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Author Online

LITERARY ANALYSIS: AUTOBIOGRAPHY

An autobiography is the true story of a person's life, told by that person. Autobiographies share the following characteristics:

- They are told from the first-person point of view.
- They focus on significant people and events in the writer's life.
- They express the ways those people and events affected the writer.

This excerpt from Barack Obama's autobiography describes a visit from his father. As you read, pay attention to the details that reveal the relationship between father and son.

A Cultural Mix
Barack Obama once described himself as a "skinny kid with a funny name." *Barack* means "blessing" in Swahili, a language spoken in Kenya and other African countries. Obama was named after his father, who was Kenyan. Obama's parents met at the University of Hawaii. There, Obama Sr. was the first-ever African student. Obama's mother, who is white, was originally from Kansas. Their marriage was short-lived, and Obama's father eventually moved back to Kenya. His mother remarried and took Obama to live with her new husband in Indonesia for four years. At age ten, Obama returned to Hawaii, where his grandparents helped raise him.

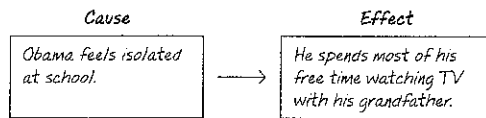


Barack Obama
born 1961

READING SKILL: RECOGNIZE CAUSE-AND-EFFECT RELATIONSHIPS

Why do people do the things they do? Why do they feel the way they feel? Understanding cause-and-effect relationships between actions, events, and feelings can give you greater insight into the people you read about. In Barack Obama's autobiography, not every cause-and-effect relationship is stated directly. Sometimes you will have to look deeper to notice when one or more things are responsible for causing another.

As you read, notice how Obama's emotions affect his actions. For each important cause-and-effect relationship, create a graphic like the one shown.



VOCABULARY IN CONTEXT

Barack Obama uses the following words to tell about his boyhood visit with his father. How well do you know these words? Place each one in the correct column of a chart like the one shown.

| | | | |
|------------------|---------------|--------------|----------|
| WORD LIST | dowdy | novelty | refuge |
| | inevitable | opaque | volatile |
| | irretrievably | recuperation | |

| | | |
|-----------|--------------|-------------------|
| Know Well | Think I Know | Don't Know at All |
| | | |

MORE ABOUT THE AUTHOR
For more on Barack Obama, visit the Literature Center at ClassZone.com.

VOCABULARY SKILL

VOCABULARY IN CONTEXT

1. Read item 1 aloud, emphasizing *dowdy*.
2. Point out the phrase *compared to the* lectures the other girls

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2010 Time Schedule ver3

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| 8월 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 | 21 | 22 | 23 | 24 | 25 | 26 | 27 | 28 | 29 | 30 | |
| 9월 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 | 21 | 22 | 23 | 24 | 25 | 26 | 27 | 28 | 29 | 30 | 31 |
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| 11월 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 | 21 | 22 | 23 | 24 | 25 | 26 | 27 | 28 | 29 | 30 | |
| 12월 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 | 21 | 22 | 23 | 24 | 25 | 26 | 27 | 28 | 29 | 30 | 31 |

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Dreams from My Father

BARACK OBAMA

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As the summer drew to a close, I became increasingly restless to start school. My main concern was finding companions my own age; but for my grandparents, my admission into Punahou Academy heralded the start of something grand, an elevation in the family status that they took great pains to let everyone know. Started by missionaries¹ in 1841, Punahou had grown into a prestigious prep school, an incubator for island elites. Its reputation had helped sway my mother in her decision to send me back to the States: It hadn't been easy to get me in, my grandparents told her; there was a long waiting list, and I was considered only because of the intervention of Gramps's boss, who was an alumnus (my first experience with affirmative action,² it seems, had little to do with race). . . . **A**

With my admission notice had come a thick packer of information that Toot³ set aside to pore over one Saturday afternoon. "Welcome to the Punahou family," the letter announced. A locker had been assigned to me; I was enrolled in a meal plan unless a box was checked; there was a list of things to buy—a uniform for physical education, scissors, a ruler, number two pencils, a calculator (optional). Gramps spent the evening reading the entire school catalog, a thick book that listed my expected progression through the next seven years—the college prep courses, the extracurricular activities, the traditions of well-rounded excellence. With each new item, Gramps grew more and more animated; several times he got up, with his thumb saving his place, and headed toward the room where Toot was reading, his voice full of amazement: "Madelyn, get a load of this!"

ANALYZE VISUALS
Look at Obama's actual class picture. What details about Obama and his classmates stand out the most?

A AUTOBIOGRAPHY
What makes starting school such an important event for Obama and his family?

- missionaries: people who travel to distant places and spread their religion.
- affirmative action: a system in which employers and schools give preference to members of minority groups in order to make up for past discrimination.
- Toot: Obama's name for his grandmother.

832 UNIT 7: HISTORY, CULTURE, AND THE AUTHOR

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2010 Time Schedule ver3

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classmates had been together since kindergarten; they lived in the same neighborhoods, in split-level homes with swimming pools; their fathers coached the same Little League teams; their mothers sponsored the bake sales. Nobody played soccer or badminton or chess, and I had no idea how to throw a football in a spiral or balance on a skateboard. **B**

A ten-year-old's nightmare. Still, in my discomfort that first month, I was no worse off than the other children who were relegated to the category of misfits—the girls who were too tall or too shy, the boy who was mildly hyperactive, the kids whose asthma excused them from PE.

There was one other child in my class, though, who reminded me of a different sort of pain. Her name was Coretta, and before my arrival she had been the only black person in our grade. She was plump and dark and didn't seem to have many friends. From the first day, we avoided each other but watched from a distance, as if direct contact would only remind us more keenly of our isolation.

Finally, during recess one hot, cloudless day, we found ourselves occupying the same corner of the playground. I don't remember what we said to each other, but I remember that suddenly she was chasing me around the jungle gyms and swings. She was laughing brightly, and I teased her and dodged this way and that, until she finally caught me and we fell to the ground breathless. When I looked up, I saw a group of children, faceless before the glare of the sun, pointing down at us.

"Coretta has a boyfriend! Coretta has a boyfriend!"

The chants grew louder as a few more kids circled us.

"She's not my g-girlfriend," I stammered. I looked to Coretta for some assistance, but she just stood there looking down at the ground. "Coretta's got a boyfriend! Why don't you kiss her, mister boyfriend?"

"I'm not her boyfriend!" I shouted. I ran up to Coretta and gave her a slight shove; she staggered back and looked up at me, but still said nothing. "Leave me alone!" I shouted again. And suddenly Coretta was running, faster and faster, until she disappeared from sight. Appreciative laughs rose around me. Then the bell rang, and the teachers appeared to round us back into class. **C**

For the rest of the afternoon, I was haunted by the look on Coretta's face just before she had started to run: her disappointment, and the accusation. I wanted to explain to her somehow that it had been nothing personal; I'd just never had a girlfriend before and saw no particular need to have one now. But I didn't even know if that was true. I knew only that it was too late for explanations, that somehow I'd been tested and found wanting; and whenever I snuck a glance at Coretta's desk, I would see her with her head bent over her work, appearing as if nothing had happened, pulled into herself and asking no favors.

B CAUSE AND EFFECT

What are some of the causes of Obama's discomfort around his classmates?

READING SKILL

B CAUSE AND EFFECT

Remind students to refer to the graphic from page 835. *answer: Obama's classmates teased him and asked rude questions, making him feel the*

C CAUSE AND EFFECT

Reread lines 91–96. What causes Obama to push Coretta away?

READING SKILL

C CAUSE AND EFFECT

Remind students to refer to the graphic from page 835. *answer: The students' chanting "Coretta has a boyfriend" caused Obama to push Coretta away, embarrassing her and making her*

My act of betrayal bought me some room from the other children, and like Coretta, I was mostly left alone. I made a few friends, learned to speak less often in class, and managed to toss a wobbly football around. But from that day forward, a part of me felt trampled on, crushed, and I took **refuge** in the life that my grandparents led. After school let out, I would walk the five blocks to our apartment; if I had any change in my pockets, I might stop off at a newsstand run by a blind man, who would let me know what new comics had come in. Gramps would be at home to let me into the apartment, and as he lay down for his afternoon nap, I would watch cartoons and sitcom reruns. At four-thirty, I would wake Gramps and we would drive downtown to pick up Toot. My homework would be done in time for dinner, which we ate in front of the television. There I would stay for the rest of the evening, negotiating with Gramps over which programs to watch, sharing the latest snack food he'd discovered at the supermarket. At ten o'clock, I went to my room (Johnny Carson came on at that time, and there was no negotiating around that), and I would fall asleep to the sounds of Top 40 music on the radio. **C**

Nested in the soft, forgiving bosom of America's consumer culture, I felt safe; it was as if I had dropped into a long hibernation. I wonder sometimes how long I might have stayed there had it not been for the telegram Toot found in the mailbox one day.

"Your father's coming to see you," she said. "Next month. Two weeks after your mother gets here. They'll both stay through New Year's."

She carefully folded the paper and slipped it into a drawer in the kitchen. Both she and Gramps fell silent, the way I imagine people react when the doctor tells them they have a serious, but curable, illness. For a moment the air was sucked out of the room, and we stood suspended, alone with our thoughts.

"Well," Toot said finally, "I suppose we better start looking for a place where he can stay."

Gramps took off his glasses and rubbed his eyes.

"Should be one heck of a Christmas."

Over lunch, I explained to a group of boys that my father was a prince. "My grandfather, see, he's a chief. It's sort of like the king of the tribe, you know . . . like the Indians. So that makes my father a prince. He'll take over when my grandfather dies."

"What about after that?" one of my friends asked as we emptied our trays into the trash bin. "I mean, will you go back and be a prince?"

"Well . . . if I want to, I could. It's sort of complicated, see, 'cause the tribe is full of warriors. Like Obama . . . that means 'Burning Spear.' The men in our tribe all want to be chief, so my father has to settle these feuds before I can come." **E**

refuge (rĕf'yooj) *n.* a source of comfort in times of trouble

2 Targeted Passage

D AUTOBIOGRAPHY
What role do television and radio play in Obama's daily life as a child?

E CAUSE AND EFFECT
Why might Obama tell exaggerated or untrue stories about his father?

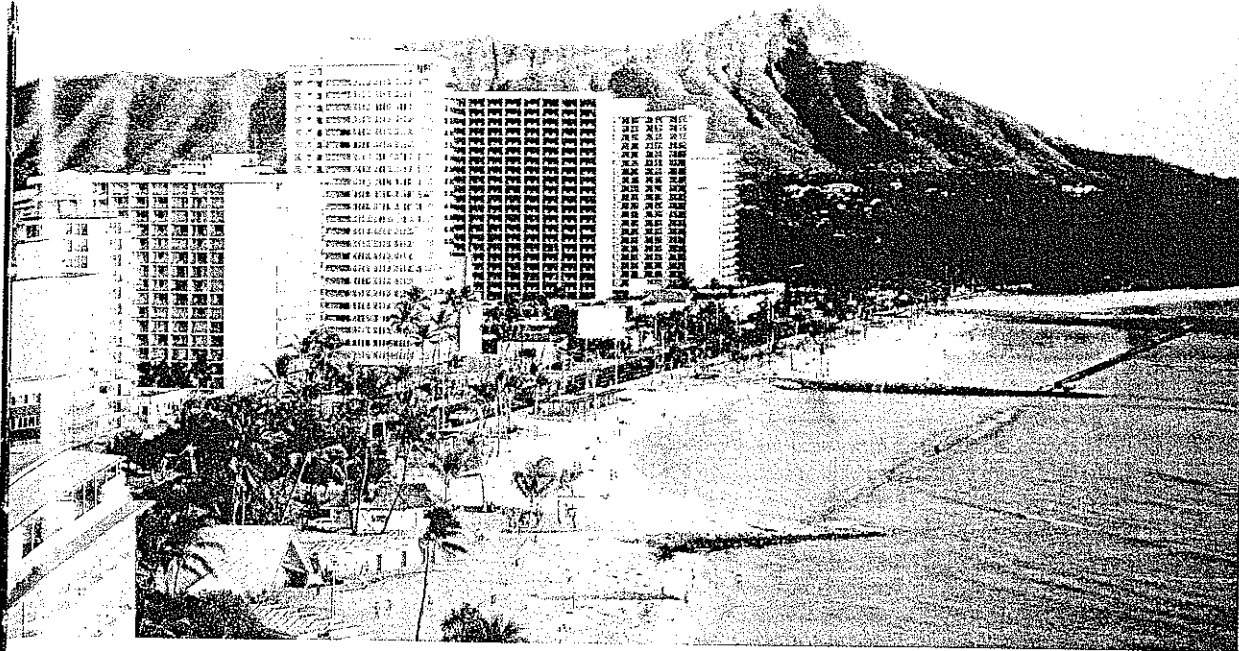
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As the words tumbled out of my mouth, and I felt the boys re-adjust to me, more curious and familiar as we bumped into each other in the line back to class, a part of me really began to believe the story. But another part of me knew that what I was telling them was a lie, something I'd constructed from the scraps of information I'd picked up from my mother. After a week of my father in the flesh, I had decided that I preferred his more distant image, an image I could alter on a whim—or ignore when convenient. If my father hadn't exactly disappointed me, he remained something unknown, something **volatile** and vaguely threatening.

My mother had sensed my apprehension in the days building up to his arrival—I suppose it mirrored her own—and so, in between her efforts to prepare the apartment we'd sublet for him, she would try to assure me that the reunion would go smoothly. She had maintained a correspondence with him throughout the time we had been in Indonesia, she explained, and he knew all about me. Like her, my father had remarried, and I now had five brothers and one sister living in Kenya. He had been in a bad car accident, and this trip was part of his **recuperation** after a long stay in the hospital.

"You two will become great friends," she decided. . . .

ANALYZE VISUALS

Look at this picture of Honolulu in 1972. What are some features of the setting where Obama grew up?

volatile (vōl'ə-tī) *adj.*
difficult to define or pin down; unpredictable

recuperation
(rī-kōō'pə-rā'shən) *n.*
a return to health or strength; recovery

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The big day finally arrived, and Miss Hefiy let me out early from class, wishing me luck. I left the school building feeling like a condemned man. My legs were heavy, and with each approaching step toward my grandparents' apartment, the thump in my chest grew louder. When I entered the elevator, I stood without pressing the button. The door closed, then reopened, and an older Filipino man who lived on the fourth floor got on.

170 "Your grandfather says your father is coming to visit you today," the man said cheerfully. "You must be very happy." ❶

When—after standing in front of the door and looking out across the Honolulu skyline at a distant ship, and then squinting at the sky to watch sparrows spiral through the air—I could think of no possible means of escape, I rang the doorbell. Toot opened the door.

"There he is! Come on, Bar . . . come meet your father."

And there, in the unlit hallway, I saw him, a tall, dark figure who walked with a slight limp. He crouched down and put his arms around me, and I let my arms hang at my sides. Behind him stood my mother, her chin trembling as usual.

180 "Well, Barry," my father said. "It is a good thing to see you after so long. Very good."

He led me by the hand into the living room, and we all sat down.

"So, Barry, your grandmama has told me that you are doing very well in school."

I shrugged.

"He's feeling a little shy, I think," Toot offered. She smiled and rubbed my head.

"Well," my father said, "you have no reason to be shy about doing well. Have I told you that your brothers and sister have also excelled in their

190 schooling? It's in the blood, I think," he said with a laugh.

I watched him carefully as the adults began to talk. He was much thinner than I had expected, the bones of his knees cutting the legs of his trousers in sharp angles; I couldn't imagine him lifting anyone off the ground. Beside him, a cane with a blunt ivory head leaned against the wall. He wore a blue blazer, and a white shirt, and a scarlet ascot.⁵ His horn-rimmed glasses reflected the light of the lamp so that I couldn't see his eyes very well, but when he took the glasses off to rub the bridge of his nose, I saw that they were slightly yellow, the eyes of someone who's had malaria⁶ more than once. There was a fragility about his frame, I thought, a caution. . . . After an hour or so, my mother suggested 200 that he looked tired and should take a nap, and he agreed. He gathered up his travel bag, then stopped in mid-stride and began to fish around in it, until he finally pulled out three wooden figurines—a lion, an elephant, and an ebony⁷ man in tribal dress bearing a drum—and handed them to me. ❷

5. ascot (ăs'kət): a neck scarf worn knotted so that its ends lie flat, one upon the other.

6. malaria (mə-lār'ē-ə): a serious disease that is spread by mosquitoes and causes fever and chills.

7. ebony (ēb'ə-nē): a hard, black wood grown in Africa.

❶ AUTOBIOGRAPHY
How does Obama feel about seeing his father? Compare this with how other people think he feels.

❷ AUTOBIOGRAPHY
What are Obama's first impressions of his father?

"Say thank you, Bar," my mother said.

"Thank you," I muttered.

My father and I both looked down at the carvings, lifeless in my hands.

He touched my shoulder.

"They are only small things," he said softly. Then he nodded to Gramps, and together they gathered up his luggage and went downstairs to the other 210 apartment.

A month. That's how long we would have together, the five of us in my grandparents' living room most evenings, during the day on drives around the island or on short walks past the private landmarks of a family: the lot where my father's apartment had once stood; the remodeled hospital where I had been born; my grandparents' first house in Hawaii, before the one on University Avenue, a house I had never known. There was so much to tell in that single month, so much explaining to do; and yet when I reach back into my memory for the words of my father, the small interactions or conversations we might have had, they seem **irretrievably** lost. Perhaps they're imprinted 220 too deeply, his voice the seed of all sorts of tangled arguments that I carry on with myself, as impenetrable now as the pattern of my genes, so that all I can perceive is the worn-out shell. My wife offers a simpler explanation—that boys and their fathers don't always have much to say to each other unless and until they trust—and this may come closer to the mark, for I often felt mute before him, and he never pushed me to speak. I'm left with mostly images that appear and die off in my mind like distant sounds: his head thrown back in laughter at one of Gramps's jokes as my mother and I hang Christmas ornaments; his grip on my shoulder as he introduces me to one of his old friends from college; the narrowing of his eyes, the stroking of his sparse goatee, as he reads his 230 important books. **H**

Images, and his effect on other people. For whenever he spoke—his one leg draped over the other, his large hands outstretched to direct or deflect attention, his voice deep and sure, cajoling and laughing—I would see a sudden change take place in the family. Gramps became more vigorous and thoughtful, my mother more bashful; even Toot, smoked out of the foxhole of her bedroom, would start sparring with him about politics or finance, stabbing the air with her blue-veined hands to make a point. It was as if his presence had summoned the spirit of earlier times and allowed each of them to reprise his or her old role; as if Dr. King had never been shot, and the 240 Kennedys continued to beckon the nation, and war and riot and famine were nothing more than temporary setbacks, and there was nothing to fear but fear itself. **I**

It fascinated me, this strange power of his, and for the first time I began to think of my father as something real and immediate, perhaps even permanent.

irretrievably

(ir'ri-trē'və-blē) adv.
permanently; in a manner
that cannot be reversed

H AUTOBIOGRAPHY

Reread lines 211–230.
Why is this month with his father so important to Obama? Note the memories of his father that are most vivid to him.

I CAUSE AND EFFECT

What effect does Obama's father have on members of the family?

LITERARY

H AUTOBIOGRAPHY

Possible answer: In a short month, Obama feels pressure from the memories of the features of single events, such as his father's head-tilt, his grip on his father's shoulder, and the narrowing of his eyes as he strokes his goatee.

READING SKILL

I CAUSE AND EFFECT

Remind students of the effect of the father's presence in the graphic novel. Possible answer: He energizes the family, watching television, and is usually quiet and thoughtful, or a

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After a few weeks, though, I could feel the tension around me beginning to build. Gramps complained that my father was sitting in his chair. Toot muttered, while doing the dishes, that she wasn't anybody's servant. My mother's mouth pinched, her eyes avoiding her parents, as we ate dinner. One evening, I turned on the television to watch a cartoon special—*How the*


250 *Grinch Stole Christmas*—and the whispers broke into shouts.
“Barry, you have watched enough television tonight,” my father said. “Go in your room and study now, and let the adults talk.”

Toot stood up and turned off the TV. “Why don't you turn the show on in the bedroom, Bar.”

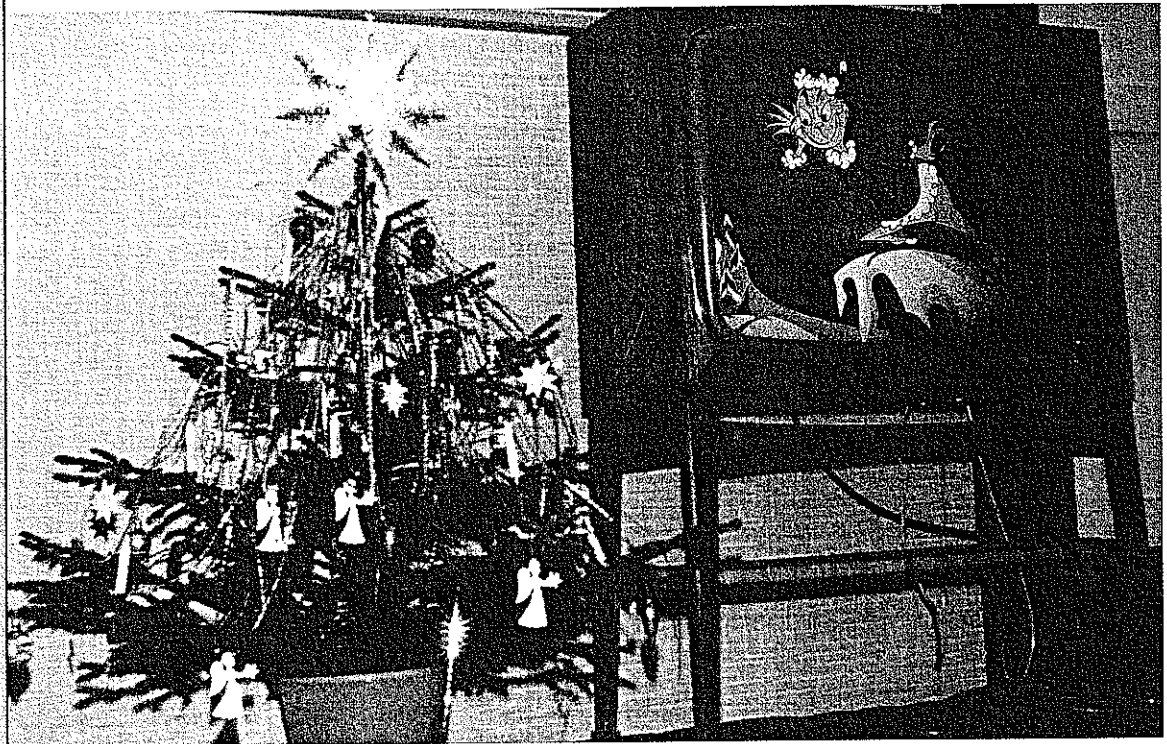
“No, Madelyn,” my father said, “that's not what I mean. He has been watching that machine constantly, and now it is time for him to study.”

My mother tried to explain that it was almost Christmas vacation, that the cartoon was a Christmas favorite, that I had been looking forward to it all week. “It won't last long.”

260 “Anna, this is nonsense. If the boy has done his work for tomorrow, he can begin on his next day's assignments. Or the assignments he will have when he returns from the holidays.” He turned to me. “I tell you, Barry, you do not work as hard as you should. Go now, before I get angry at you.”

 Targeted Passage

ANALYZE VISUALS
Compare the scene in the photograph with the way you imagine Toot and Gramps' apartment. What are the similarities?



I went to my room and slammed the door, listening as the voices outside grew louder, Gramps insisting that this was his house, Toot saying that my father had no right to come in and bully everyone, including me, after being gone all this time. I heard my father say that they were spoiling me, that I needed a firm hand, and I listened to my mother tell her parents that nothing ever changed with them. We all stood accused, and even after my father left
270 and Toot came in to say that I could watch the last five minutes of my show, I felt as if something had cracked open between all of us, goblins rushing out of some old, sealed-off lair. Watching the green Grinch on the television screen, intent on ruining Christmas, eventually transformed by the faith of the doe-eyed creatures who inhabited Whoville, I saw it for what it was: a lie. I began to count the days until my father would leave and things would return to normal. ❊

The next day, Toot sent me down to the apartment where my father was staying to see if he had any laundry to wash. I knocked, and my father opened the door, shirtless. Inside, I saw my mother ironing some of his
280 clothes. Her hair was tied back in a ponytail, and her eyes were soft and dark, as if she'd been crying. My father asked me to sit down beside him on the bed, but I told him that Toot needed me to help her, and left after relaying the message. Back upstairs, I had begun cleaning my room when my mother came in.

"You shouldn't be mad at your father, Bar. He loves you very much. He's just a little stubborn sometimes."

"Okay," I said without looking up. I could feel her eyes follow me around the room until she finally let out a slow breath and went to the door.

"I know all this stuff is confusing for you," she said. "For me, too. Just try
290 to remember what I said, okay?" She put her hand on the doorknob. "Do you want me to close the door?"

I nodded, but she had been gone for only a minute when she stuck her head back into the room.

"By the way, I forgot to tell you that Miss Hefty has invited your father to come to school on Thursday. She wants him to speak to the class."

I couldn't imagine worse news. I spent that night and all of the next day trying to suppress thoughts of the **inevitable**; the faces of my classmates when they heard about mud huts, all my lies exposed, the painful jokes afterward. Each time I remembered, my body squirmed as if it had received a jolt to
300 the nerves. ❊

I was still trying to figure out how I'd explain myself when my father walked into our class the next day. Miss Hefty welcomed him eagerly, and as I took my seat I heard several children ask each other what was going on. I became more desperate when our math teacher, a big, no-nonsense Hawaiian named Mr. Eldredge, came into the room, followed by thirty confused children from his homeroom next door.

❊ CAUSE AND EFFECT

What causes tension in the family?

inevitable

(ĭn-ĕv'ĭ-tə-bəl) *n.*
that which cannot be avoided or prevented

❊ AUTOBIOGRAPHY

Why is Obama afraid to have his father visit his class?

READING

❊ CAU

Remind the grasp Obama's and grasp disappear family n

LITERA

❊ AU

Possible embarrass about h

"We have a special treat for you today," Miss Hefty began. "Barry Obama's father is here, and he's come all the way from Kenya, in Africa, to tell us about his country."

310 The other kids looked at me as my father stood up, and I held my head stiffly, trying to focus on a vacant point on the blackboard behind him. He had been speaking for some time before I could finally bring myself back to the moment. He was leaning against Miss Hefty's thick oak desk and describing the deep gash in the earth where mankind had first appeared. He spoke of the wild animals that still roamed the plains, the tribes that still required a young boy to kill a lion to prove his manhood. He spoke of the customs of the Luo, how elders received the utmost respect and made laws for all to follow under great-trunked trees. And he told us of Kenya's struggle to be free, how the British had wanted to stay and unjustly rule the people, just as they had in America; how many had been enslaved only because of the color of their skin, just as they had in America; but that Kenyans, like all of us in the room, longed to be free and develop themselves through hard work and sacrifice.

When he finished, Miss Hefty was absolutely beaming with pride. All my classmates applauded heartily, and a few struck up the courage to ask questions, each of which my father appeared to consider carefully before answering. The bell rang for lunch, and Mr. Eldredge came up to me.

"You've got a pretty impressive father."

The ruddy-faced boy who had asked about cannibalism said, "Your dad is pretty cool."

330 And off to one side, I saw Coretta watch my father say good-bye to some of the children. She seemed too intent to smile; her face showed only a look of simple satisfaction. **E**

Two weeks later he was gone. In that time, we stand together in front of the Christmas tree and pose for pictures, the only ones I have of us together, me holding an orange basketball, his gift to me, him showing off the tie I've bought him ("Ah, people will know that I am very important wearing such a tie"). At a Dave Brubeck⁸ concert, I struggle to sit quietly in the dark auditorium beside him, unable to follow the spare equations of sound that the performers make, careful to clap whenever he claps. For brief spells in the day I will lie beside him, the two of us alone in the apartment subtler from a retired old woman whose name I forget, the place full of quilts and doilies and knitted seat covers, and I read my book while he reads his. He remains **opaque** to me, a present mass; when I mimic his gestures or turns of phrase, I know neither their origins nor their consequences, can't see how they play out over time. But I grow accustomed to his company. **M**

The day of his departure, as my mother and I helped him pack his bags, he unearthed two records, forty-fives, in dull brown dust jackets.

8. **Dave Brubeck** (brōō'bēk): an American jazz pianist and composer whose music was very popular during the 1960s.

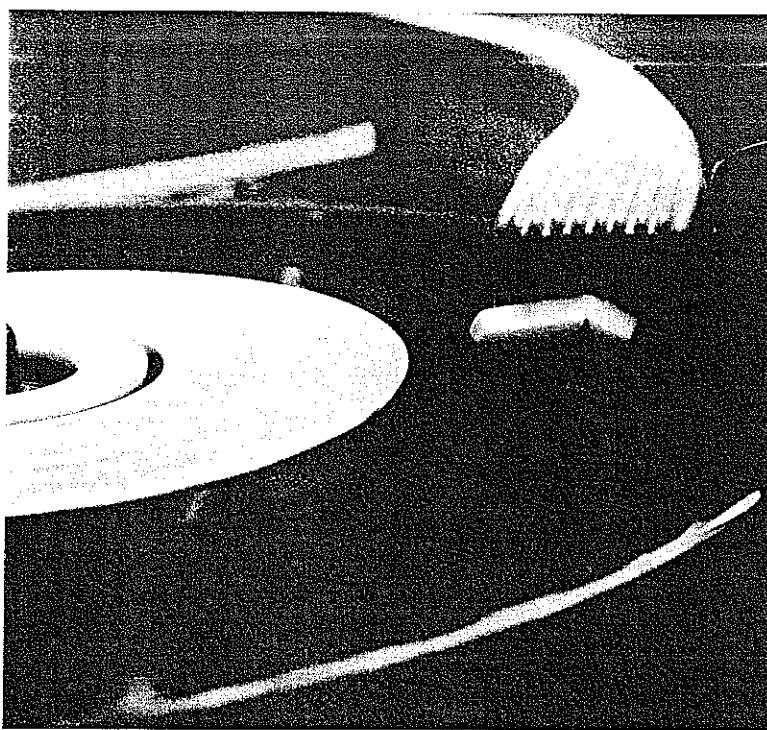
E CAUSE AND EFFECT

What effect does Obama's father's talk have on the class?

opaque (ō-pāk') *adj.*
hidden; difficult or impossible to understand

M AUTOBIOGRAPHY



In what ways has Obama's relationship with his father changed during their visit?




ANALYZE VISUALS
What details of this stereo does the photographer focus on?

“Barry! Look here—I forgot that I had brought these for you. The sounds of your continent.”

350 It took him a while to puzzle out my grandparents’ old stereo, but finally the disk began to turn, and he gingerly placed the needle on the groove. A tinny guitar lick opened, then the sharp horns, the thump of drums, then the guitar again, and then the voices, clean and joyful as they rode up the back beat, urging us on.

“Come, Barry,” my father said. “You will learn from the master.” And suddenly his slender body was swaying back and forth, the lush sound was rising, his arms were swinging as they cast an invisible net, his feet wove over the floor in off-beats, his bad leg stiff but his rump high, his head back, his hips moving in a tight circle. The rhythm quickened, the horns sounded, and
360 his eyes closed to follow his pleasure, and then one eye opened to peek down at me and his solemn face spread into a silly grin, and my mother smiled, and my grandparents walked in to see what all the commotion was about. I took my first tentative steps with my eyes closed, down, up, my arms swinging, the voices lifting. And I hear him still: As I follow my father into the sound, he lets out a quick shout, bright and high, a shout that leaves much behind and reaches out for more, a shout that cries for laughter.  

 **Targeted Passage**

CAUSE AND EFFECT
Reread lines 355–366.
What feelings does his father’s music and dancing create in Obama?

ANALYZE VISUALS
Possible answer: the arm that holds the table of the stereo.

READING STRATEGY

CAUSE AND EFFECT
Remind students to look for cause and effect in the graphic organizer.
ANSWER: Obama’s father’s music and dancing create in Obama a sense of joy and pride in his heritage.

SELECTING MAIN IDEAS
REFLECT HOW THE ADULT CHARACTER’S PAST EXPERIENCES WITH THE CURRENT SITUATION AFFECT HIS CURRENT BEHAVIOR.

Comprehension

1. **Recall** Why is Miss Hefty interested in Obama's Kenyan heritage?
2. **Clarify** Why does Obama's father object to the young Obama watching television?
3. **Summarize** What does Obama's father discuss in his speech to Obama's class?

Literary Analysis


4. **Identify Cultural Values** Note things about American culture that Obama values as a child. As an adult looking back on his life, do you think Obama is critical of the way he spent his own time? Explain why or why not.
5. **Interpret Autobiography** Do you think Obama grows close to his father during their one-month visit? Cite details from the autobiography to support your opinion about their relationship.
6. **Examine Cause-and-Effect Relationships** Review the cause-and-effect graphics you created as you read. Create one more that shows the overall effect Obama's father's visit had on Obama.

Cause Effect

Obama's father visits.

→
7. **Analyze a Symbolic Event** Reread lines 73–104. Obama calls his rejection of Coretta a “betrayal.” What might this event symbolize, beyond Obama's desire to be left alone by the other students?
8. **Draw Conclusions** How does the title *Dreams from My Father* relate to this selection? What dreams do you think Obama's father inspired in Obama? Consider how Obama's feelings of pride changed during the visit.

Extension and Challenge

9. **Literary Criticism** Barack Obama has said of *Dreams from My Father*, “I see my book as part of my politics. . . . Policy [official government planning] has to be guided by facts, but to move people you have to tell stories.” Why might people be moved by Obama's personal story? Why might they relate to him?
10.  **SOCIAL STUDIES CONNECTION** Research more about the history, beliefs, and culture of the Luo tribe in Kenya. Then make a poster that summarizes the key points of what you learned.



RESEARCH LINKS

For more on the Luo tribe in Kenya, visit the Research Center at ClassZone.com.

Vocabulary in Context

VOCABULARY PRACTICE

Answer each question to show your understanding of the vocabulary words.

1. Are **dowdy** clothes stylish or unstylish?
2. If you try to change the **inevitable**, are you likely to succeed?
3. If an item is **irretrievably** lost, is it possible or impossible to find?
4. If having guests over is a **novelty**, is it typical or unusual?
5. If an idea seems **opaque** to you, is that idea easy or difficult to understand?
6. During a **recuperation**, do you get better or worse?
7. Is a rabbit more likely to take **refuge** in its burrow or in an open field?
8. If someone has a **volatile** personality, are the person's actions difficult or easy to predict?

VOCABULARY IN WRITING

Using at least two vocabulary words, write a paragraph from young Obama's point of view that explains how he feels when his family argues about his television habits.

EXAMPLE SENTENCES

After a tense evening at the apartment, I want to take refuge in the comfort of my room.

VOCABULARY STRATEGY: DENOTATION AND CONNOTATION

A word's **denotation** is its dictionary definition, but many words have additional ideas and feelings associated with them. These associations, or shades of meaning, are called **connotations**. Connotations can be positive or negative. For example, the words *clever* and *conniving* have different connotations. *Clever* describes someone who is creative and smart, while *conniving* implies the person is manipulative and dishonest. To fully understand what you read, it is important to recognize word connotations.

PRACTICE Each pair of phrases uses words with similar meanings but different connotations. Use each phrase in a sentence that reflects the word's connotation.

- | | |
|---|--|
| 1. a unique gift a bizarre gift | 3. a rowdy audience a lively audience |
| 2. the stubborn child the persistent child | 4. to control a situation to manipulate a situation |

