

Before You Read

Hollywood and the Pits

Connect to the Short Story

Think about how you have changed during the past few years. Are there parts of your childhood self that you have left behind?

List Write a list of your interests and hobbies from a few years ago. Then add what your interests and hobbies are today. How has growing older affected your childhood interests?

Build Background

This story is set in 1968 in Los Angeles, California. In the middle of the city, close to the glamour of Hollywood, is an archaeological site filled with the skeletons of prehistoric creatures.

- The La Brea Tar Pits contain more than three million fossils from the last Ice Age, which occurred about 40,000 years ago. Fossils are hardened remains or prints of plants and animals.
- The pits were formed when sticky tar oozed up from inside the earth and created pools. Many prehistoric animals became stuck in the tar pits when they mistook them for pools of water and tried to drink from them.

Vocabulary

excavated (eks'kə vāt'əd) *adj.* uncovered or removed by digging; unearthed (p. 612). *Scientists cleaned the excavated fossils and shipped them to a museum.*

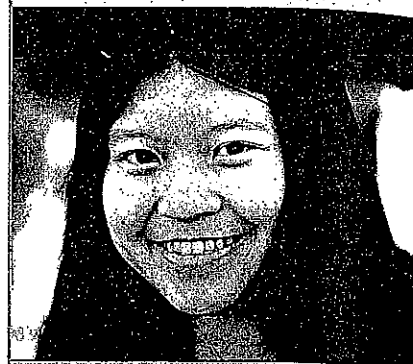
immobilized (i mō'bə līzd') *v.* made unable to move; fixed in place (p. 612). *The cast immobilized Jonah's broken arm.*

painstaking (pānz'tā'king) *adj.* requiring close, careful labor or attention (p. 618). *Sewing the costumes for the school musical was painstaking work.*

predators (pred'ə tərz) *n.* animals that kill other animals for food (p. 618). *The nature show on television showed how predators find their prey.*

deception (di sep'shən) *n.* that which fools or misleads (p. 618). *A magician uses deception to trick an audience.*

Meet Cherylene Lee



From Stage to Science It is hard to imagine a successful stage, movie, and TV performer becoming a scientist, but that is just what Cherylene Lee did. Like the narrator in "Hollywood and the Pits," Lee was a child performer in her hometown of Los Angeles. After earning degrees in paleontology and geology, she began writing stories, poetry, and plays.

Literary Works Some of Lee's plays include *Wong Bow Rides Again* and *The Ballad of Doc Hay*. Her story "Hollywood and the Pits" appears in the collection *American Dragons: Twenty-five Asian American Voices*, edited by Laurence Yep and published in 1995.

Cherylene Lee was born in 1953.



Literature Online

Author Search For more about Cherylene Lee, go to glencoe.com and enter QuickPass code GL29763u5.

Set Purposes for Reading

BQ BIG Question

As you read, think about the changes the narrator is experiencing. How does she respond to these changes?

Literary Element Analogy

An **analogy** is a comparison between two things, based on one or more elements that they share. In "Hollywood and the Pits," the author uses analogies to compare the narrator's experiences to the La Brea Tar Pits.

Authors often use analogies to explain something unknown in a familiar, concrete way. Analogies can help you better understand and visualize difficult or unfamiliar ideas. As you read, notice how the author adds sections about the La Brea Tar Pits to her story. Ask yourself, how is the information about the tar pits similar to the narrator's life?

Reading Strategy Draw Conclusions About Characters

When you **draw conclusions**, you use pieces of information to make a general statement about characters, events, or ideas. You use clues that the author gives you and your own knowledge and experience. Drawing conclusions can help you understand why characters act or think certain ways. To draw conclusions about a character:

- Notice details about the character, including his or her personality traits, actions, appearance, and feelings.
- Think about what these clues tell you that the author may not state directly. Use the clues to make a general statement about the character.

Use a graphic organizer like the one below to help you keep track of your thoughts about each character in the story.

Character:	Clues About the Character	What These Clues Mean
Personality Traits		
Actions		
Physical Descriptions		
Thoughts and Feelings		

My Conclusions

Learning Objectives

For pages 608–623

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

Literary Study: Analyzing analogy.

Reading: Drawing conclusions.

TRY IT

Draw Conclusions With a partner, think of a memorable character from a book, television show, or movie. What clues most help you understand this character? What can you conclude about the character from his or her thoughts and actions? Explain.

but it seemed perfectly logical to me. After all, I grew up in Hollywood, a place where dreams and nightmares can often take the same shape. What else would a child actor do?
"Thank you very much, dear. We'll be letting you know."

I knew what that meant. It meant I would never hear from them again. I didn't get the job. I heard that phrase a lot that year.

I walked out of the plush office, leaving behind the casting director, producer, director, writer, and whoever else came to listen to my reading for a semiregular role on a family sit-com.⁵ The carpet made no sound when I opened and shut the door.

I passed the other girls waiting in the reception room, each poring over her script. The mothers were waiting in a separate room, chattering about their daughters' latest commercials, interviews, callbacks, jobs. It sounded like every Oriental⁶ kid in Hollywood was working except me.

My mother used to have a lot to say in those waiting rooms. Ever since I was three, when I started at the Meglin Kiddie Dance Studio, I was dubbed "The Chinese Shirley Temple"—always the one to be picked at auditions and interviews, always the one to get the speaking lines, always called "the one-shot kid," because I could do my scenes in one take—even tight close-ups. My mother would only talk about me behind my back because she didn't want me to hear her brag, but I knew that she was proud. In a way I was proud too, though I never dared admit it. I didn't want to be called a show-off. But I didn't exactly know what I did to be proud of either. I only knew that at fifteen I was now being passed over at all these interviews when before I would be chosen.

My mother looked at my face hopefully when I came into the room. I gave her a quick shake of the head. She looked bewildered.⁷ I felt bad for my mother then. How could I explain it to her? I didn't understand it myself. We left saying polite good-byes to all the other mothers.

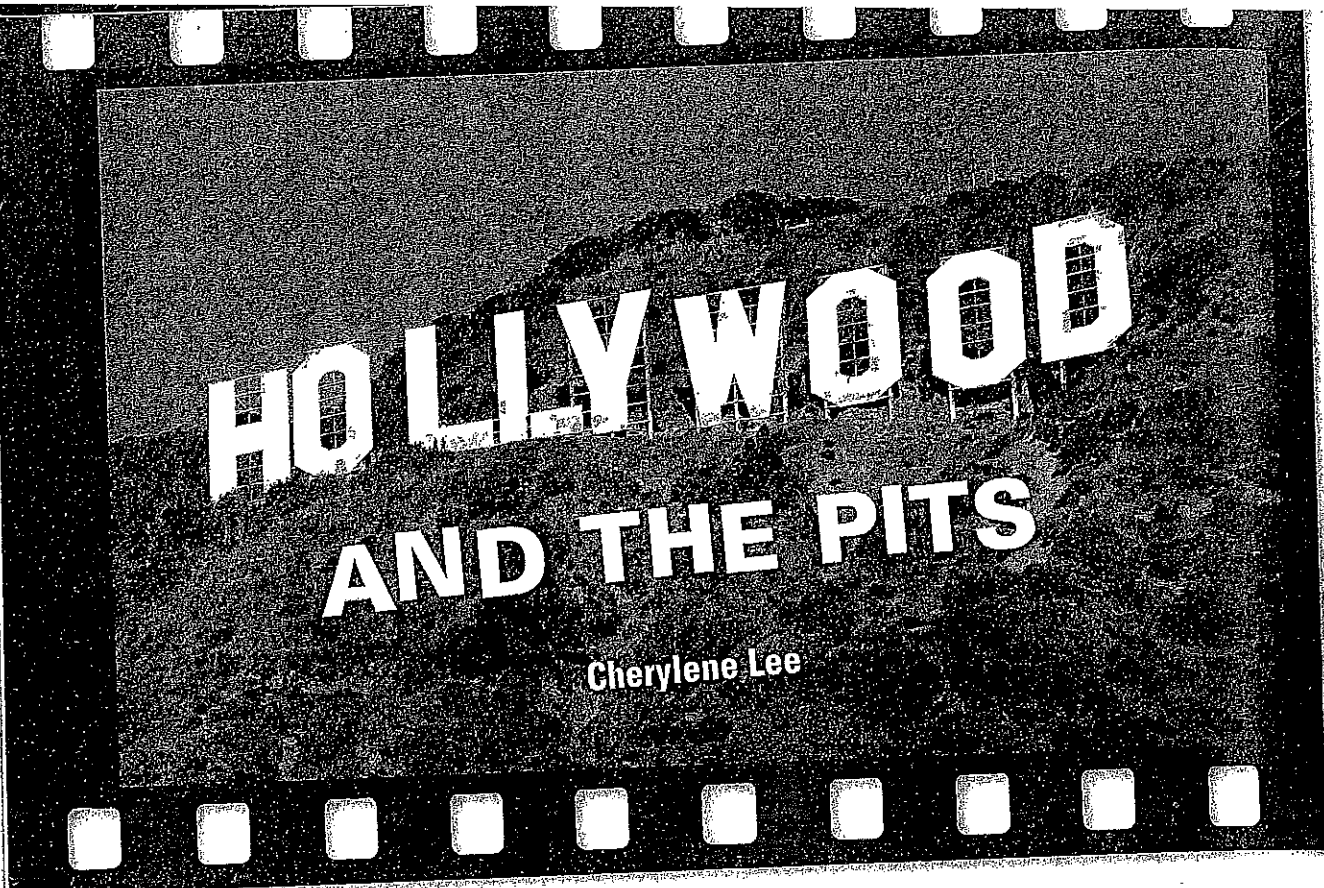
5 *Sit-com* is short for "situation comedy," the most common type of TV comedy series.

6 In the past, people of eastern Asia and their descendants were sometimes referred to as *Oriental*, which means "of the East."

7 Someone who is *bewildered* is very confused.

Draw Conclusions About Characters How do you think the narrator feels after leaving the office?





HOLLYWOOD AND THE PITS

Cherylene Lee

In 1968 when I was fifteen, the pit opened its secret to me. I breathed, ate, slept, dreamed about the La Brea¹ Tar Pits. I spent summer days working the archaeological dig² and in dreams saw the bones glistening, the broken pelvises, the skulls, the vertebrae looped like a woman's pearls hanging on an invisible cord. I welcomed those dreams. I wanted to know where the next skeleton was, identify it, record its position, discover whether it was whole or not. I wanted to know where to dig in the coarse, black, gooey sand. I lost myself there and found something else.

My mother thought something was wrong with me. Was it good for a teenager to be fascinated by death? Especially animal death in the Pleistocene?³ Was it normal to be so obsessed⁴ by a sticky brown hole in the ground in the center of Los Angeles? I don't know if it was normal or not, but it

1 *La Brea* (lə brā'ə)

2 An *archaeological* (är'kē ə loj'ē kəl) *dig* is a place where objects such as ancient bones are dug up for study.

3 *Pleistocene* (plīs'tə sēn') is the name of the period that began about two million years ago, when glaciers covered much of North America and Europe.

4 *Obsessed* means "overly concentrated or focused on a single emotion or idea."

We didn't say anything until the studio parking lot, where we had to search for our old blue Chevy among rows and rows of parked cars baking in the Hollywood heat.

"How did it go? Did you read clearly? Did you tell them you're available?"

"I don't think they care if I'm available or not, Ma."

"Didn't you read well? Did you remember to look up so they could see your eyes? Did they ask you if you could play the piano? Did you tell them you could learn?"

The barrage⁸ of questions stopped when we finally spotted our car. I didn't answer her. My mother asked about the piano because I lost out in an audition once to a Chinese girl who already knew how to play.

My mother took off the towel that shielded the steering wheel from the heat. "You're getting to be such a big girl," she said, starting the car in neutral. "But don't worry, there's always next time. You have what it takes. That's special." She put the car into forward and we drove through a parking lot that had an endless number of identical cars all facing the same direction. We drove back home in silence.

In the La Brea Tar Pits many of the excavated bones belong to juvenile mammals. Thousands of years ago thirsty young animals in the area were drawn to watering holes, not knowing they were traps. Those inviting pools had false bottoms made of sticky tar, which immobilized its victims and preserved their bones when they died. Innocence trapped by ignorance. The tar pits record that well.

I suppose a lot of my getting into show business in the first place was a matter of luck—being in the right place at the right time. My sister, seven years older than me, was a member of the Meglin Kiddie Dance Studio long before I started lessons. Once during the annual recital held at the Shrine Auditorium, she was spotted by a Hollywood agent

⁸ A **barrage** is a heavy concentration or great outpouring, as of words.

excavated (eks'kə vāt'əd) *adj.* uncovered or removed by digging; unearthed
immobilized (i mō'bə līzd') *v.* made unable to move; fixed in place

Draw Conclusions About Characters What

impressions do you have so far of the narrator's mother?

Analogy In what way might the tar pits reflect the narrator's experience as a child actor?

who handled only Oriental performers. The agent sent my sister out for a role in the CBS *Playhouse 90* television show *The Family Nobody Wanted*. The producer said she was too tall for the part. But true to my mother's training of always having a positive reply, my sister said to the producer, "But I have a younger sister . . ." which started my show-biz career at the tender age of three.

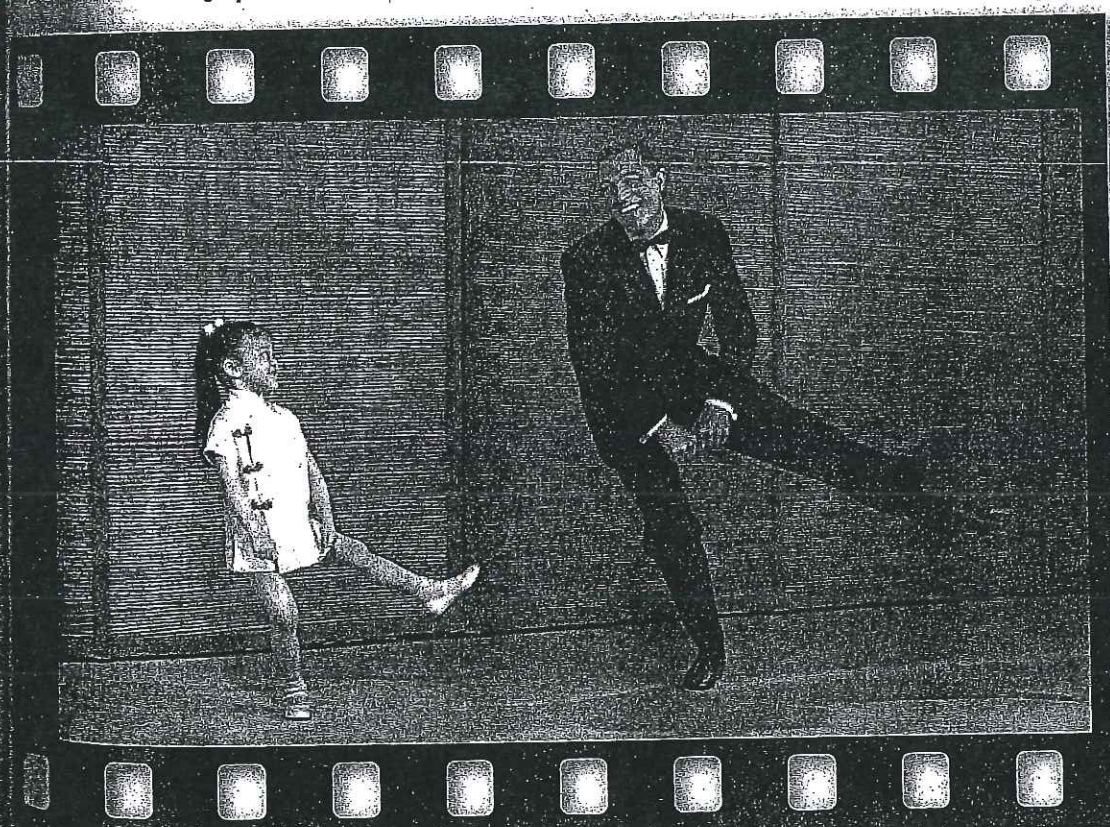
My sister and I were lucky. We enjoyed singing and dancing, we were natural hams, and our parents never discouraged us. In fact they were our biggest fans. My mother chauffeured us to all our dance lessons, lessons we begged to take. She drove us to interviews, took us to studios, went on location with us, drilled us on our lines, made sure we kept up our schoolwork and didn't sass back the tutors hired by studios to teach us for three hours a day. She never complained about being a stage mother. She said that we made her proud.

My father must have felt pride too, because he paid for a choreographer⁹ to put together our sister act: "The World Famous Lee Sisters," fifteen minutes of song and dance,

9 A **choreographer** creates or directs dance movements.

Draw Conclusions About Characters

Is the narrator's mother being helpful, or does she have other reasons for being involved in her daughters' show-business career?

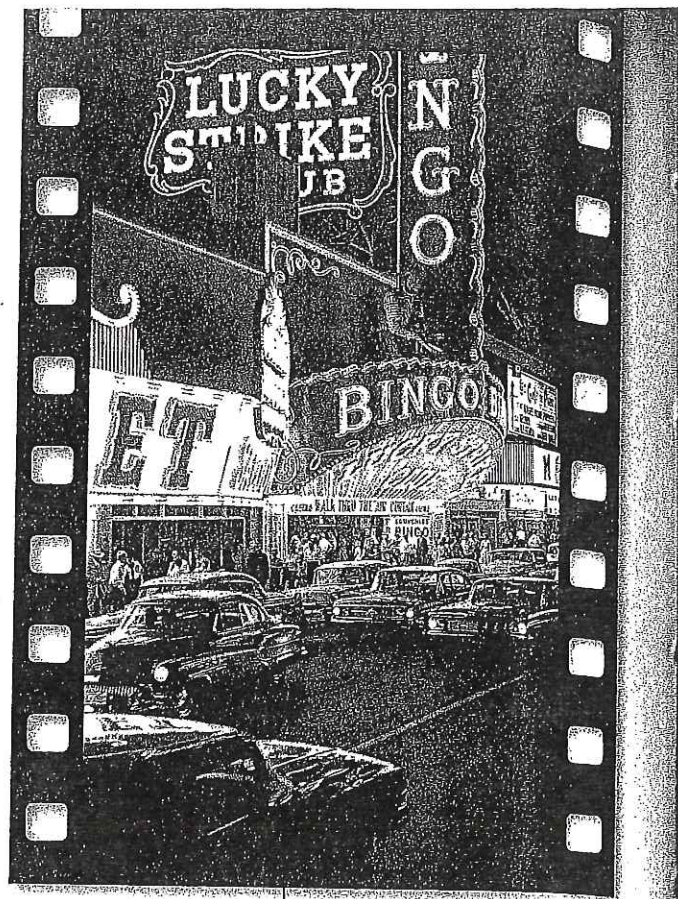


As a child, Cherylene Lee performed with some of the great Hollywood entertainers. Here, she's seen with dancer Gene Kelly.

real vaudeville stuff. We joked about that a lot, "Yeah, the Lee Sisters—Ug-Lee and Home-Lee," but we definitely had a good time. So did our parents. Our father especially liked our getting booked into Las Vegas at the New Frontier Hotel on the Strip. He liked to gamble there, though he said the craps tables in that hotel were "cold," not like the casinos in downtown Las Vegas, where all the "hot" action took place.

In Las Vegas our sister act was part of a show called "Oriental Holiday." The show was about a Hollywood producer going to the Far East, finding undiscovered talent, and bringing it back to the U.S. We did two shows a night in the main showroom, one at eight and one at twelve, and on weekends a third show at two in the morning. It ran the entire summer often to standing-room-only audiences—a thousand people a show.

Our sister act worked because of the age and height difference. My sister then was fourteen and nearly five foot two; I was seven and very small for my age—people thought we were cute. We had song-and-dance routines to old tunes like "Ma, He's Making Eyes at Me," "Together," and "I'm Following You," and my father hired a writer to adapt the lyrics to "I Enjoy Being a Girl," which came out "We Enjoy Being Chinese." We also told corny jokes, but the Las Vegas audience seemed to enjoy it. Here we were, two kids, staying up late and jumping around, and getting paid besides. To me the applause sometimes sounded like static, sometimes like distant waves. It always amazed me when people applauded. The owner of the hotel liked us so much, he invited us back to perform in shows for three summers in a row. That was before I grew too tall and the sister act didn't seem so cute anymore.



Draw Conclusions About Characters How did the narrator feel about performing when she was younger?

Many of the skeletons in the tar pits are found incomplete—particularly the skeletons of the young, which have only soft cartilage connecting the bones. In life the soft tissue allows for growth, but in death it dissolves quickly. Thus the skeletons of young animals are more apt to be scattered, especially the vertebrae protecting the spinal cord. In the tar pits, the central ends of many vertebrae are found unconnected to any skeleton. Such bone fragments are shaped like valentines, disks that are slightly lobed—heart-shaped shields that have lost their connection to what they were meant to protect.

I never felt my mother pushed me to do something I didn't want to do. But I always knew if something I did pleased her. She was generous with her praise, and I was sensitive when she withheld it. I didn't like to disappoint her.

I took to performing easily, and since I had started out so young, making movies or doing shows didn't feel like anything special. It was part of my childhood—like going to the dentist one morning or going to school the next. I didn't wonder if I wanted a particular role or wanted to be in a show or how I would feel if I didn't get in. Until I was fifteen, it never occurred to me that one day I wouldn't get parts or that I might not "have what it takes."

When I was younger, I got a lot of roles because I was so small for my age. When I was nine years old, I could pass for five or six. I was really short. I was always teased about it when I was in elementary school, but I didn't mind because my height got me movie jobs. I could read and memorize lines that actual five-year-olds couldn't. My mother told people she made me sleep in a drawer so I wouldn't grow any bigger.

But when I turned fifteen, it was as if my body, which hadn't grown for so many years, suddenly made up for lost time. I grew five inches in seven months. My mother was amazed. Even I couldn't get used to it. I kept knocking into things, my clothes didn't fit right, I felt awkward and clumsy when I moved. Dumb things that I had gotten away with, like paying children's prices at the movies instead of junior admission, I couldn't do anymore. I wasn't a shrimp or a small fry any longer. I was suddenly normal.

Analogy How do the scattered skeletons and bone fragments relate to what is happening in the narrator's life?

Draw Conclusions About Characters How is the narrator adjusting to growing up?

Before that summer my mother had always claimed she wanted me to be normal. She didn't want me to become spoiled by the attention I received when I was working at the studios. I still had chores to do at home, went to public school when I wasn't working, was punished severely when I behaved badly. She didn't want me to feel I was different just because I was in the movies. When I was eight, I was interviewed by a reporter who wanted to know if I thought I had a big head.

"Sure," I said.

"No you don't," my mother interrupted, which was really unusual, because she generally never said anything. She wanted me to speak for myself.

I didn't understand the question. My sister had always made fun of my head. She said my body was too tiny for the weight—I looked like a walking Tootsie Pop. I thought the reporter was making the same observation.

"She better not get that way," my mother said fiercely. "She's not any different from anyone else. She's just lucky and small for her age."

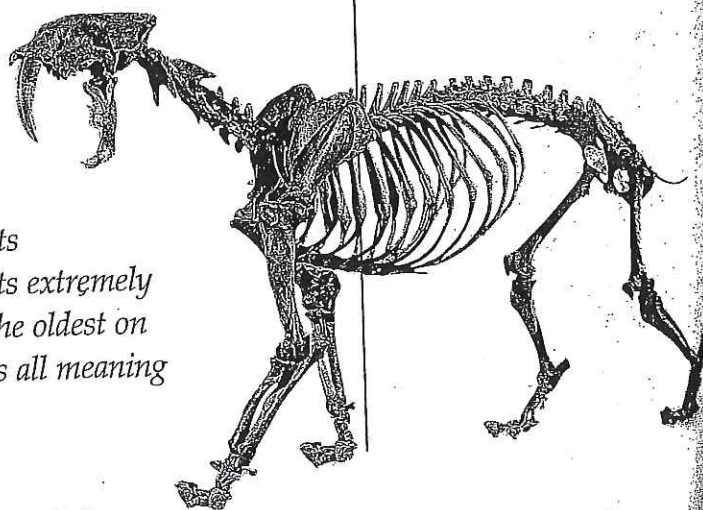
The reporter turned to my mother, "Some parents push their children to act. The kids feel like they're used."

"I don't do that—I'm not that way," my mother told the reporter.

But when she was sitting silently in all those waiting rooms while I was being turned down for one job after another, I could almost feel her wanting to shout, "Use her. Use her. What is wrong with her? Doesn't she have it anymore?" I didn't know what I had had that I didn't seem to have anymore. My mother had told the reporter that I was like everyone else. But when my life was like everyone else's, why was she disappointed?

The churning action of the La Brea Tar Pits makes interpreting the record of past events extremely difficult. The usual order of deposition—the oldest on the bottom, the youngest on the top—loses all meaning

Draw Conclusion: about
Character: Based on what
you've read, is the narrator's
mother being truthful?



when some of the oldest fossils can be brought to the surface by the movement of natural gas. One must look for an undisturbed spot, a place untouched by the action of underground springs or natural gas or human interference. Complete skeletons become important, because they indicate areas of least disturbance. But such spots of calm are rare. Whole blocks of the tar pit can become displaced, making false sequences of the past, skewing the interpretation¹⁰ for what is the true order of nature.

That year before my sixteenth birthday, my mother seemed to spend a lot of time looking through my old scrapbooks, staring at all the eight-by-ten glossies of the shows that I had done. In the summer we visited with my grandmother often, since I wasn't working and had lots of free time. I would go out to the garden to read or sunbathe, but I could hear my mother and grandmother talking.

"She was so cute back then. She worked with Gene Kelly when she was five years old. She was so smart for her age. I don't know what's wrong with her."

"She's fifteen."

"She's too young to be an ingenue¹¹ and too old to be cute. The studios forget so quickly. By the time she's old enough to play an ingenue, they won't remember her."

"Does she have to work in the movies? Hand me the scissors."

My grandmother was making false eyelashes using the hair from her hairbrush. When she was young she had incredible hair. I saw an old photograph of her when it flowed beyond her waist like a cascading black waterfall. At seventy, her hair was still black as night, which made her few strands of silver look like shooting stars. But her hair had thinned greatly with age. It sometimes fell out in clumps. She wore it brushed back in a bun with a hairpiece for added fullness. My grandmother had always been proud of her hair, but once she started making false eyelashes from it, she wasn't proud of the way it looked anymore. She said she was proud of it now because it made her useful.

¹⁰ *Skewing the interpretation* is twisting it so that it is wrong or off the mark.

¹¹ An *ingenue* (än'jə nōō') is an actress who plays innocent, inexperienced young women.

Analogy How does the description of the displaced fossils compare to the narrator's feelings about her life?

Draw Conclusions About Characters What is the narrator's grandmother suggesting about the narrator's future?

It was **painstaking** work—tying knots into strands of hair, then tying them together to form feathery little crescents. Her glamorous false eyelashes were much sought after. Theatrical make-up artists waited months for her work. But my grandmother said what she liked was that she was doing something, making a contribution, and besides it didn't cost her anything. No overhead. "Till I go bald," she often joked.

She tried to teach me her art that summer, but for some reason strands of my hair wouldn't stay tied in knots.

"Too springy," my grandmother said. "Your hair is still too young." And because I was frustrated¹² then, frustrated with everything about my life, she added, "You have to wait until your hair falls out, like mine. Something to look forward to, eh?" She had laughed and patted my hand.

My mother was going on and on about my lack of work, what might be wrong, that something she couldn't quite put her finger on. I heard my grandmother reply, but I didn't catch it all: "Movies are just make-believe, not real life. Like what I make with my hair that falls out—false. False eyelashes. Not meant to last."

The remains in the La Brea Tar Pits are mostly of carnivorous animals. Very few herbivores are found—the ratio is five to one, a perversion of the natural food chain. The ratio is easy to explain. Thousands of years ago a thirsty animal sought a drink from the pools of water only to find itself trapped by the bottom, gooey with subterranean¹³ oil. A shriek of agony from the trapped victim drew flesh-eating predators, which were then trapped themselves by the very same ooze which provided the bait. The cycle repeated itself countless times. The number of victims grew, lured by the image of easy food, the deception of

12 To be **frustrated** is to be kept from doing something or achieving some goal.

13 **Carnivorous** animals eat meat; **herbivores** eat mainly plants. The remains in the pits are a **perversion** because they give a false picture of reality. **Subterranean** means underground.

Vocabulary

painstaking (pānz' tā' king) *adj.* requiring close, careful labor or attention

predators (pred' ə tərz) *n.* animals that kill other animals for food

deception (di sep' shən) *n.* that which fools or misleads

Draw Conclusions About Characters What is the grandmother trying to tell the narrator?

an easy kill. The animals piled on top of one another. For over ten thousand years the promise of the place drew animals of all sorts, mostly predators and scavengers¹⁴—dire wolves, panthers, coyotes, vultures—all hungry for their chance. Most were sucked down against their will in those watering holes destined to be called the La Brea Tar Pits in a place to be named the City of Angels, home of Hollywood movie stars.

I spent a lot of time by myself that summer, wondering what it was that I didn't have anymore. Could I get it back? How could I if I didn't know what it was?

That's when I discovered the La Brea Tar Pits. Hidden behind the County Art Museum on trendy¹⁵ Wilshire Boulevard, I found a job that didn't require me to be small or cute for my age. I didn't have to audition. No one said, "Thank you very much, we'll call you." Or if they did, they meant it. I volunteered my time one afternoon, and my fascination stuck—like tar on the bones of a saber-toothed tiger.

My mother didn't understand what had changed me. I didn't understand it myself. But I liked going to the La Brea Tar Pits. It meant I could get really messy and I was doing it with a purpose. I didn't feel awkward there. I could wear old stained pants. I could wear T-shirts with holes in them. I could wear disgustingly filthy sneakers and it was all perfectly justified. It wasn't a costume for a role in a film or a part in a TV sit-com. My mother didn't mind my dressing like that when she knew I was off to the pits. That was okay so long as I didn't track tar back into the house. I started going to the pits every day, and my mother wondered why. She couldn't believe I would rather be groveling¹⁶ in tar than going on auditions or interviews.

While my mother wasn't proud of the La Brea Tar Pits (she didn't know or care what a fossil was), she didn't discourage me either. She drove me there, the same way she used to drive me to the studios.

14 A **scavenger** is an animal, such as a hyena or vulture, that feeds on dead, decaying animals.

15 **Trendy** describes what is currently popular. Wilshire Boulevard has many trendy shops, stores, and restaurants.

16 **Groveling** is lying or crawling facedown on the ground in a timid or fearful manner.

Analogy In what way might this description of the tar pits compare with Hollywood's movie industry?

Visual Vocabulary

A saber-toothed tiger was a predator in the cat family that had strong limbs, a muscular body, and a short tail.



"Wouldn't you rather be doing a show in Las Vegas than scrambling around in a pit?" she asked.

"I'm not in a show in Las Vegas, Ma. The Lee Sisters are retired." My older sister had married and was starting a family of her own.

"But if you could choose between . . ."

"There isn't a choice."

"You really like this tar-pit stuff, or are you just waiting until you can get real work in the movies?"

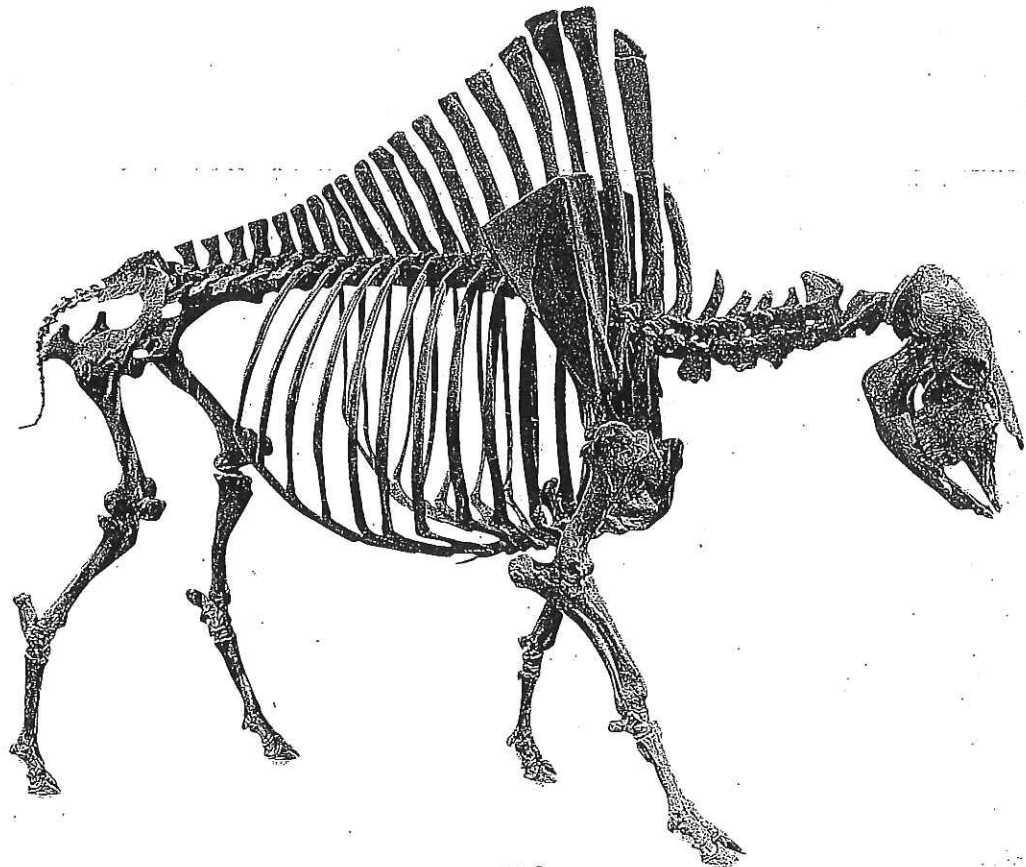
I didn't answer.

My mother sighed. "You could do it if you wanted, if you really wanted. You still have what it takes."

I didn't know about that. But then, I couldn't explain what drew me to the tar pits either. Maybe it was the bones, finding out what they were, which animal they belonged to, imagining how they got there, how they fell into the trap. I wondered about that a lot.

At the La Brea Tar Pits, everything dug out of the pit is saved—including the sticky sand that covered the bones through the ages. Each bucket of sand is washed, sieved, and examined for

Draw Conclusions About Characters Why do you think the narrator chooses the tar pits instead of show business?



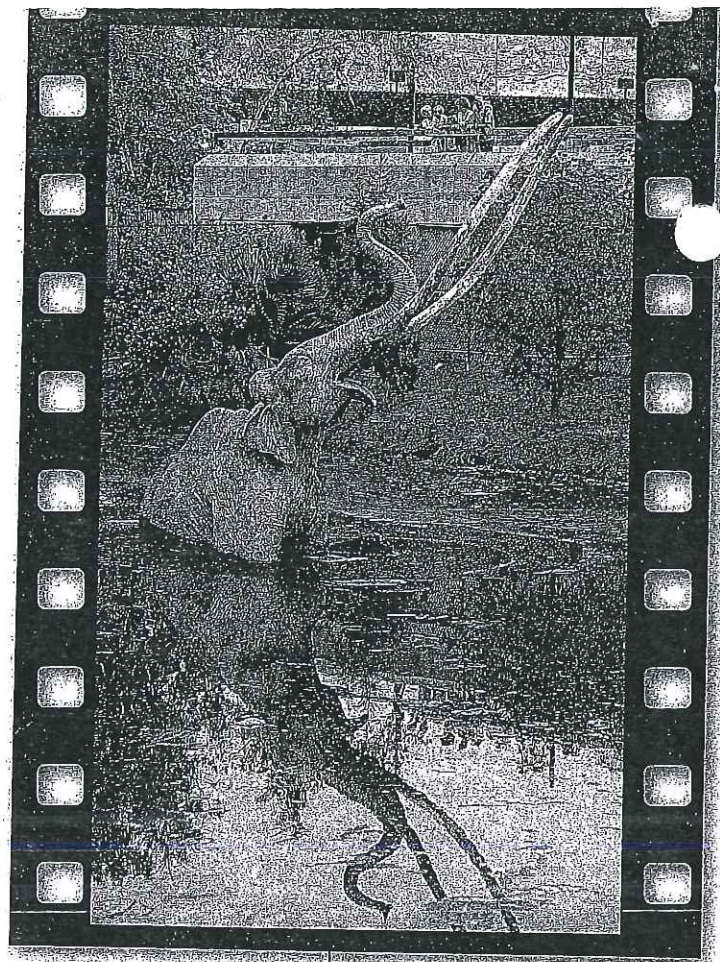
pollen grains, insect remains, any evidence of past life. Even the grain size is recorded—the percentage of silt to sand to gravel that reveals the history of deposition, erosion, and disturbance. No single fossil, no one observation, is significant enough to tell the entire story. All the evidence must be weighed before a semblance¹⁷ of truth emerges.

The tar pits had its lessons. I was learning I had to work slowly, become observant, to concentrate. I learned about time in a way that I would never experience—not in hours, days, and months, but in thousands and thousands of years. I imagined what the past must have been like, envisioned Los Angeles as a sweeping basin, perhaps slightly colder and more humid, a time before people and studios arrived. The tar pits recorded a warming trend; the kinds of animals found there reflected the changing climate. The ones unadapted disappeared. No trace of their kind was found in the area. The ones adapted to warmer weather left a record of bones in the pit. Amid that collection of ancient skeletons, surrounded by evidence of death, I was finding a secret preserved over thousands and thousands of years. There was something cruel about natural selection and the survival of the fittest.¹⁸ Even those successful individuals that “had what it took” for adaptation still wound up in the pits.

I never found out if I had what it took, not the way my mother meant. But I did adapt to the truth: I wasn't a Chinese Shirley Temple any longer, cute and short for my age. I had grown up. Maybe not on a Hollywood movie set, but in the La Brea Tar Pits. ☹️

¹⁷ A *semblance* of truth would be the slightest likeness of truth.

¹⁸ *Natural selection and the survival of the fittest* is the theory that plants and animals best suited to their environment tend to survive and pass on their characteristics to their offspring.



Life-size replicas of extinct mammals at the La Brea Tar Pits show visitors how the area's soft tar trapped Ice Age animals.

BQ BIG Question

Through her work in the tar pits, what is the narrator learning about herself?

After You Read

Respond and Think Critically

1. What begins to happen to the narrator's show-business career after she turns fifteen? [Recall]
2. How did animals from thousands of years ago end up in the La Brea Tar Pits? [Summarize]
3. The narrator describes Hollywood as "a place where dreams and nightmares can often take the same shape." What does she mean? [Interpret]
4. How does the narrator feel about the change in her Hollywood career? Explain. [Analyze]
5. How does the narrator's relationship with her mother change throughout the story? [Analyze]
6. **BO** **BIG Question** In what way is working in the tar pits a positive action for the narrator? [Evaluate]

TIP

Interpreting

Here are some tips to help you answer question 3.

- Recall what you know about Hollywood.
- Consider how the career of a Hollywood actor can change.
- Think about how Hollywood experiences might affect an actor's or performer's life.

FOLDABLES Study Organizer

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

Connect to Science

Fossils in the La Brea Tar Pits

Scientists have collected more than one million bones from the La Brea Tar Pits. Fossils from hundreds of species of animals, plants, and other organisms have been excavated.

The fossils in the pits are well preserved partly because animal bones and other remains were buried so quickly. It took from a few weeks to two years for bones to be completely buried. Some bones have marks showing that they were exposed to changing temperatures, rodents, and erosion from water and wind.

Small items such as shells, tiny bones, insects, and plant remains are called *microfossils*. These tiny fossils can provide a great deal of information. For example, microfossils of wood, leaves, cones, and seeds indicate that the area's climate 40,000 years ago was not much different from that of the present day.

Group Activity Discuss the following questions with classmates.

1. Why are fossils from the tar pits so well preserved?
2. What natural events affected animal bones as they became fossils?
3. What can you learn from microfossils?

Literary Element: Analogy

1. Why is the story of the narrator's life interrupted from time to time with factual information about the tar pits?
2. Reread the description of the narrator's mother looking at old scrapbooks. Then reread the description of tar pits that appears just before the description of the scrapbooks. In what ways are the scrapbooks and the collections of fossils alike?

Review: Symbol

As you learned on page 420, a **symbol** is any object, person, place, or experience that stands for more than what it is. Authors use symbols in stories to add meaning and emphasize the theme, or a message about life that the author wants to express.

3. Recall the statement "Innocence trapped by ignorance" from the story. How does this phrase reflect Lee's use of symbolism in the story? Explain.
4. In what way might the grandmother's hair symbolize the narrator?

Reading Strategy

Draw Conclusions About Characters

Test Skills Practice

5. Which statement accurately explains why the narrator enjoys working in the tar pits?
 - A Her mother encourages her to work there.
 - B The work is important and interesting.
 - C She can work with other people.
 - D She is able to use scientific tools.

Vocabulary Practice

Identify whether the words in each set have the same or the opposite meaning. Then write a sentence using each vocabulary word, or draw or find a picture that represents the word.

excavated and buried
immobilized and paralyzed
painstaking and uncomplicated
predators and hunters
deception and honesty

Example:

excavated and buried = opposite meaning

Sentence: Scientists collected hundreds of excavated animal bones and other fossils during the dig.

Academic Vocabulary

Many of the animals that were capable of **adaptation** still ended up in the tar pits. In the preceding sentence, *adaptation* means "the ability to change." Think about how you have changed in the last few years. What adaptations have you made?



Literature Online

Selection Resources For Selection Quizzes, eFlashcards, and Reading-Writing Connection activities, go to glencoe.com and enter QuickPass code GL29763u5.