

Before You Read

The Force of Luck

Connect to the Folktale

Think about a time when you won a game, a contest, or a prize. Was your success the result of hard work, or was it luck?

Partner Talk With a partner, talk about whether success comes from a person's efforts or from luck. Can a person have control over his or her fate?

Build Background

Folktales are stories that have been passed down orally from one generation to another by storytellers. Almost every culture has its own folktales. These tales help reinforce and preserve a culture's values and traditions. "The Force of Luck" is part of the oral tradition of the Hispanic people who lived in the American Southwest. This story shares common elements with other folktales:

- The story is about ordinary people.
- The story takes place in a small village sometime in the past.
- The story features three main events.

Vocabulary

prosperous (pros' pər əs) *adj.* having wealth or good fortune; successful (p. 92). *The prosperous actor lived in a mansion high in the hills.*

provisions (prə vizh' ənz) *n.* food or supplies (p. 94). *The backpackers carried enough provisions for two weeks in the wilderness.*

novelty (nov' əl tē) *n.* something new and unusual (p. 97). *For people living in hot climates, snow is a novelty.*

benefactors (ben' ə fak' tərz) *n.* people who help, especially by giving money or gifts (p. 100). *With support from several benefactors, the library was able to buy new computers.*

Meet Rudolfo A. Anaya



Southwestern Writer The land and culture of his native New Mexico have inspired Rudolfo A. Anaya since he was a child. Anaya was born in Pastura, a village on a vast plain covered with small farming communities. He has written that "the most important elements of my childhood are the people of those villages and the wide open plains."

Literary Works In his writing, Anaya draws on those childhood memories and on the Mexican myths and legends of his ancestors. Anaya is the author of short stories, novels, and plays. Rudolfo A. Anaya was born in 1937.



Literature Online

Author Search For more about Rudolfo A. Anaya, go to glencoe.com and enter QuickPass code GL29763u1.

Set Purposes for Reading

BQ BIG Question

As you read, ask yourself, what does this folktale suggest about luck and about relying on oneself?

Literary Element Character

A **character** is a person in a literary work. If a character is an animal, it displays human traits. A **main character** is the most important character in a work. A **minor character** is part of the story but is not the focus of the action. **Flat** characters reveal only one personality trait. **Round** characters show varied, and sometimes contradictory, traits.

As you read, pay attention to what the characters think about the events in the story. Notice what they say and how they act. Look for changes in the main character.

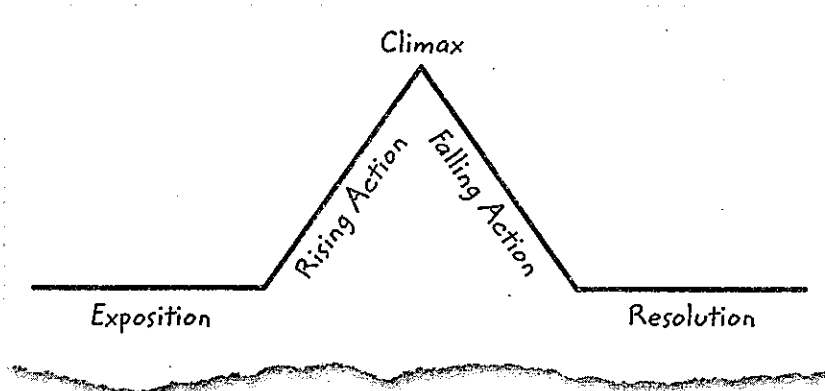
Reading Skill Analyze Plot

When you **analyze**, you look at the separate parts of something to understand the whole. When you analyze **plot**, you look at how the parts of the plot work together as a whole. Recall that a plot has five main parts: **exposition**, **rising action**, **climax**, **falling action**, and **resolution**.

To analyze plot, answer these questions:

- Who are the characters, and what is the conflict in the story?
- How do events in the story combine to advance the plot?
- What part of the story is most interesting or suspenseful?
- What happens at the end of the story? How was the reader prepared for the ending by what came before?

As you read, fill in a graphic organizer like the one below.



Learning Objectives

For pages 90–103

In studying this text, you will focus on the following objectives:

Literary Study: Analyzing characters.

Reading: Analyzing plot.

TRY IT

Analyze Every story has a plot—including the stories in movies, books, or television programs. Analyze the plot of your favorite movie, book, or television program. With a partner, discuss which events make up the story's rising action, climax, and resolution.

THE FORCE OF LUCK



Retold by Rudolfo A. Anaya

Once two wealthy friends got into a heated argument. One said that it was money which made a man **prosperous**, and the other maintained that it wasn't money, but luck, which made the man. They argued for some time and finally decided that if only they could find an honorable man then perhaps they could prove their respective points of view.¹

One day while they were passing through a small village they came upon a miller who was grinding corn and wheat. They paused to ask the man how he ran his business. The miller replied that he worked for a master and that he earned only four bits a day, and with that he had to support a family of five.

The friends were surprised. "Do you mean to tell us you can maintain a family of five on only fifteen dollars a month?" one asked.

"I live modestly to make ends meet," the humble miller replied.

The two friends privately agreed that if they put this man to a test perhaps they could resolve their argument.

"I am going to make you an offer," one of them said to the miller. "I will give you two hundred dollars and you may do whatever you want with the money."

¹ *Prove their respective points of view* means that each man wanted to prove his opinion was the correct one.

Vocabulary

prosperous (pros'per əs) *adj.* having wealth or good fortune; successful

Farmers (Agricultores), 1935.
Antonia Gattorna. Gouache
and ink on paper laid down
on board, 17 1/2 x 19 1/2 in.
Private Collection.

Character What does the miller's statement tell you about his character?

"But why would you give me this money when you've just met me?" the miller asked.

"Well, my good man, my friend and I have a long-standing argument. He contends that it is luck which elevates a man to high position, and I say it is money. By giving you this money perhaps we can settle our argument. Here, take it, and do with it what you want!"

So the poor miller took the money and spent the rest of the day thinking about the strange meeting which had presented him with more money than he had ever seen. What could he possibly do with all this money? Be that as it may, he had the money in his pocket and he could do with it whatever he wanted.

When the day's work was done, the miller decided the first thing he would do would be to buy food for his family. He took out ten dollars and wrapped the rest of the money in a cloth and put the bundle in his bag. Then he went to the market and bought supplies and a good piece of meat to take home.

Analyze Plot. What conflict does the miller face?



La Molendera 1, 1924. Diego Rivera. *Encaustica sobre tela*, 90 x 117 cm.
Museo de Arte Moderno, Bosque de Chapultepec, Mexico. ©ARS, NY.

On the way home he was attacked by a **hawk** that had smelled the meat which the miller carried. The miller fought off the bird but in the struggle he lost the bundle of money. Before the miller knew what was happening the hawk grabbed the bag and flew away with it. When he realized what had happened he fell into deep thought.

"Ah," he moaned, "wouldn't it have been better to let that hungry bird have the meat! I could have bought a lot more meat with the money he took. Alas, now I'm in the same poverty as before! And worse, because now those two men will say I am a thief! I should have thought carefully and bought nothing. Yes, I should have gone straight home and this wouldn't have happened!"

So he gathered what was left of his **provisions** and continued home, and when he arrived he told his family the entire story.

When he was finished telling his story his wife said, "It has been our lot² to be poor, but have faith in God and maybe someday our luck will change."

The next day the miller got up and went to work as usual. He wondered what the two men would say about his story. But since he had never been a man of money he soon forgot the entire matter.

Three months after he had lost the money to the hawk, it happened that the two wealthy men returned to the village. As soon as they saw the miller they approached him to ask if his luck had changed. When the miller saw them he felt ashamed and afraid that they would think that he had squandered³ the money on worthless things. But he decided to tell them the truth and as soon as they had greeted each other he told his story. The men believed him. In fact, the one who insisted that it was money and not luck which made a man prosper took out another two hundred dollars and gave it to the miller.

2 Here, *lot* means "fate" or "final outcome."

3 *Squandered* means "spent" or "used in a reckless or wasteful manner."

Vocabulary

provisions (prə vīzh' ənz) *n.* food or supplies

Visual Vocabulary

A hawk is a bird of prey.



Character: Describe the miller's wife.

Analyze Plot In what way does the man's action advance the plot? What do you think will happen to the money?

"Let's try again," he said, "and let's see what happens this time."

The miller didn't know what to think. "Kind sir, maybe it would be better if you put this money in the hands of another man," he said.

"No," the man insisted, "I want to give it to you because you are an honest man, and if we are going to settle our argument you have to take the money!"

The miller thanked them and promised to do his best. Then as soon as the two men left he began to think what to do with the money so that it wouldn't disappear as it had the first time. The thing to do was to take the money straight home. He took out ten dollars, wrapped the rest in a cloth, and headed home.

When he arrived his wife wasn't at home. At first he didn't know what to do with the money. He went to the pantry where he had stored a large earthenware jar filled with bran. That was as safe a place as any to hide the money, he thought, so he emptied out the grain and put the bundle of money at the bottom of the jar, then covered it up with the grain. Satisfied that the money was safe he returned to work.

That afternoon when he arrived home from work he was greeted by his wife.

"Look, my husband, today I bought some good clay with which to whitewash the entire house."

"And how did you buy the clay if we don't have any money?" he asked.

"Well, the man who was selling the clay was willing to trade for jewelry, money, or anything of value," she said. "The only thing we had of value was the jar full of bran, so I traded it for the clay. Isn't it wonderful, I think we have enough clay to whitewash these two rooms!"

The man groaned and pulled his hair.

"Oh, you crazy woman! What have you done? We're ruined again!"

"But why?" she asked, unable to understand his anguish.

"Today I met the same two friends who gave me the two hundred dollars three months ago," he explained. "And after I told them how I lost the money they gave me

Character What did the miller learn from his last experience with the money?

Visual Vocabulary

Earthenware is made from clay that is heated until it is hard.



another two hundred. And I, to make sure the money was safe, came home and hid it inside the jar of bran—the same jar you have traded for dirt! Now we're as poor as we were before! And what am I going to tell the two men? They'll think I'm a liar and a thief for sure!"

"Let them think what they want," his wife said calmly. "We will only have in our lives what the good Lord wants us to have. It is our lot to be poor until God wills it otherwise."

So the miller was consoled and the next day he went to work as usual. Time came and went, and one day the two wealthy friends returned to ask the miller how he had done with the second two hundred dollars. When the poor miller saw them he was afraid they would accuse him of being a liar and a spendthrift.⁴ But he decided to be truthful and as soon as they had greeted each other he told them what had happened to the money.

"That is why poor men remain honest," the man who had given him the money said. "Because they don't have money they can't get into trouble. But I find your stories hard to believe. I think you gambled and lost the money. That's why you're telling us these wild stories."

"Either way," he continued, "I still believe that it is money and not luck which makes a man prosper."

"Well, you certainly didn't prove your point by giving the money to this poor miller," his friend reminded him. "Good evening, you luckless man," he said to the miller.

"Thank you, friends," the miller said.

"Oh, by the way, here is a worthless piece of lead I've been carrying around. Maybe you can use it for something," said the man who believed in luck. Then the two men left, still debating their points of view on life.

Since the lead was practically worthless, the miller thought nothing of it and put it in his jacket pocket. He forgot all about it until he arrived home. When he threw his jacket on a chair he heard a thump and he remembered the piece of lead. He took it out of the pocket and threw it

Analyze Plot In what way might the lead affect the events in the story?

⁴ A *spendthrift* is someone who spends money generously or wastefully.

under the table. Later that night after the family had eaten and gone to bed, they heard a knock at the door.

"Who is it? What do you want?" the miller asked.

"It's me, your neighbor," a voice answered. The miller recognized the fisherman's wife. "My husband sent me to ask you if you have any lead you can spare. He is going fishing tomorrow and he needs the lead to weight down the nets."

The miller remembered the lead he had thrown under the table. He got up, found it, and gave it to the woman.

"Thank you very much, neighbor," the woman said. "I promise you the first fish my husband catches will be yours."

"Think nothing of it," the miller said and returned to bed. The next day he got up and went to work without thinking any more of the incident. But in the afternoon when he returned home he found his wife cooking a big fish for dinner.

"Since when are we so well off we can afford fish for supper?" he asked his wife.

"Don't you remember that our neighbor promised us the first fish her husband caught?" his wife reminded him. "Well this was the fish he caught the first time he threw his net. So it's ours, and it's a beauty. But you should have been here when I gutted him! I found a large piece of glass in his stomach!"

"And what did you do with it?"

"Oh, I gave it to the children to play with," she shrugged.

When the miller saw the piece of glass he noticed it shone so brightly it appeared to illuminate the room, but because he knew nothing about jewels he didn't realize its value and left it to the children. But the bright glass was such a novelty that the children were soon fighting over it and raising a terrible fuss.

Now it so happened that the miller and his wife had other neighbors who were jewelers. The following morning when the miller had gone to work the jeweler's

Vocabulary

novelty (nov'əl tē) *n.* something new and unusual

Analyze Plot What are some clues that the glass may prove important to the plot?

wife visited the miller's wife to complain about all the noise her children had made.

"We couldn't get any sleep last night," she moaned.

"I know, and I'm sorry, but you know how it is with a large family," the miller's wife explained. "Yesterday we found a beautiful piece of glass and I gave it to my youngest one to play with and when the others tried to take it from him he raised a storm."

The jeweler's wife took interest. "Won't you show me that piece of glass?" she asked.

"But of course. Here it is."

"Ah, yes, it's a pretty piece of glass. Where did you find it?"

"Our neighbor gave us a fish yesterday and when I was cleaning it I found the glass in its stomach."

"Why don't you let me take it home for just a moment. You see, I have one just like it and I want to compare them."

"Yes, why not? Take it," answered the miller's wife.

So the jeweler's wife ran off with the glass to show it to her husband. When the jeweler saw the glass he instantly knew it was one of the finest diamonds he had ever seen.

"It's a diamond!" he exclaimed.

"I thought so," his wife nodded eagerly. "What shall we do?"

"Go tell the neighbor we'll give her fifty dollars for it, but don't tell her it's a diamond!"

"No, no," his wife chuckled, "of course not." She ran to her neighbor's house. "Ah yes, we have one exactly like this," she told the miller's wife. "My husband is willing to buy it for fifty dollars—only so we can have a pair, you understand."

"I can't sell it," the miller's wife answered. "You will have to wait until my husband returns from work."

That evening when the miller came home from work his wife told him about the offer the jeweler had made for the piece of glass.

"But why would they offer fifty dollars for a worthless piece of glass?" the miller wondered aloud. Before his wife could answer they were interrupted by the jeweler's wife.

Character What does the jeweler's wife's statement tell you about her character?

Analyze Plot Why might this event be part of the story's climax?

"What do you say, neighbor, will you take fifty dollars for the glass?" she asked.

"No, that's not enough," the miller said cautiously. "Offer more."

"I'll give you fifty thousand!" the jeweler's wife blurted out.

"A little bit more," the miller replied.

"Impossible!" the jeweler's wife cried, "I can't offer any more without consulting my husband." She ran off to tell her husband how the bartering⁵ was going, and he told her he was prepared to pay a hundred thousand dollars to acquire the diamond.

He handed her seventy-five thousand dollars and said, "Take this and tell him that tomorrow, as soon as I open my shop, he'll have the rest."

When the miller heard the offer and saw the money he couldn't believe his eyes. He imagined the jeweler's wife was jesting⁶ with him, but it was a true offer and he received the hundred thousand dollars for the diamond. The miller had never seen so much money, but he still didn't quite trust the jeweler.

"I don't know about this money," he confided to his wife. "Maybe the jeweler plans to accuse us of robbing him and thus get it back."

"Oh no," his wife assured him, "the money is ours. We sold the diamond fair and square—we didn't rob anyone."

"I think I'll still go to work tomorrow," the miller said. "Who knows, something might happen and the money will disappear, then we would be without money and work. Then how would we live?"

So he went to work the next day, and all day he thought about how he could use the money. When he returned home that afternoon his wife asked him what he had decided to do with their new fortune.

"I think I will start my own mill," he answered, "like the one I operate for my master. Once I set up my business we'll see how our luck changes."

⁵ **Bartering** is trading goods for other goods without using money.

⁶ **Jesting** means speaking or acting in a playful manner.

BQ **BIG Question**

Whom does the miller count on?

The next day he set about buying everything he needed to establish his mill and to build a new home. Soon he had everything going.

Six months had passed, more or less, since he had seen the two men who had given him the four hundred dollars and the piece of lead. He was eager to see them again and to tell them how the piece of lead had changed his luck and made him wealthy.

Time passed and the miller prospered. His business grew and he even built a summer cottage where he could take his family on vacation. He had many employees who worked for him. One day while he was at his store he saw his two **benefactors** riding by. He rushed out into the street to greet them and ask them to come in. He was overjoyed to see them, and he was happy to see that they admired his store.

"Tell us the truth," the man who had given him the four hundred dollars said. "You used that money to set up this business."

The miller swore he hadn't, and he told them how he had given the piece of lead to his neighbor and how the fisherman had in return given him a fish with a very large diamond in its stomach. And he told them how he had sold the diamond.

"And that's how I acquired this business and many other things I want to show you," he said. "But it's time to eat. Let's eat first then I'll show you everything I have now."

The men agreed, but one of them still doubted the miller's story. So they ate and then the miller had three horses saddled and they rode out to see his summer home. The cabin was on the other side of the river where the mountains were cool and beautiful. When they arrived the men admired the place very much. It was such a peaceful place that they rode all afternoon through the forest. During their ride they came upon a tall pine tree.

Analyze Plot How can you tell that the plot has now reached the falling action?

Character Why would the man not believe the miller?

Vocabulary

benefactors (ben'ə fak'tərz) *n.* people who help, especially by giving money or gifts



Eagle (Aguila), (detail). Diego Rivera. Overdoor mural, fresco. Secretaria de Educacion Pública, Mexico City. ©ARS, NY.

"What is that on top of the tree?" one of them asked.

"That's the nest of a hawk," the miller replied.

"I have never seen one; I would like to take a closer look at it!"

"Of course," the miller said, and he ordered a servant to climb the tree and bring down the nest so his friend could see how it was built. When the hawk's nest was on the ground they examined it carefully.

They noticed that there was a cloth bag at the bottom of the nest. When the miller saw the bag he immediately knew that it was the very same bag he had lost to the hawk which fought him for the piece of meat years ago.

"You won't believe me, friends, but this is the very same bag in which I put the first two hundred dollars you gave me," he told them.

"If it's the same bag," the man who had doubted him said, "then the money you said the hawk took should be there."

"No doubt about that," the miller said. "Let's see what we find."

The three of them examined the old, weatherbeaten bag. Although it was full of holes and crumbling, when they tore it apart they found the money intact.⁷ The two men remembered what the miller had told them and they agreed he was an honest and honorable man. Still,

⁷ Something that is *intact* is undamaged and whole.

the man who had given him the money wasn't satisfied. He wondered what had really happened to the second two hundred he had given the miller.

They spent the rest of the day riding in the mountains and returned very late to the house.

As he unsaddled their horses, the servant in charge of grooming and feeding the horses suddenly realized that he had no grain for them. He ran to the barn and checked, but there was no grain for the hungry horses. So he ran to the neighbor's granary and there he was able to buy a large clay jar of bran. He carried the jar home and emptied the bran into a bucket to wet it before he fed it to the horses. When he got to the bottom of the jar he noticed a large lump which turned out to be a rag-covered package. He examined it and felt something inside. He immediately went to give it to his master who had been eating dinner.

"Master," he said, "look at this package which I found in an earthenware jar of grain which I just bought from our neighbor!"

The three men carefully unraveled the cloth and found the other one hundred and ninety dollars which the miller had told them he had lost. That is how the miller proved to his friends that he was truly an honest man.

And they had to decide for themselves whether it had been luck or money which had made the miller a wealthy man! ❁

Analyze Plot How does the man's doubt provide a clue to what will happen in the story's resolution?

Character How do you think the miller feels about finding the money?

After You Read

Respond and Think Critically

1. What are the two wealthy men trying to prove? Explain. [Recall]
2. Explain how the miller loses his first gift. [Summarize]
3. What values do you think are promoted by this folktale? Explain. [Infer]
4. **Literary Element** **Character** Is the miller a realistic character? Is he a round or flat character? Use details from the story to support your answer. [Evaluate]
5. **Reading Skill** **Analyze Plot** Review the plot diagram you created as you read. List at least two events that make up the story's rising action. Then provide at least two events that make up the story's falling action. [Analyze]
6. **BQ** **BIG Question** Think about events and details from the folktale. Whom or what does the miller count on? [Conclude]

Vocabulary Practice

On a separate sheet of paper, write the vocabulary word that correctly completes each sentence. If none of the words fits the sentence, write "none."

prosperous novelty provisions benefactors

1. We filled our cupboards with the necessary _____ to prepare for the coming storm.
2. My neighbor _____ reality television shows.
3. The animal shelter's _____ gave money, purchased supplies, and helped find homes for pets.
4. Amy was determined to be _____, so she worked hard and saved her earnings.
5. Within a few days, Juan's new unicycle was no longer a _____.

Writing

Write a Summary As you learned on page 59, writing a summary involves retelling the main ideas and most important details. Use your plot diagram and review the story to recall key events in "The Force of Luck." Then write a brief summary of the folktale.

TIP

Inferring

When you infer, you combine clues and details from the text with your own background knowledge. Think about what details and events in the story suggest about the best way to live.

- What kind of person is the miller?
- What does he do with the gifts of money? How does he act after the money is lost?
- What happens as a result of the miller giving the lead to the fisherman's wife? What lesson about life is the folktale suggesting?



Keep track of your ideas about the **BIG Question** in your unit Foldable.



Literature Online

Selection Resources

For Selection Quizzes, eFlashcards, and Reading-Writing Connection activities, go to glencoe.com and enter QuickPass code GL29763u1.