

from most of his classmates.

**SKETCH IT** What has been your proudest moment? It doesn't have to involve something others recognize as a major accomplishment. It just has to be meaningful to you. Make a sketch that reflects details of this moment and how you felt. If you're struggling to think of an example, make a drawing of a goal you have for yourself and what it might be like to achieve it.

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**BEST PRACTICES TOOLKIT**

Differentiated Instruction

**Reading Support**

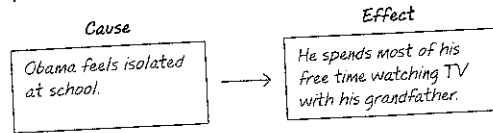


Audio Anthology CD\*

## 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

the first-ever African American president'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.

**A Life of Service** After graduating from Columbia University in New York City, Obama worked as a community organizer in Chicago, helping people affected by unemployment. He then attended Harvard Law School. He was offered jobs working for an important judge and in high-powered law firms, but instead he chose to return to Chicago to practice civil-rights law. In 1997, Obama entered politics, becoming an Illinois state senator representing Chicago's south side. In 2004, Obama was elected to the United States Senate. That same year, he wrote and presented the keynote speech at the Democratic National Convention, an important meeting at which the Democratic Party declares its candidate for president. The speech and Obama's delivery of it were widely praised.



**MORE ABOUT THE AUTHOR**  
For more on Barack Obama, visit the Literature Center at [ClassZone.com](http://ClassZone.com).

## VOCABULARY SKILLS

### ▲ VOCABULARY IN CONTEXT

1. Read item 1 aloud, emphasizing *dowdy*.
2. Point out the phrase *compared to the* in the text. Discuss how it compares the other girls.

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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 missionaries<sup>1</sup> 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,<sup>2</sup> it seems, had little to do with race). . . . **A**

With my admission notice had come a thick packet of information that Toot<sup>3</sup> 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.   
20 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!"

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

832 UNIT 7: HISTORY, CULTURE, AND THE AUTHOR

#### 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?

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40 We sat at a table with four other children, and Miss Hefty, an energetic middle-aged woman with short gray hair, took attendance. When she read my full name, I heard titters break across the room. Frederick leaned over to me. “I thought your name was Barry.”

“Would you prefer if we called you Barry?” Miss Hefty asked. “Barack is such a beautiful name. Your grandfather tells me your father is Kenyan. I used to live in Kenya, you know. Teaching children just your age. It’s such a magnificent country. Do you know what tribe your father is from?”

Her question brought on more giggles, and I remained speechless for a moment. When I finally said “Luo,” a sandy-haired boy behind me repeated the word in a loud hoot, like the sound of a monkey. The children could no longer contain themselves, and it took a stern reprimand from Miss Hefty before the class would settle down and we could mercifully move on to the next person on the list.

I spent the rest of the day in a daze. A redheaded girl asked to touch my hair and seemed hurt when I refused. A ruddy-faced boy asked me if my father ate people. When I got home, Gramps was in the middle of preparing dinner.

“So how was it? Isn’t it terrific that Miss Hefty used to live in Kenya? Makes the first day a little easier, I’ll bet.”

I went into my room and closed the door.

60 The **novelty** of having me in the class quickly wore off for the other kids, although my sense that I didn’t belong continued to grow. The clothes that Gramps and I had chosen for me were too old-fashioned; the Indonesian sandals that had served me so well in Djakarta<sup>4</sup> were **dowdy**. Most of my

4. Djakarta (ja-kär'te): the capital city of Indonesia, an island nation in Southeast Asia; sometimes spelled *Jakarta*.



Kenya is a country of great ethnic diversity.

### Targeted Passage

**novelty** (növ'el-tē) *n.* the quality of being new

**dowdy** (dou'dē) *adj.* out of style; shabby


...many, during recess one not, 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. 

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.

 **CAUSE AND EFFECT**

Reread lines 91–96.

What causes Obama to push Coretta away?

**READING SKILL**

 **CAUSE AND I**

Remind students to reread lines 91–96 in the graphic from page 835. *answer: The students chanting "Coretta has a boyfriend" push Coretta away.*

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120 negotiating around that), and I would fall asleep to the sounds of Top 40 music on the radio. **D**

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 <sup>130</sup> 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."

**O**ver 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."

<sup>140</sup> "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**

**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?



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** (vɒl'ə-tl) *adj.*  
difficult to define or pin down; unpredictable

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

Lines 14  
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Very good.”  
“Oh, Barry, my father said. “It is a good thing to see you after so long.

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

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.<sup>5</sup> 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 malaria<sup>6</sup> more than once. There was a fragility about his frame, I thought, a caution. . . . After an hour or so, my mother suggested 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 ebony<sup>7</sup> man in tribal dress beating a drum—and handed them to me. ©

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’ē-nē): a hard, black wood grown in Africa.

© AUTOBIOGRAPHY  
What are Obama’s first impressions of his father?

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we might have had, they seem **irretrievably** lost. Perhaps they're imprinted  
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  
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  
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'Y-trē've-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 answers:  
short month  
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**READING SKILL**

**I CAUSE AND EFFECT**

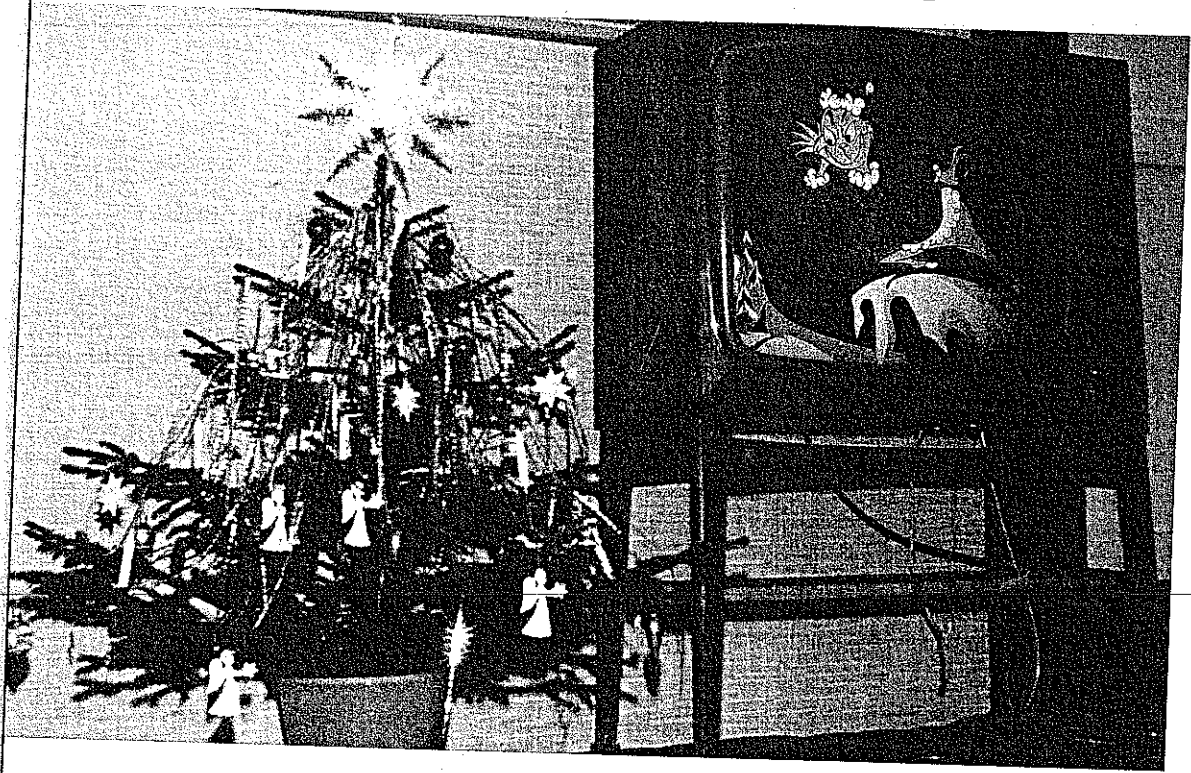
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begin on his next day's assignments. Or the assignments he will have when he returns from the holidays." He turned to me. "I tell you, Barry, you do not work as hard as you should. Go now, before I get angry at you."

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



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. **K**

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.

**inevitable**

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

**K AUTOBIOGRAPHY**

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

**LITERA**

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*Possible  
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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. **1**

**T**wo 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 Brubeck<sup>8</sup> 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  
340 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. **11**

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.

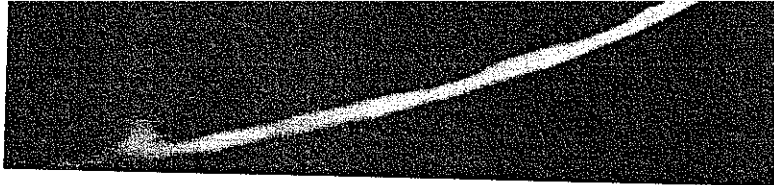
**11 CAUSE AND EFFECT**

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

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

**11 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?

**ANALYZE**  
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“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. 

**4 Targeted Passage**

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

**READING**

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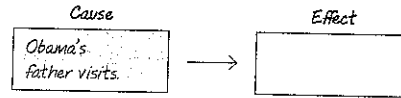
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during their one-month visit? Cite details from the autobiography to support your opinion about their relationship.

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.



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](http://ClassZone.com).

**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<br>a bizarre gift            | 3. a rowdy audience<br>a lively audience               |
| 2. the stubborn child<br>the persistent child | 4. to control a situation<br>to manipulate a situation |

**VOCABULARY PRACTICE**

For more practice, go to the Vocabulary Center at [ClassZone.com](http://ClassZone.com).

