



CALVIN AND THE SUGAR APPLES

Written by Inês F. Oliveira
Illustrated by Vanessa Balleza

Teacher Resource Guide

ACTIVITY 1:

Judge a Book By Its Cover

What can a cover reveal? In this activity, students will use skills of observation and prediction to hypothesize what types of themes, characters, and plot will be included in the novel.

Discussion: A book publisher is the company responsible for editing, printing, and selling books. Thousands of authors submit books to publishers for release, but only a fraction of these are selected for printing. Before a book is released, the publisher collaborates with the author and/or illustrator to choose cover art for the book. Why do you think the publisher chose this image? What does it reveal about the story, its characters, plot, and themes?



PROMPTS

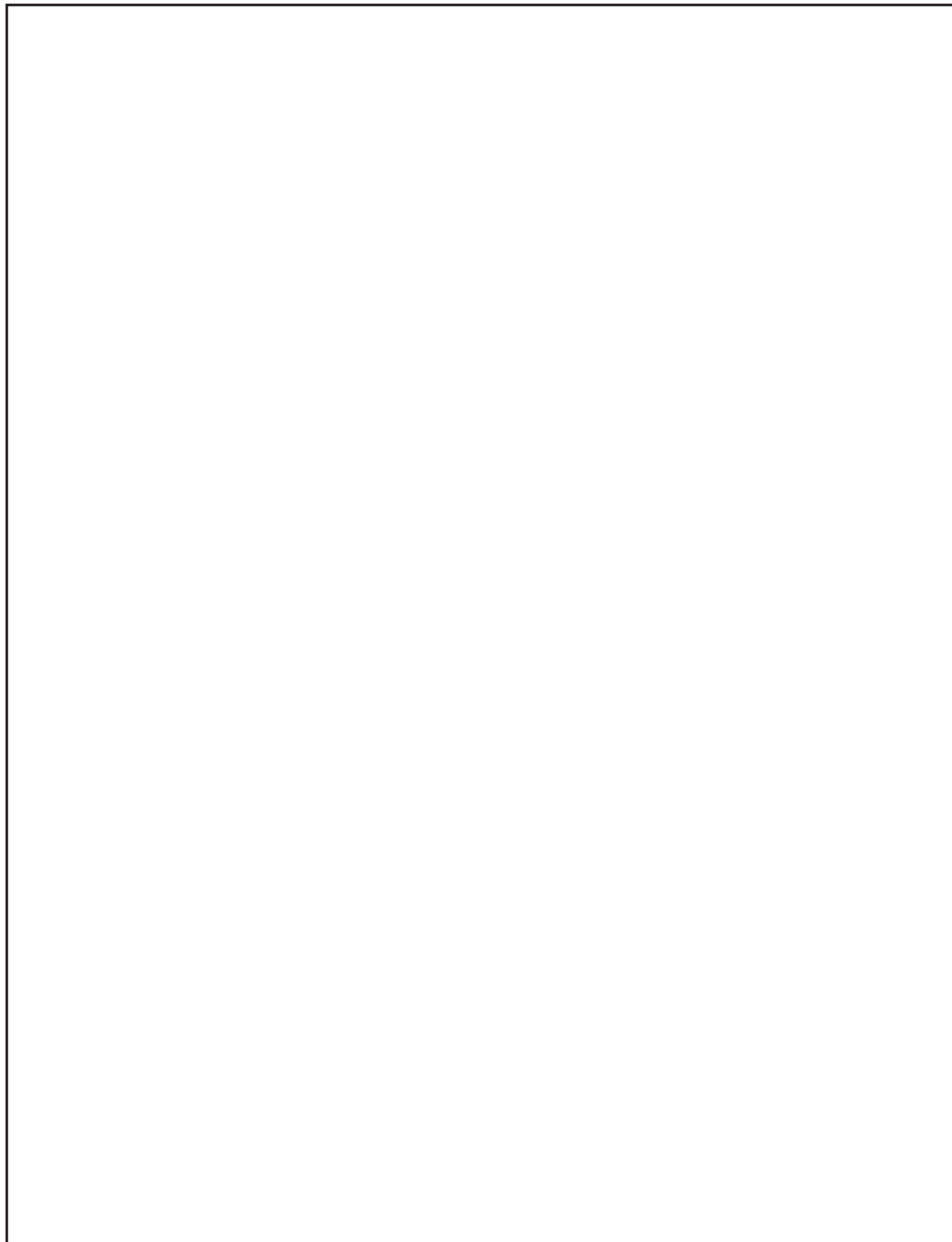
- 1) What is your first reaction to the cover?
- 2) How does the illustration relate to the novel?
- 3) Did the cover effectively communicate what the story is about?
- 4) The cover image features Amelia, some of her artwork, the sugar apple trees, Calvin, and other wildlife. Why do you think the publisher chose to include these elements?
- 5) Would you have chosen this illustration for the cover?
- 6) If you were designing the cover, would you have made any changes?

EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

1) Design an alternate cover for the book.

2) There are several hand drawn illustrations throughout the novel. Choose a scene that you find particularly significant and create an illustration for it in the same style as the illustrations in the story. Why did you choose this scene? What elements did you include in your artwork?

3) If you were a publisher, what kind of books would you want to print? How would you decide?



ACTIVITY 2:

Quotes & Questions

Below are several quotes from *Calvin and the Sugar Apples*. Use the discussion prompts and questions to connect with the characters, understand their motivations, and identify themes and symbols.

“I want to be alone without feeling lonely.”

– Amelia, page 17, when her family finds her after the talent show mishap.

Is it possible to feel this way? What are the differences and similarities between being alone and being lonely? What emotions could Amelia be experiencing to make her feel this way?

“We build up walls, but nature doesn’t care.”

– Amelia, page 25, describing the layout of her neighborhood.

In what ways does nature impact the plot of the story? Do you think the story would be different if it was set somewhere other than Portugal?

“Sugar apples are big. Yet, you can hardly see them hanging from their tree. They’re brilliant in their disguise, showing only the same green as the leaves that hide them.”

– Amelia, page 53, comparing herself to the fruit when she returns to school after the talent show.

From Amelia’s descriptions, sugar apples are filled with contradictions - large, yet camouflaged, soft on the outside and sweet on the inside. Amelia also frequently compares herself and Calvin to the sugar apples. What do these comparisons reveal about Amelia and how she feels about herself?

“When we love something, is it possible to forget it?”

– Amelia, page 65, to Mr. Lima after the talent show assignment.

Mr. Lima replies, “I wouldn’t say forget. It’s always in our mind and heart, but we may not remember every detail.” What do you think of Amelia’s question? And Mr. Lima’s reply? How would you answer her question?

“Nature protects us all. But it also makes us tough enough to stay alive.”

– Amelia, page 75, while discussing her attempts at being alone.

How does nature protect us? How does it protect animals? In what ways does it toughen us up?

“I’m starting to think that being on a stage isn’t for me. I’m not sure I like to be the center of even this tiny universe, much less the entire school.”

– Amelia, page 187, after arriving to class late with Iris.

How do you think Amelia arrived at this conclusion? What impact, if any, do you think this has on her friendship with Camila?

ACTIVITY 3:

Mr. Lima's Assignment

In Chapter 5, Mr. Lima prompts the class to write about their unique talents and how they presented them at the talent show. Mr. Lima amends the assignment for Amelia, who did not participate in the performance. He asks her, "Please write about a talent you'd like to have for today's class. After all, dreaming is in itself the most powerful talent!"

Activity: Imagine that you are participating in a talent show soon. Answer Mr. Lima's questions about how you would perform or something you would showcase.

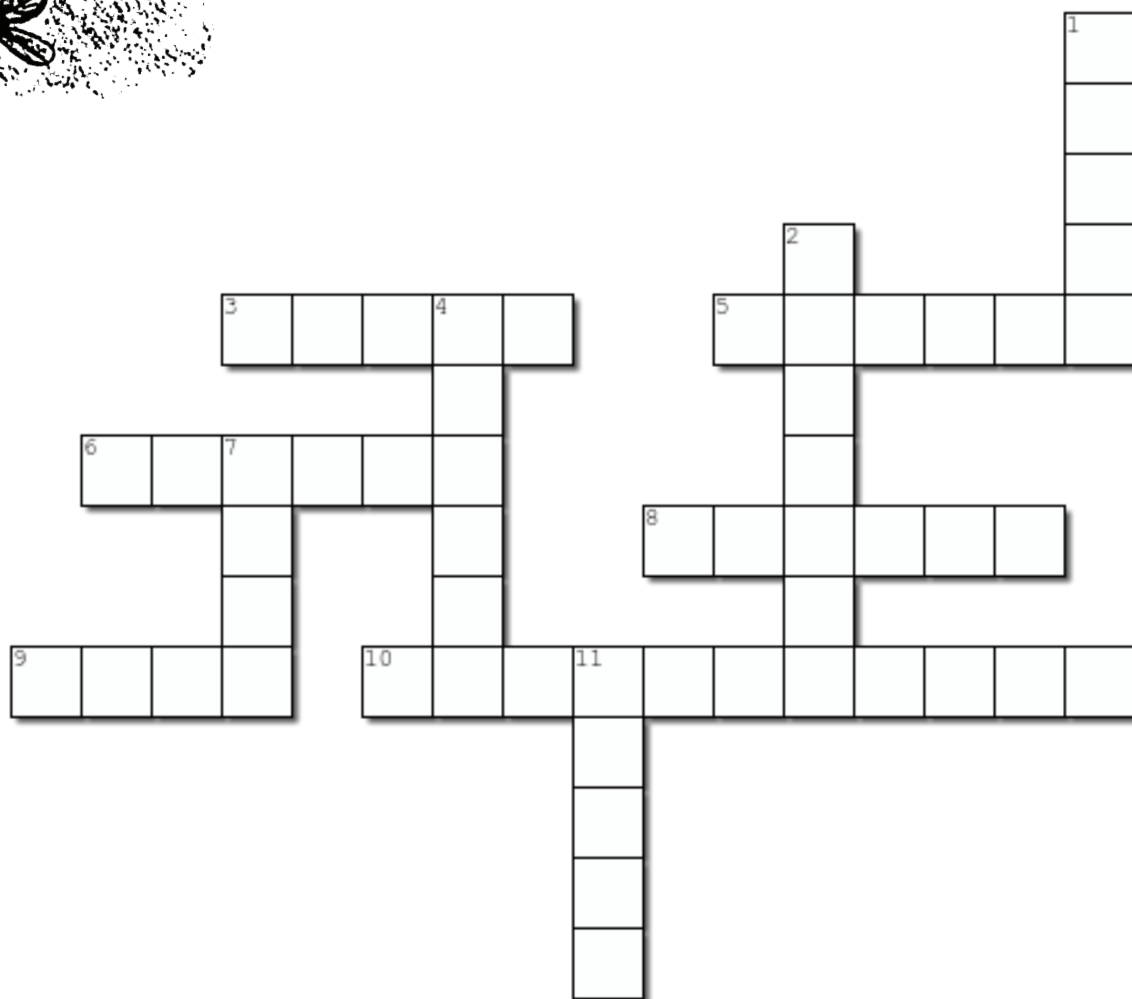
IDEAS TO INCLUDE

- 1) Would you perform on stage like Camila or create set designs like Amelia?
- 2) Do you prefer to be involved with organization, such as creating a schedule or working backstage?
- 3) Are there talents that you work on each day that might not translate to being on stage?

**Crossword puzzle activity
on the next page!**



Crossword Puzzle



ACROSS

3. Amelia is in ____ grade
5. Mrs. ____ is the principal of Amelia's school.
6. Iris's favorite sport
8. Camila, Amelia, and Iris draw with these
9. The ____ is in the middle of the playground.
10. Both sugar apples and chinchillas are sensitive to this.

DOWN

1. Mountain range where sugar apples grow
2. Iris moves from this region
4. Eva is this type of animal
7. Calvin's ____ is donated to the exotic pet clinic.
11. Miss ____ is the lunch lady that greets Amelia every day.

Answers on the last page!

ACTIVITY 4:

Setting

Setting is a literary element defined as the time and geographic location within a story or narrative. *Calvin and the Sugar Apples* is set in the Beira Mar neighborhood of Portugal. Setting is much more than a physical location, however, and can give clues to the story's mood, conflicts, character development, and themes.

Activity: Compare and contrast the setting of *Calvin and the Sugar Apples* with another novel of your choice.

IDEAS TO CONSIDER

- Research Portugal. What is the climate like? Population? Where is it located? What food, plants, and animals are native to the country?
- Does the setting of the other story share any similarities?
- *Calvin and the Sugar Apples* takes place in a single neighborhood in Portugal, including Amelia's school, home, and grocery store a few blocks away. Is the other story set locally, or does it take place in many locations and areas?
- Personal preference: Would you like to visit either place? Why or why not?





Crossword Puzzle Answers

ACROSS

3. Fifth
5. Santos
6. Soccer
8. Sticks
9. Cube
10. Temperature

DOWN

1. Andes
 2. Madeira
 4. Turtle
 7. Cage
 11. Paula
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