentions that Dominick Flood has fled the country. At the gate to Arroyo Blanco, he shows them vulgar graffiti in Spanish on the newly erected wall.

A month later, the vandals have still not been caught. Delaney makes their apprehension his personal mission. He sets up tripwire-activated cameras to monitor the wall. The one night that he doesn't keep a personal vigil, the cameras are activated. He develops the film and recognizes Cándido, whom he assumes is the vandal.

Chapter 6: Cándido returns to their camp to find that their buried money has been incinerated. América wants desperately to return to Mexico, but they have no money and Cándido is unable to find work. She also has begun to realize that Socorro is blind. Cándido hunts the neighborhood cats for sustenance and siphons water from the neighborhood sprinkler system. Desperate to find work, he risks detection by immigration officials by emerging from the canyon, but he finds nothing. As he returns to the shack, Delaney spots him, swerves off the road, and orders him to stay where he is.

Chapter 7: While driving, Delaney spots Cándido. He leaves his car still halfway in the road, demands that he stay still, and calls 911 on his cell phone. As Cándido dashes away, a truck crashes into Delaney's still-new car. Twenty minutes later the police arrive. Delaney tries to convince him to pursue Cándido, but the officer is more interested in the traffic accident. After the police leave, Delaney tracks Cándido's footprints to Arroyo Blanco Drive. His suspicions apparently confirmed, Delaney goes home to change clothes, eat, and get his gun. On the way, he notices that the cameras have been triggered and that there is new graffiti. He develops the films and realizes that Jack, Jr. is the vandal. He considers giving up the chase, then returns to tracking Cándido.

Chapter 8: Cándido returns to the shack, where he relates his encounter with Delaney to América. She tells him that Socorro is blind and that she suspects that it is linked to her rape and burning urine. It is the first time she's admitted to him that she was raped. As Cándido tries to process the news, Delaney appears with a gun, and then the shack and people are washed away in a flash flood. Cándido and América are saved when they wash up on the roof of the post office, but Socorro is lost in the waters. As Delaney is swept past, Cándido reaches out to save him.

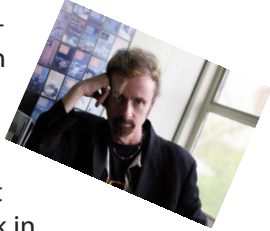
U.S. Immigration Timeline

- ca. 1000** A small number of Vikings land in Northern America.
- 1492** Christopher Columbus lands in the Americas, followed by other Europeans.
- 1502** Spaniards brings African slaves to Hispaniola. Eventually 10 million more African slaves will be imported.
- 1607** England establishes its first permanent colony at Jamestown, Virginia.
- 1619** First Africans arrive in Jamestown.
- 1700-1776** First major wave of immigration, mostly English.
- 1808** Congress bans the importation of slaves.
- 1820-1870** Second major wave of immigration, mostly European (English, Irish, German).
- 1845** Failure of potato crops in Ireland results in famine and mass immigration.
- 1848** The Gold Rush results in Chinese

- and Latin American immigration to the west coast.
- 1881-1920** Third major wave of immigration, mostly southern and eastern European (Austro-Hungary, Italy, Russia).
- 1882** The Chinese Exclusion Act passed to prohibit Chinese immigration.
- 1892** Ellis Island opens.
- 1907** One million immigrants are processed at Ellis Island in a single year.
- 1914** Anti-immigration sentiments are fostered by World War I.
- 1917** Congress requires literacy tests for immigrants.
- 1924** Congress establishes immigration quotas based on nationality.
- 1930-1964** Immigration declines due to restrictions, the Great Depression, World War II, and the Cold War.
- 1945** Large numbers of Puerto Ricans begin to arrive.
- 1952** The Immigration and Nationality Act allows people of all races to be eligible for naturalization.
- 1954** Ellis Island closes.
- 1965** The Immigration Act of 1965 ends quotas based on nationality. Immigration from Asia and the West Indies increases.
- 1986** The Immigration Reform and Control Act prohibits hiring illegal immigrants and legalizes illegal aliens residing unlawfully in the U.S. since 1982.
- 1996** The Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act makes it easier to deport illegal aliens.

Author Sketch

Born Thomas John Boyle on December 2, 1948 in Peekskill, New York, Boyle later changed his middle name to Coraghessan (pronounced "Cor-AG-hessan") in honor of his Irish ancestry. His father was a bus driver, his mother a secretary. After earning a bachelor's degree in English and history at the State University of New York in Potsdam, Boyle taught two years at his high school alma mater, Lakeland High School in Shrub Oak, N.Y. (he has said in interviews that one of his goals in teaching was to avoid the Vietnam draft), then studied with John Irving and John Cheever at the University of Iowa Writer's Workshop. There, he earned a Master's of Fine Arts in 1974, staying on to complete a Ph.D. in Nineteenth-Century British Literature in 1977. The next year he joined the faculty of the University of Southern California, where he is currently a professor of English.



Boyle published his first collection of short stories, *Descent of Man*, in 1979, followed by his first novel, *Water Music*, in 1982. He has authored eleven novels, and his short stories have appeared in *The New Yorker*, *Harper's*, *GQ*, *Playboy*, *Esquire*, *The Paris Review*, and other periodicals. He lives in Santa Barbara, California, with his wife and three children, in a house designed by Frank Lloyd Wright.

Critic's Corner

The winner of many awards, including several O'Henry Awards for short story-writing and a PEN/Faulkner Award, Boyle has received varied critical reaction to *The Tortilla Curtain*. Critics ranged from lauding its "big, bold" sweep to dismissing it as "weak, obvious stuff." The actual subject of the novel is also a matter of some debate. Critics favorable to the novel are under the impression that it is about illegal immigration, and praise it for its unflinching depiction of the hardships endured by Cándido and América Rincón. Predictably enough, those who dismiss the novel read it from the opposite end, focusing on his depiction of the Mossbachers and their inherent bigotry as the novel's main theme. Of course, both themes exist in the novel and both require some measure of attention. Other critical approaches to the novel focus on the writing itself. Several critics accuse Boyle of being unduly heavy-handed, especially in his use of irony and symbolism (e.g., the bigoted, Caucasian Mossbachers live in a

walled community called "Blanco Arroyo," or "White Stream" or "White Gully"; the hapless Mexican protagonist's wife is named América, a heavily ironic comment on the immigrant experience.) Further criticism centers around everything from the depiction of Topanga Canyon residents as bigots, to the relentlessly hopeless view of the immigrant experience, to the unbelievable number of calamities that befall the immigrant couple (one Amazon.com reviewer wrote that the novel should be titled *A Series of Implausible Unfortunate Events*). However, Boyle's novel has received much positive notice for its indictment of greed, bigotry, and inequality, and its biting satire of a materialistic, self-centered modern society.

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 Hicks, Heather J. "On Whiteness in T. Coraghessan Boyle's *The Tortilla Curtain*." *Critique*. 45.1 (2003).
 Kingsolver, Barbara. "Downscale in Topanga Canyon." *Nation*. 261.9 (1995): 326-327.
 Skow, John. "Snobs and Wetbacks." *Time*. 4 Oct. 1995: 68.
 Spencer, Scott. "The Pilgrim of Topanga Creek." *New York Times Book Review*. 3 Sep. 1995.
 Wheelwright, Julie. "California Nightmares." *New Statesman & Society*. 8.378 (1995): 39.

Other Works by T.C. Boyle

Novels

- Water Music*, 1981
Budding Prospects, 1984
World's End, 1987
East is East, 1990
The Road to Wellville, 1993
River Rock, 1998
A Friend of the Earth, 2000
Drop City, 2003
The Inner Circle, 2004
Talk Talk, 2006

Collections of Short Fiction

- Descent of Man*, 1979
Greasy Lake, 1986
If the River Was Whiskey, 1989
The Collected Stories of T. Coraghessan Boyle, 1993
Without a Hero, 1994
T.C. Boyle Stories, 1998

After the Plague, 2001
The Human Fly, 2005
Tooth and Claw, 2005

Audiobooks

The Tortilla Curtain, Blackstone Audiobooks, 2006, unabridged

Large Print

The Tortilla Curtain, Wheeler Publications, 1999

Objectives

General Objectives

1. To read a contemporary novel.
2. To track extended metaphors.
3. To develop critical reading, writing, and thinking skills.
4. To expand vocabulary.
5. To identify and analyze symbols.
6. To read fiction in relation to contemporary world events.
7. To formulate critical reactions to fiction.
8. To understand and utilize literary vocabulary.
9. To develop an appreciation for literary fiction.
10. To investigate literary representations of race, class, and gender.

Specific Objectives

1. To discuss the novel's representation of illegal immigrants.
2. To discuss the novel's representation of affluence.
3. To analyze the novel's depiction of American culture.
4. To contrast Delaney and Cándido.
5. To contrast Kyra and América.
6. To unravel the metaphor of the wall.
7. To track comparisons between immigrants and animals.
8. To chart Delaney's descent into bigotry.
9. To identify instances of irony.
10. To evaluate the novel's literary and social merits.

Literary Terms and Application

Characterization: the assembly of actions, speech patterns, attitudes, and habits that defines a character. The characters of *The Tortilla Curtain* are generally well developed, mostly through the narration of their thoughts and internal struggles.

Point of view: the perspective from which a narrative is told. The entire novel is told from the third-person perspective person, but the narration switches among characters, often repeating the same event from multiple perspectives. A good example is the first two chapters. The novel begins from Delaney's perspective of the accident; the second chapter relates it from Cándido's.

Theme: the dominant idea or meaning in a literary work. There are two main themes in the novel. The first, immigration, is the most obvious and is what much of the action centers around. The second theme builds upon the first. While the novel appears to be primarily interested in immigration, Boyle uses the contrast between the characters to explore the theme of "liberal humanism," charting its boundaries and hypocrisies.

Cross-Curricular Sources

DVD/VHS

The Road to Wellville, Sony, 1994
Soylent Green, Warner Home Video, 1973

Novels

Rudolfo Anaya, *Bless Me Ultima*
Sandra Cisneros, *The House on Mango Street*
William Faulkner, *Light in August*
Abdulrazak Gurnah, *By the Sea*
Oscar Hijuelos, *Empress of the Sacred Season*
Jay McInerney, *Brightness Falls*
David Malouf, *Remembering Babylon*
Gabriel García Márquez, *Love in the Time of Cholera*
Bharati Mukherjee, *Jasmine*
John Steinbeck, *The Grapes of Wrath*, *Tortilla Flat*,
The Pearl
Meera Syal, *Anita and Me*
Voltaire, *Candide*
Tom Wolfe, *Bonfire of the Vanities*

Internet

Center for Immigration Studies
<http://www.cis.org/>
Ellis Island: The Peopling of America
http://www.ellisland.org/immexp/wseix_5_0.asp?
Map of Topanga
<http://www.topangachamber.org/map.htm>
T.C. Boyle (teacher links)
<http://www.englisch.schule.de/boyle/boyleaut.htm>
U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services
<http://www.uscis.gov/portal/site/uscis>
T. Coraghessan Boyle Resource Center
<http://www.tcboyle.net>

T. Coraghessan Boyle website
<http://www.tcyboyle.com>

Nonfiction

Debating Immigration, Carol M. Swain, Ed.
Guarding the Golden Door, Roger Daniels

Themes and Motifs

Themes

- illegal immigration
- human rights
- human suffering
- privilege
- social responsibility
- racism
- nature
- hypocrisy
- urban sprawl

Motifs

- The slow dissolution of ideals and hopes.
- Implicit comparisons between illegal immigrants and animals.
- Chance encounters with recurring consequences.
- The *Candide*-like series of unfortunate events.
- Jarring transitions between scenes.

Meaning Study

Below are significant words, phrases, or sentences from *The Tortilla Curtain*. Explain each in context. Chapter and page numbers pinpoint each entry so you can re-read the passage in which it appears.

1. These people sanitized their groceries just as they sanitized their kitchens and toilets and drove the life from everything, imprisoning their produce in jars and cans and plastic pouches, wrapping their meat and even their fish in cellophane. (p. 122-123)
(In the grocery store, Cándido is struck by the antiseptic environment. These musings are an extension of the novel's preoccupation with barriers. Just as the Americans build walls to keep out animals and undesirable people, they wrap their food in plastic to keep out germs. This desire to "sanitize" life is central to the novel's depiction of American culture. The usage of the word "imprison" is interesting, since the analogue of the food in this extended metaphor is the American citizen, which is Delaney's objection to the wall built around Arroyo Blanco Estates.)

2. When he did make a major purchase he felt good about it, good about himself, good about the future of the country and the state of the world. That was the American way. Buy something. Feel good. (p 149)
(Delaney is reflecting about his purchase of a new car. The materialism here is another central facet of the novel's understanding of American culture. People are defined by their belongings. Kyra's main emotional attachments are to houses. The Da Ros house instills a sense of tranquility in her, and she feels a sense of loss at its destruction. The gate is proposed to prevent robberies in the neighborhood. The fire in the canyon threatens to destroy their "lives" because it threatens to destroy their property. Boyle's contempt in the above lines is palpable and emerges often in the novel. His obvious disdain for his American characters largely prevents them from being sympathetic figures.)

3. She was glorious in her outrage, a saint, a crusader. This was what mattered. Principles. Right and wrong, an issue as clear-cut as the on/off switch on the TV. (p. 152)
(Kyra is outraged to discover that someone has left their dog locked in their car on a hot day, and Delaney marvels at her in the above lines. Her fierce concern contrasts sharply with her callous disregard for the plight of immigrants. After accosting the owner of the dog, she stops at a 7-11 and is appalled to find a gathering of immigrants looking for work and resolves to have them dispersed, lest they lower property values. Though much of the novel equates immigrants with animals in the eyes of Americans, this passage makes them less than animals.

That the issue is "clear-cut" also contrasts in Delaney's mind with the issue of illegal immigration, which remains blurred to him throughout the novel. Continuing the theme of materialism, Delaney's frame of reference for such easily discerned categories is a television switch.)

4. Where were these people supposed to go? Back to Mexico? Delaney doubted it, knowing what he did about migratory animal species and how one population responded to being displaced by another. (p. 193)

(Once again, illegal immigrants are overtly compared to wild animals. The interesting aspect of Delaney's musings here is that it inherently classes white Americans as animals as well. In this example, white Americans are the more successful "migratory animal species," displacing the people from the 7-11 and labor exchange. This metaphor is apt for a variety of reasons. First, it refers to the migratory habits of contemporary America. Kyra notes that Americans relocate every few years, and there is a steady flow of people moving from cities like Los Angeles to suburban neighborhoods like Arroyo Blanco Estates. Secondly, the metaphor is historically appropriate, reflecting the steady displacement of Native Americans by European colonists.)

5. Indita. She hated it when he called her that: his little Indian ... a subtle dig at her, a criticism of her looks, her Indian blood. (p. 204)
(While much of the novel can be simplistically broken down to a struggle between "white" and "brown" people, rich and poor, the issue of race is actually more complex. Two people exemplify the stratification of mixed race: América and José Navidad. In this passage, América becomes angry when Cándido refers disparagingly to her "Indian" ancestry. Though she is beautiful, she appears to be of less European ancestry than him and thus ontologically inferior. José Navidad, named after Faulkner's Joe Christmas, occupies the reverse side of mixed race. To the white Americans, he appears the same as all other Hispanic immigrants. To Cándido, he appears to be "half a gringo.")
6. The coyote is not to blame—he is only trying to survive, to make a living, to take advantage of the opportunities available to him. (p. 214)
(This passage is an excerpt from Delaney's article on the conflict between coyotes and human development. It is a heavy-handed use of irony that Delaney expresses sympathy for the coyotes and their right to the land but is enraged when finding immigrants camping in the canyon. While Boyle is also referring to immigrants in the writings on coyotes, Delaney is naively referring only to coyotes. When pursued in depth, Delaney considers immigrants like Cándido to be animals, but animals with less right to the land than coyotes. Coyotes belong.

Immigrants don't. From the white Americans perspective, they are unnatural animals, while coyotes and dogs are natural animals.)

7. Ninety percent of the community was already walled in, tireless dark men out there applying stucco under conditions that would have killed anybody else. (p. 242)
(The wall built to exclude "brown" people is erected by "tireless dark men," the same people it was meant to keep out. Similarly, José is hired to distribute the pamphlets advocating the project to the community. That the men are "tireless" and that the working conditions would have "killed anyone else" makes the men different from other people in an essential way. To Delaney's mind, they are somehow uniquely suited to heavy manual labor.)
8. Those other little four-legged beasts, the ones with the bells on their collars to warn away the birds, they were easier to catch. (p. 327)
He'd run a length of PVP pipe off the development's sprinkler system, easiest thing in the world (p. 328)
(In the first quote, Cándido reflects on trapping and eating the domestic cats of Arroyo Blanco Estates. In the second, he is thinking about having siphoned water from the irrigation system. In these passages, the comparison to coyotes becomes complete. Earlier in the book, coyotes devour both of the Mossbacher's dogs and chew into the irrigation system.)
9. I can't believe it. How could anybody be that vicious? He gave me twenty dollars, remember? (p. 350)
(Cándido describes his last confrontation with Delaney, and América wonders whether he is racist, hating them simply because they are Mexican. Cándido expresses doubt with the above lines. His reply rings a bit naïve. Having lived in the shadow of such obvious wealth, it seems impossible that he would consider Delaney's having given him twenty dollars after hitting him with a car a sign of good faith.)
10. When he saw the white face surge up out of the black swirl of the current and the white hand grasping at the tiles, he reached down and took hold of it. (p. 355)
(The flash flood at the end of the novel echoes

the “flood” of “brown people” alluded to in several places earlier in the novel. Note that color scheme: “white face” and “white hand” in “black swirl.” Delaney’s deepest fear has been manifested physically; he has been swept away in a “dark” flood. On the surface level, Cándido’s reaching for Delaney is characterization. Even in the darkest hour, he remains an essentially decent human being. Thematically, the rescue is a role reversal. At the beginning of the novel, Delaney the “liberal humanist” gives Cándido twenty dollars of “blood money” and proceeds to the recycling center. At the end of the novel, Delaney the racist is saved by the object of his revulsion. Cándido seems to be exemplifying the ideal that Delaney abandoned.)

Comprehension Study

- List and explain examples of irony in the novel. (The Tortilla Curtain abounds with examples of irony. The most obvious irony is that both the gate and walls of Arroyo Blanco—“White Stream” or “White Gully” —are built by the very “brown” people they are designed to exclude. The inverse of this example is that Jack, Jr. is the community vandal. The wall is built based on fears of “crime” committed by immigrants, yet the immigrants provide honest labor and the crime is committed by a Caucasian teenager, the son of the wall’s most vocal proponent. Similarly, when the fire nearly ravages the community, Dominick Flood, a convicted felon, flees the country, and José and his companion are arrested for an event of which they are innocent.)
- List and discuss examples of barriers in the novel. (While the structure of the novel highlights socio-economic barriers between white Americans and illegal immigrants by shifting between perspectives, physical barriers dominate the novel on the literal level. The residents of Arroyo Blanco are obsessed with exclusion and separation, not just from poverty and “brown” people, but from the world in general. The wall and gate are the most obvious barriers, but their houses themselves are barriers. Cándido and América live in a more porous world, their camp open to the elements. At the end of the novel, when Delaney returns to his hermetically sealed house to change clothes,

Cándido returns to a leaky shack. Kyra seals off the world in the private bubble of her car, even the sounds of reality muted beneath simulated sea noise. Dominick Flood is contained by the invisible barrier of his monitoring device.)

- Analyze the characters in terms of gender roles. (The two primary couples of the novel act out opposed gender roles. In the Mossbacher home, Kyra embodies traditionally male roles and values. She is the family’s emotionally distant bread winner, a workaholic who barely has time for her son. Delaney drives Jordan to and from school, prepares meals, and tends the house. She is also the sexual aggressor in the relationship. Conversely, Cándido is prototypically macho, shamed when he cannot earn for his family. He earns the majority of income, is physically aggressive towards his wife, and performs classically masculine actions like hunting. It is interesting to note that the main disruption in each family’s prescribed gender roles results in disaster. When América works, she is raped and robbed. When Delaney pursues Cándido with a gun, he is swept away in a flash flood.)
- How and why does Boyle employ shifts in point of view? (Boyle shifts perspectives between the four main characters: Kyra, Delaney, Cándido, and América. The primary function of these changes in point of view is to highlight the differences between their experiences of the same places and events. Often the shifts between perspectives reveal a flawed or partial understanding of an occurrence. In the first scene of the novel, Delaney hits Cándido with his car. While Delaney worries that Cándido threw himself in front of the car in order to extort him, Cándido worries about returning to health and being able to work. The how is as important as the why. Usually Boyle makes the shift as jarring as possible, alternating between scenes of intense poverty and casual wealth.)
- List and explain significant or referential names of characters. (Cándido is the most obvious reference, resembling Voltaire’s hapless *Candide*. José Navidad is based on Faulkner’s Joe Christmas in *Light in August*. While the characters are both of mixed race, the similarities seem largely superficial,

since José is a flat, purely malicious character. Dame Edith, Osbert, and Sacheverell are named after Dame Edith Sitwell and her two brothers, Osbert and Sacheverell, all English writers. The Mossbacher name is not directly referential, but it resembles “Mossback,” in opposition to the pejorative “wetback,” which literally implies that a Hispanic immigrant is still wet from crossing the Rio Grande. A “mossback” would have stayed in one place, America, long enough to grow moss, indicating a sense of established belonging. “Arroyo Blanco Estates” translates as “White Stream (or “White Gully”) Estates,” the “white stream/gully” standing in contrast to the surrounding “flood” of “brown people,” while simultaneously forming a symbolic racial gulf.)

6. How are Hispanic immigrants compared to coyotes in the novel?

(Like the coyotes, Cándido preys on the development’s pets and drinks from their irrigation system. This literal similarity is ironic, since it is a more figurative similarity that worries the residents of Arroyo Blanco. More generally, the immigrants are imagined as displaced predators waiting in the shadows to attack the “peaceful” white Americans. Over the course of the plot, Cándido assumes the role of the coyote. He helps build the chain-link fence around the Mossbacher yard to prevent coyote incursion. Once the brick wall is erected, the coyotes are unable to enter the development, but Cándido scales the wall to assume their role.)

7. Track major changes in Delaney’s character.

(Over the arc of the novel, Delaney becomes a racist. The main question this development presents is whether he was already a bigot. Although he begins the novel a self-professed “liberal humanist,” this set of ideals has never been tested. Once he is directly encounters Cándido, he begins the slide into racial hatred, although he remains a dedicated naturalist and advocate of animal rights. The way in which the novel presents these changes indicates that “liberal humanism” in America is a farce, a set of ideals to which people adhere only when convenient, and that, further, this system of ideals is cold and cruel, excluding humans while including inanimate objects, abstract concepts, and brute animals.)

8. Discuss the novel’s theme of nature.

(At the surface level, it appears that the novel uses models of the natural world to represent the relationship between wealthy and poor, white and brown, American and Mexican. In the scheme of the novel, the immigrants are cast in the role of the coyote. However, Delaney, the nature writer, becomes enraged at perceived desecrations of natural areas by immigrants and is able to muster sympathy for actual coyotes but none for the figurative coyotes. Structurally the novel appears to overlay the natural and human world, comparing the two, while the characters within this structure are unable to draw the same conclusions. The novel compares Cándido with a coyote, while Delaney is unable or unwilling to make the same connection.)

9. Analyze the significance of what is not written—major elisions and omissions.

(The most glaring omission in the novel is any sort of overt political or ethical judgment of the characters. While the novel presents the white Americans of Arroyo Blanco as selfish, racist, and only intellectually aware of the human suffering outside the gates of their private communities, the depiction of illegal immigrants is no more sympathetic, divided between the senselessly malicious José and the haplessly unlucky Cándido. The novel presents problems, no solutions, and is not even particularly interested in exploring the problems it presents, preferring to exploit them for mildly amusing instances of blatant irony.)

10. Is this a political novel?

(The Tortilla Curtain is a political novel only insofar as any cultural artifact is a political object that reflects its contemporary origins. The content of the novel is related to political issues, primarily illegal immigration, but the novel is not particularly interested in exploring or delineating the ramifications of its characters and events. It is a stoically apolitical novel on a political subject.)

How Language Works

1. The houses of Arroyo Blanco Estates reflect the homogeneity of their residents: “The houses were all in the Spanish Mission style, painted in one of three prescribe shades of white,

with orange tile roofs." (p. 30) That the houses are all in one of three "prescribed shades" is one of many references in the novel to whiteness and the neighborhood's racial sameness.

2. Kyra has one moment of lucidity: "All this over a dog? It was ridiculous, she knew it. There were people out there going through Dumpsters for a scrap to eat, people lined up on the streets begging for work, people who'd lost their homes, their children, people with real problems, real grief." (p. 74) Interestingly enough, her musings prophesy the eventual trials and tribulations of Cándido and América. Although Kyra is intellectually capable of realizing that other people suffer, once she is confronted with "people lined up on the streets begging for work," she conspires to have them dispersed, rather than feeling genuine sympathy.
3. When considering the possible origins of the shopping cart, Kyra lists people likely to use one: "Crazies. Mexicans. Winos." (p. 163) In her perception, being Mexican is a socially unacceptable affliction like mental illness or alcoholism.
4. Jack Jardine explains the vandalism of the Da Ros home as "an animal reflex ... marking their territory." (p. 316) Ironically, his son is likely the vandal, meaning that this "animal reflex" is a human trait, not a trait inherent in the "them" from which he wants to separate himself.
5. In continuance of the novel's theme of whiteness, Delaney's prized car is "milk-white ... [with] tan leather upholstery." (p. 333)
6. Cándido lists his ills: "a violated wife and a blind baby and a crazy white man with a gun, and even that wasn't enough to satisfy an insatiable God: no, they all had to drown like rats in the bargain." (p. 353) Perhaps one of the most striking aspects of Cándido's perspective is that his misfortunes are understood in terms of "bad luck" and the will of a cruel deity, while Delaney understands his misfortunes in terms of natural laws of causality.

Across the Curriculum

Drama

1. Using what you know from the novel, script and act out a short scene of Cándido and América in Mexico before they came to the United States.
2. Perform characterization exercises in which you act out characters' reactions to randomly selected situations. Take turns acting out each main character's reaction to the same scene.

Gender Studies

1. Make lists of the words used to describe Kyra and América. Discuss these words in relation to gender stereotypes and compare the two characters based on this assessment.
2. Make lists defining gender roles in the novel. Which gender performs which social, sexual, emotional, economic, and physical roles? Are the gender roles of the novella indicative of its contemporary society or idiosyncratic?

Journalism

1. Write a review of *The Tortilla Curtain*. Include a short synopsis, brief author biography, comments on the book's influence, and a judgment of its literary merit.
2. Compose an op/ed in which you address the topic of illegal immigration.
3. Write a real estate listing for your home.

Social Studies

1. In a chalk talk, give a concise history of immigration in North America, beginning with early Viking expeditions and continuing through the present day.
2. Make a map of Cándido's travels through Mexico and the United States. Feature a magnified insert of Los Angeles.

Art

1. Sketch drawings of what you consider to be the most significant moments of the novel. Indicate the significance of each drawing in its title. Present and discuss the drawings in class.

2. Employing media of your choice, make collages that depict significant ironies in the novel.
3. Using details from the novel, draw portraits of each main character. Present your portraits and explain your artistic decisions.
4. Make posters contrasting these pairs of characters: Cándido/Delaney, América/Kyra, Cándido/América, Delaney/Kyra, Delaney/Jack, Jordan/Jack, Jr., Cándido/José, José/Dominick.

Language

1. Choose a significant paragraph and rewrite it in your own words. Discuss how your writing style differs from Boyle's. What is lost in the conversion? What is gained?
2. Selecting terms from the novel, make an illustrated glossary of geography terms describing the landscape of southern California.
3. Choose twenty Spanish words or phrases used in the novel and research their meaning and pronunciation.
4. Keep a vocabulary journal as you read the novel. At the end of each chapter, look up each word you do not know in the dictionary, noting their definition, synonyms, and antonyms.

Composition

1. Choose what you consider to be the most significant moment or quote from the novel and write an essay explaining it. Use MLA (Modern Language Association)-style citations to document quotes and references.
2. Write a story detailing the life of Cándido and América after the flash flood. Do they remain in the United States? Do their living conditions improve? Does Cándido succeed in saving Delaney?
3. Make a list of five significant themes, motifs, or images from the novel. Write a poem in relation to each selection in a form of your choice.
4. Write a short play about América's childhood,

using details found in the novel.

5. Rewrite the events of a chapter from the perspective of a minor character like José, Jack, Kit, or Dominick.

Literature

1. Make a character list, noting distinguishing characteristics of each character and changes in personality and behavior over the course of the novel.
2. Compose an essay in which you compare the novel's depiction of coyotes and illegal immigrants. You should have an introduction, at least three main ideas with supporting arguments, and a conclusion. Use MLA citations for references to the novel and include an outline and a Works Cited page.
3. Choose what you consider to be the novel's most important line or paragraph and write an essay explaining its significance.
4. Select ten terms from a glossary of literary terminology and use them in relation to the novel. For instance, that José is hired to distribute fliers advocating the erection of a wall around Arroyo Blanco Estates is an example of irony.

Vocabulary Study

1. Keep a vocabulary journal while you read the novel. Note and least five words in each chapter that you do not know, look them up, write their definitions, and use each one in a sample sentence. Then add a list of synonyms and antonyms for each word.
2. Make a glossary, choosing twenty of these words:
abhor
acquiesce
admonish
agnostic
altercation
amenity
anathema
annealed
auspicious
autocratic
bastion
callow
cathartic
comestible
conciliatory
consummate

contingency
 convene
 crenellated
 culpable
 definitive
 demur
 diurnal
 dolorous
 domicile
 dubious
 dun
 enervate
 extrude
 fauna
 feral
 ferment
 flagrant
 flora
 forlorn
 friable
 furtive
 futile
 gape
 glissade
 humanist
 imperious
 impervious
 inanimate
 incarcerate
 incessant
 injunction
 inscrutable
 insidious
 interim
 interminable
 inundate
 inviolable
 irrevocable
 jeer
 judicious
 languorous
 lithe
 lucid
 lurid
 malignant
 masticate
 mortify
 mundane
 neophyte
 numinous
 officious
 ominous
 parameter
 patina
 patrician
 penurious
 perfidious
 portentous
 preternatural

prostrate
 prudence
 pungent
 quaint
 rancid
 ravenous
 respite
 reticent
 rictus
 salutation
 sated
 sequester
 shank
 slough
 staccato
 strident
 supple
 surreptitiously
 tensile
 tepid
 timid
 transpose
 tribulation
 truncated
 ubiquitous
 unremitting
 vacillation
 venal
 vicissitude
 vigil

Grammar and Mechanics

1. Make two photocopies the first paragraph of the novel. Marking on the first copy, circle each subject, draw a box around each predicate, underline phrases once, and underline clauses twice. On the second copy, label each word as a verb, noun, pronoun, adjective, adverb, preposition, conjunction, or interjection.

2. There are seven ways to use a comma in the English language. Find and copy down an example of each usage from the novel.

Critical Thinking

Using the following list of common analogy patterns, create a test of twenty analogies from the novel. Trade tests with a partner, take them, and then switch back to grade.

Action and Meaning (shiver : cold), Age (puppy : dog), Antonyms (large : small), Cause and Effect (explosive decompression : pulmonary embolism), Class and Member (rodent : rat), Defining Characteristic (genius : intelligence), Definition (visage : expression), Degree (angry : livid), Function (keyboard : typing), Group and Member (whale : pod), Location (sunset : west), Manner

(laugh : snicker), Part and Whole (lens : glasses), Relation (father : son), Sex (bull : sow), Symbol and Symbolized (heart : love), Synonyms (happy : merry), Time Sequence (incubate : hatch), Tool and Purpose (knife : cut), Worker and Work (engineer : build), Worker and Place (sailor : ship), Worker and Product (photographer : photograph), Worker and Tool (photographer : camera)

An example of this would be coyote : Sacheverell

- a) coyote : fence
- b) Delaney : writer
- c) Cándido : Dame Edith
- d) Kyra : América

The correct answer is c. The coyote kills and eats Sacheverell, just as Cándido kills and eats Dame Edith.

Writing

1. Compose an essay contrasting Cándido's experience of America with Delaney's. You should have an introductory paragraph with a thesis statement, a body with at least three main ideas and a topic sentence in each paragraph, and a conclusion. Use MLA citations for quotes from the novel and include a Works Cited page and an outline.
2. As a group, discuss symbolism in the novel. Brainstorm lists of connected objects, characters, and ideas, then individually outline possible essays. Compare and discuss the outlines with partners.

Alternate Assessment

1. Read another story or novel by T.C. Boyle. Are there similarities in characterization, literary style, themes, motifs, or imagery?
2. Read *Candide* by Voltaire and compare Candide's series of trials to Cándido's misfortunes.
3. Read *Light in August* by William Faulkner and compare Joe Christmas to José Navidad. In what ways is José based on Joe? In what ways does Boyle deviate from the model?
4. Compose a short story relating the experiences of an immigrant from Africa, Europe, or Asia. How does their experience differ from Cándido's? Why?

Vocabulary Test

Circle the definition that *best* fits the word.

1. Venal

- a) malicious
- b) sick, unhealthy
- c) corrupt or corruptible
- d) taking pleasure in another's misfortune

2. Patina

- a) sheen on a surface from age or use
- b) type of tiles used for roofing
- c) irregular noise
- d) steep canyon

3. Anathema

- a) unlucky object or person
- b) thing or person widely reviled
- c) highly developed sense of irony
- d) poison

4. Masticate

- a) to chop
- b) to seethe with anger
- c) to accuse
- d) to chew

5. Culpable

- a) blameworthy
- b) capable of being crossed or forded
- c) crushable
- d) deserving scorn

6. Friable

- a) dry or hot
- b) easily crumbled
- c) edible
- d) rough in texture

7. Ubiquitous

- a) sanctimonious
- b) omnipotent
- c) omnipresent
- d) self-serving

8. Comestible

- a) enhancing one's appearance
- b) available for purchase
- c) sincere
- d) edible

9. Inundate

- a) to berate
- b) to engage in introspection
- c) to fill
- d) to overwhelm or flood

10. Callow

- a) yellowish and waxy
- b) immature

- c) insincere
- d) difficult to endure

11. Mundane

- a) boring
- b) exciting
- c) commonplace
- d) irregular

12. Insidious

- a) treacherous
- b) common
- c) silent
- d) flammable

13. Domicile

- a) camp
- b) place of residence
- c) house
- d) country

14. Fauna

- a) plants unique to a region
- b) plants of a region
- c) animals unique to a region
- d) animals of a region

15. Flora

- a) plants unique to a region
- b) plants of a region
- c) animals unique to a region
- d) animals of a region

Comprehension Test A

Part I: Character Identification (30 points)

Name the character(s) who fits these descriptions.

- _____ 1. real estate agent
- _____ 2. most vocal proponent of the gate and wall
- _____ 3. nature writer
- _____ 4. wants to return to Mexico
- _____ 5. convinces Delaney to buy a gun
- _____ 6. hit by a car
- _____ 7. born in a shed
- _____ 8. notable for having an impressive voice
- _____ 9. vandal caught on film
- _____ 10. brandishes a dog's leg at a community meeting
- _____ 11. under house arrest
- _____ 12. self-described "Pilgrim"
- _____ 13. beaten and robbed in the city
- _____ 14. refuses to eat fried chicken from a dumpster
- _____ 15. gives Delaney a step ladder

Part II: Fact or Opinion (20 points)

Mark the following statements either T for true, F for false or O for opinion.

- _____ 1. Kyra has an extensive mailing list.
- _____ 2. The Labor Exchange is permanently closed.
- _____ 3. The Mossbachers' dogs disappear after escaping from the yard.
- _____ 4. Liberal ideals are hypocritical.
- _____ 5. Delaney's car is stolen.
- _____ 6. Cándido is fired from his construction job because he cannot speak English.
- _____ 7. América is Cándido's third wife.
- _____ 8. Kyra values animals more than people.
- _____ 9. Jack Jardine considers the gate anti-democratic.
- _____ 10. Cándido used to be a street performer.

Part III: Chronology (20 points)

In the blanks provided, number the events in chronological .

- _____ 1. América and Cándido walk to Canoga Park.
- _____ 2. América, Cándido, and Socorro are

threatened at gunpoint.

- _____ 3. Two men are arrested under suspicion starting a fire.
- _____ 4. América and Cándido camp near an old car.
- _____ 5. Kyra accosts a man who has left his dog locked in a car.
- _____ 6. Delaney, Kyra, Jordan, and Kit stay the night in a hotel.
- _____ 7. A flood sweeps through Topanga Valley.
- _____ 8. América gets her first job.
- _____ 9. Cándido is given a turkey.
- _____ 10. The Da Ros residence is vandalized.

Part IV: Essay Questions (30 points)

- 1. How and of what is the wall around the neighborhood symbolic?
- 2. Contrast Cándido and Delaney.
- 3. Contrast América and Kyra.
- 4. Describe major changes in Delaney over the course of the novel.
- 5. Analyze the theme of racism in the novel.

Comprehension Test B

Part I: Identification (30 points)

Identify speakers of quotations.

- _____ 1. Immigrants are the lifeblood of this country
- _____ 2. Guantes. Please. Para las manos.
- _____ 3. I'm going to have to ask you to speak to . . . [the issue] or yield the floor.
- _____ 4. This isn't about coyotes, don't kid yourself. It's about Mexicans, it's about blacks.
- _____ 5. gobble, gobble, gobble
- _____ 6. I found this in my purse. I can't imagine how it got there.
- _____ 7. Do you know you locked that poor animal in the car, in this heat—?
- _____ 8. You want to burn? You want to die?
- _____ 9. No matter what you think about guns, would you rather be the killer or killee?
- _____ 10. You're the saint. You. You will be my midwife.
- _____ 11. Why did you run out like that? What possessed you?
- _____ 12. They took more than just your money, didn't they?
- _____ 13. Next thing you'll want to wall the whole place in like a medieval city or something
- _____ 14. she can't see anything, and I'm afraid.
- _____ 15. I don't know what Wasserman did but that streetcorner is deserted now, I mean deserted.

Part II: Short Answer (20 points)

Provide an answer to each of these questions:

- _____ 1. What is wrong with the baby?
- _____ 2. What is the name of the subdivision in which the Mossbachers live?
- _____ 3. How does Dominick Flood misuse Kit?
- _____ 4. What is América's first job?
- _____ 5. Outside of which major city is the novel set?
- _____ 6. Why does José have a reason to talk to América at the labor exchange?
- _____ 7. What does Delaney give Cándido at the beginning of the novel?
- _____ 8. What are the names of the

Mossbachers' pets?

- _____ 9. How is the wildfire started?
- _____ 10. From where is Cándido originally?

Part III: Fill-in (20 points)

Fill in the words that complete each statement.

1. Delaney thinks that _____ is responsible for the graffiti outside the community gate, but his film reveals that the culprit was _____.
2. On a previous trip to the United States, Cándido worked in _____ fields in _____.
3. Delaney receives a number of negative _____ in reaction to his article on _____.
4. After they lose their possessions in the fire, Cándido cooks _____ stew in a _____.
5. The Mossbacher house is floor plan #A227C, painted _____ White with _____ trim.

Part IV: Essay Questions (30 points)

1. Discuss Boyle's use of point of view in the novel.
2. Characterize Kyra Mossbacher.
3. Analyze the coyote as a central symbol of the narrative.
4. List the times that Delaney's life intersects with Cándido's life.
5. Discuss gender roles in the Mossbachers' marriage.

Answer Key

VOCABULARY TEST

1. C
2. A
3. B
4. D
5. A
6. B
7. C
8. D
9. D
10. B
11. C
12. A
13. B
14. D
15. B

COMPREHENSION TEST A

Part I: Character Identification (30 points)

1. Kyra Mossbacher
2. Jack Jardine
3. Delaney Mossbacher
4. América Rincón
5. Jack Jardine
6. Cándido Rincón
7. Socorro Rincón
8. Jack Cherrystone
9. Jack Jardine, Jr.
10. Delaney Mossbacher
11. Dominick Flood
12. Delaney Mossbacher
13. Cándido Rincón
14. América Rincón
15. Kyra Mossbacher

Part II: Fact or Opinion (20 points)

1. T
2. T
3. F
4. O
5. T
6. F
7. F
8. O
9. F
10. T

Part III: Chronology (20 points)

1. 4
2. 9

3. 7
4. 2
5. 3
6. 8
7. 10
8. 1
9. 6
10. 5

Part IV: Essay Questions (30 points)

Answers will vary.

COMPREHENSION TEST B

Part I: Identification (30 points)

1. Delaney Mossbacher
2. América Rincón
3. Jack Jardine
4. Delaney Mossbacher
5. Cándido Rincón
6. Kit
7. Kyra Mossbacher
8. Cándido Rincón
9. Jack Jardine
10. América Rincón
11. Delaney Mossbacher
12. Cándido Rincón
13. Delaney Mossbacher
14. América Rincón
15. Kyra Mossbacher

Part II: Short Answer (20 points)

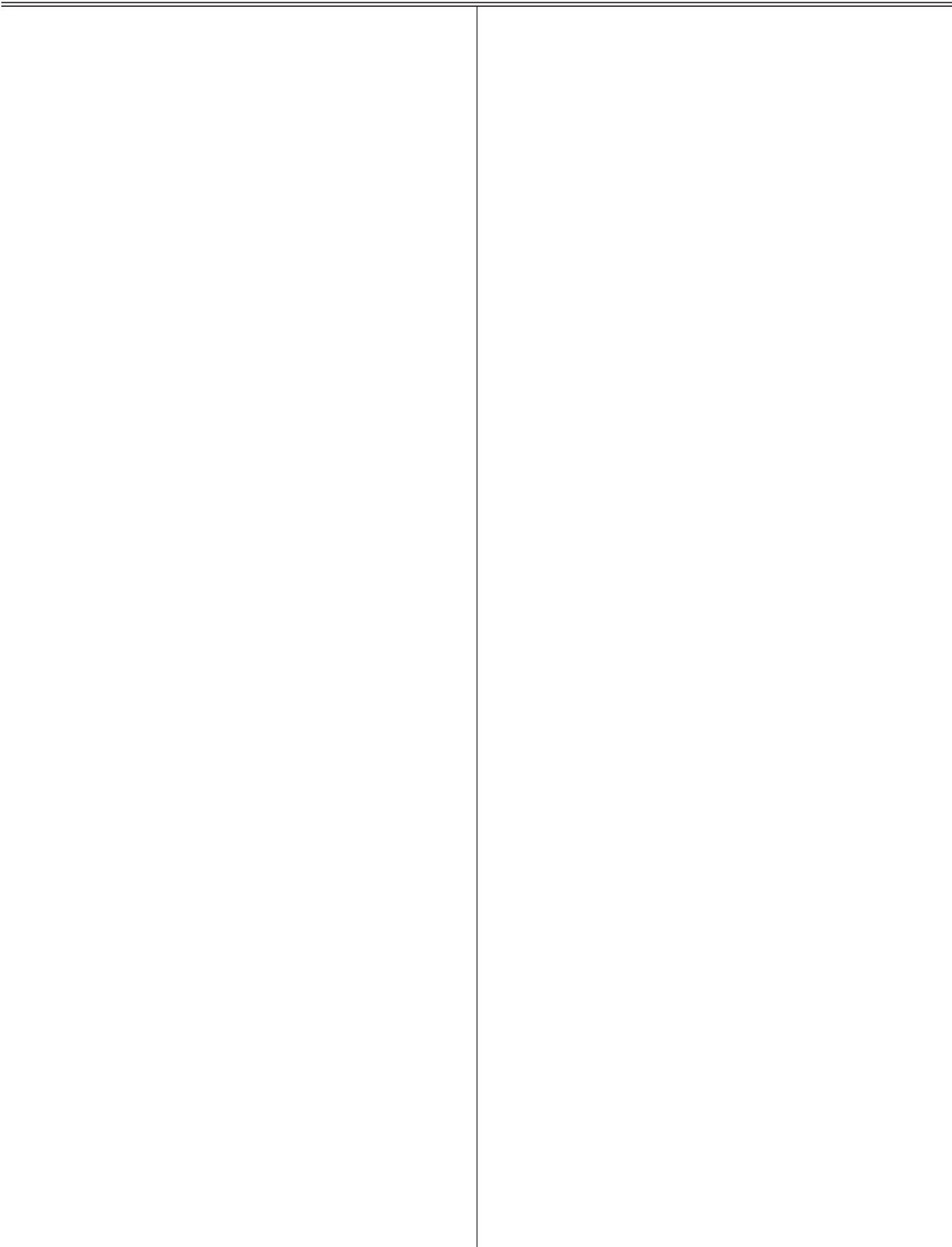
1. She is blind.
2. Arroyo Blanco Estates
3. He hides his monitoring device in her purse.
4. Scrubbing statues of The Buddha.
5. Los Angeles.
6. He gives her a cup of coffee.
7. \$20
8. Osbert, Sacheverell, and Dame Edith
9. Cándido's cooking a turkey.
10. Tepoztlan, Mexico

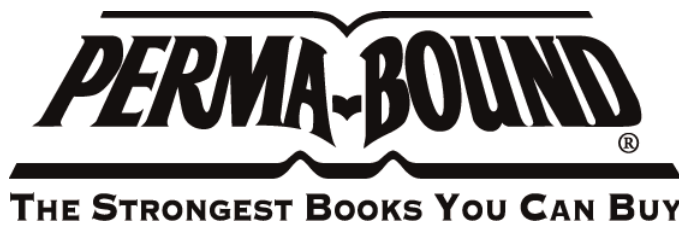
Part III: Fill-in (20 points)

1. Cándido, Jack, Jr.
2. potato, Idaho
3. letters, coyotes
4. cat, dog bowl
5. Rancho, Navajo

Part IV: Essay Questions (30 points)

Answers will vary.





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