

Before You Read

The Scholarship Jacket

Connect to the Short Story

Think about an award you have earned or would like to earn.

Partner Talk With a partner, talk about the award and about how a person might go about winning it. Discuss the experience of competing for awards. What is it like?

Build Background

This story takes place in recent time in a small town in Texas.

- A valedictorian is the student who has achieved the highest grades in a graduating class during all his or her years at school. This person is usually given the honor of giving the farewell address at the graduation ceremony.
- The word *valedictorian* comes from the Latin word *valedicere*, which means "to say farewell."

Vocabulary

eavesdrop (ēvz' drop') *v.* to listen secretly to a private conversation (p. 475). *Janet tried to eavesdrop to find out more about the surprise party.*

coincidence (kō in' si dēns) *n.* a situation in which two or more events that seem related accidentally occur at the same time (p. 476). *It was a lucky coincidence that we both won tickets for the same show.*

policy (pol' ə sē) *n.* a guideline for actions or decisions (p. 476). *Mr. Trent's homework policy clearly states when makeup work is due.*

withdrawn (with drōn') *adj.* shy, quiet, or unsociable (p. 478). *Sitting alone, Deon seemed unusually withdrawn at the dance.*

vile (vīl) *adj.* very bad; unpleasant; foul (p. 479). *A vile odor came from the lunch bag they found in the closet.*

Meet Marta Salinas

Short Story Writer Marta Salinas is the author of many short stories. Her short story "The Scholarship Jacket" was first published in *Cuentos Chicanos: A Short Story Anthology*. "Cuentos Chicanos" means "stories by Americans of Mexican descent." Her work has also appeared in the *Los Angeles Herald Examiner* and in *California Living* magazine.

Travel Writer, Too Salinas has also written and collaborated on several tourist guides for Argentina and Buenos Aires. Most of her guides are written in Spanish.

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Author Search For more about Marta Salinas, go to glencoe.com and enter QuickPass code GL29763u4.

Set Purposes for Reading

BQ BIG Question

As you read this story, ask yourself, what influences the main character as she deals with an unfair situation?

Literary Element Conflict and Resolution

Conflict is the central struggle between opposing forces in a story. An **external conflict** exists when a character struggles against some outside force, such as another person, nature, society, or fate. An **internal conflict** exists within the mind of a character who is torn between opposing feelings or goals. The **resolution** is the part of the plot that presents the final outcome of the story. At that time, the plot's conflicts are resolved and the story ends.

Conflict is important in storytelling because it advances the plot. Most plots are built around one or more conflicts. As you read, ask yourself, what conflicts are the characters facing? How might these conflicts be resolved?

Reading Strategy Make Predictions About Plot

When you **make predictions**, you guess what will happen next. To predict what will happen next in a story, think about the events and details you've read about so far. Consider, too, what you know about the subject of the story or about real life. Then make a guess about what may happen next in the **plot**, or sequence of events. After you've made a prediction, read on to see whether you guessed correctly.

Making predictions is important because it helps you closely follow the events in a story. Predicting helps you stay involved in a story and makes reading more interesting.

As you read "The Scholarship Jacket," predict what will happen next. Use a chart like the one below to record your predictions.

Plot Detail	My Prediction	What Happens

Learning Objectives

For pages 472–481

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

Literary Study:

Analyzing conflict.

Analyzing resolution.

Reading: Making predictions about plot.

TRY IT

Make Predictions Imagine that you are walking to the lunch table where your friends are sitting. Before they notice you, you hear the word "balloons." As you get closer, they stop talking. Before your friend closes her notebook, you see a list beginning with the word "invitations." As you sit down, you remember that your birthday is next week. Predict what will happen next week.



THE SCHOLARSHIP JACKET

Marta Salinas

The small Texas school that I attended carried out a tradition every year during the eighth grade graduation; a beautiful gold and green jacket, the school colors, was awarded to the class valedictorian, the student who had maintained the highest grades for eight years. The scholarship jacket had a big gold S on the left front side and the winner's name was written in gold letters on the pocket.

My oldest sister Rosie had won the jacket a few years back and I fully expected to win also. I was fourteen and in the eighth grade. I had been a straight A student since the first grade, and the last year I had looked forward to owning that jacket. My father was a farm laborer who couldn't earn enough money to feed eight children, so when I was six I was given to my grandparents to raise. We couldn't participate in sports at school because there were registration fees, uniform costs, and trips out of town; so even though we were quite agile and athletic, there would never be a sports school jacket for us. This one, the scholarship jacket, was our only chance.

In May, close to graduation, spring fever struck, and no one paid any attention in class; instead we stared out the windows and at each other, wanting to speed up the last few weeks of school. I despaired every time I looked in the mirror. Pencil thin, not a curve anywhere, I was called "Beanpole" and "String Bean" and I knew that's what I looked like.

Conflict and Resolution
What struggle does the narrator's family face?

Make Predictions About Plot Predict if the scholarship jacket will cause a conflict. What details influence your prediction?

A flat chest, no hips, and a brain, that's what I had. That really isn't much for a fourteen-year-old to work with, I thought, as I absentmindedly wandered from my history class to the gym. Another hour of sweating in basketball and displaying my toothpick legs was coming up. Then I remembered my P.E. shorts were still in a bag under my desk where I'd forgotten them. I had to walk all the way back and get them. Coach Thompson was a real bear if anyone wasn't dressed for P.E. She had said I was a good forward and once she even tried to talk Grandma into letting me join the team. Grandma, of course, said no.

I was almost back at my classroom's door when I heard angry voices and arguing. I stopped. I didn't mean to **eavesdrop**; I just hesitated, not knowing what to do. I needed those shorts and I was going to be late, but I didn't want to interrupt an argument between my teachers. I recognized the voices: Mr. Schmidt, my history teacher, and Mr. Boone, my math teacher. They seemed to be arguing about me. I couldn't believe it. I still remember the shock that rooted me flat against the wall as if I were trying to blend in with the graffiti written there.

"I refuse to do it! I don't care who her father is, her grades don't even begin to compare to Martha's. I won't lie or falsify records. Martha¹ has a straight A plus average and you know it." That was Mr. Schmidt and he sounded very angry. Mr. Boone's voice sounded calm and quiet.

"Look, Joann's father is not only on the Board, he owns the only store in town; we could say it was a close tie and—"

The pounding in my ears drowned out the rest of the words, only a word here and there filtered through.

"... Martha is Mexican. ... resign. ... won't do it. ..."

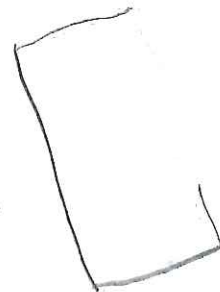
Mr. Schmidt came rushing out, and luckily for me went down the opposite way toward the auditorium, so he didn't see me. Shaking, I waited a few minutes and then went in and grabbed my bag and fled from the room.

¹ The main character is called "Martha" at school and "Marta" at home. Martha is an English version of the main character's Spanish name.

Vocabulary

eavesdrop (ēvz' drop') v. to listen secretly to a private conversation

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Make Predictions About Plot How does the conversation Marta overhears affect your prediction about whether she will receive the jacket?

Mr. Boone looked up when I came in but didn't say anything. To this day I don't remember if I got in trouble in P.E. for being late or how I made it through the rest of the afternoon. I went home very sad and cried into my pillow that night so grandmother wouldn't hear me. It seemed a cruel **coincidence** that I had overheard that conversation.

The next day when the principal called me into his office, I knew what it would be about. He looked uncomfortable and unhappy. I decided I wasn't going to make it any easier for him so I looked him straight in the eye. He looked away and fidgeted with the papers on his desk.

"Martha," he said, "there's been a change in **policy** this year regarding the scholarship jacket. As you know, it has always been free." He cleared his throat and continued. "This year the Board decided to charge fifteen dollars—which still won't cover the complete cost of the jacket."

I stared at him in shock and a small sound of dismay² escaped my throat. I hadn't expected this. He still avoided looking in my eyes.

"So if you are unable to pay the fifteen dollars for the jacket, it will be given to the next one in line."

Standing with all the dignity I could muster,³ I said, "I'll speak to my grandfather about it, sir, and let you know tomorrow." I cried on the walk home from the bus stop. The dirt road was a quarter of a mile from the highway, so by the time I got home, my eyes were red and puffy.

"Where's Grandpa?" I asked Grandma, looking down at the floor so she wouldn't ask me why I'd been crying. She was sewing on a quilt and didn't look up.

"I think he's out back working in the bean field."

I went outside and looked out at the fields. There he was. I could see him walking between the rows, his body bent over the little plants, hoe in hand. I walked slowly out to him,

2 **Dismay** is a feeling of alarm or uneasiness.

3 To **muster** dignity is to gather or collect it.

Vocabulary

coincidence (kō in'si dəns) *n.* a situation in which two or more events that seem related accidentally occur at the same time

policy (pol'ə sē) *n.* a guideline for actions or decisions

Conflict and Resolution
What conflict does Marta face? Is it an internal or external conflict?

trying to think how I could best ask him for the money. There was a cool breeze blowing and a sweet smell of **mesquite** in the air, but I didn't appreciate it. I kicked at a dirt clod. I wanted that jacket so much. It was more than just being a valedictorian and giving a little thank you speech for the jacket on graduation night. It represented eight years of hard work and expectation. I knew I had to be honest with Grandpa; it was my only chance. He saw me and looked up.

He waited for me to speak. I cleared my throat nervously and clasped my hands behind my back so he wouldn't see them shaking. "Grandpa, I have a big favor to ask you," I said in Spanish, the only language he knew. He still waited silently. I tried again. "Grandpa, this year the principal said the scholarship jacket is not going to be free. It's going to cost fifteen dollars and I have to take the money in tomorrow, otherwise it'll be given to someone else." The last words came out in an eager rush. Grandpa straightened up tiredly and leaned his chin on the hoe handle. He looked out over the field that was filled with the tiny green bean plants. I waited, desperately hoping he'd say I could have the money.

He turned to me and asked quietly, "What does a scholarship jacket mean?"

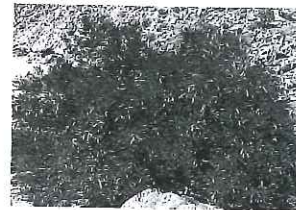
I answered quickly; maybe there was a chance. "It means you've earned it by having the highest grades for eight years and that's why they're giving it to you." Too late I realized the significance of my words. Grandpa knew that I understood it was not a matter of money. It wasn't that. He went back to hoeing the weeds that sprang up between the delicate little bean plants. It was a time consuming job; sometimes the small shoots were right next to each other. Finally he spoke again.

"Then if you pay for it, Marta, it's not a scholarship jacket, is it? Tell your principal I will not pay the fifteen dollars."

I walked back to the house and locked myself in the bathroom for a long time. I was angry with grandfather even though I knew he was right, and I was angry with the Board, whoever they were. Why did they have to change the rules just when it was my turn to win the jacket?

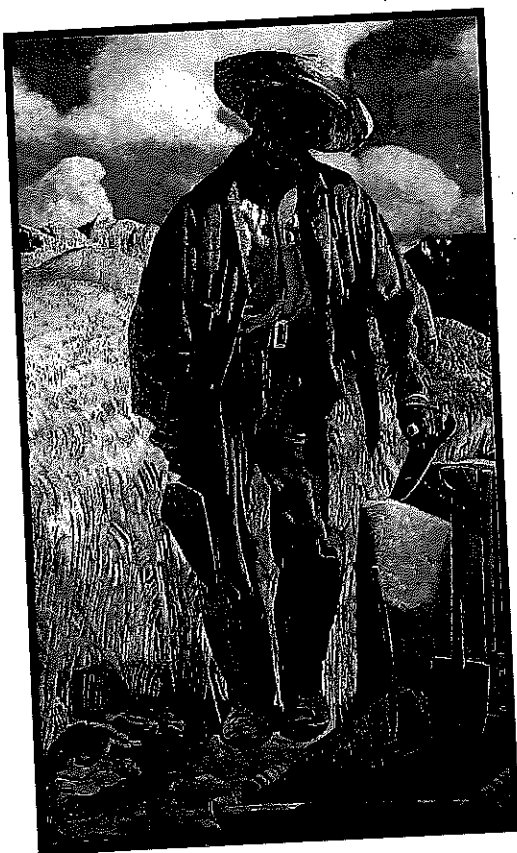
Visual Vocabulary

Mesquite (mes kēt') is a small thorny tree. Its pleasant-smelling wood is a favored barbeque fuel in the Southwest.



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Make Predictions About Plot How do you think Grandpa's decision will affect the rest of the events in the story?



New Mexico Peon, 1942. Ernest L. Blumenschein. Oil on canvas, 40 x 25 in. Gerald Peters Gallery, Santa Fe, NM.

View the Art Does the person in the painting remind you of anyone in the story? Explain.

It was a very sad and **withdrawn** girl who dragged into the principal's office the next day. This time he did look me in the eyes.

"What did your grandfather say?"

I sat very straight in my chair. "He said to tell you he won't pay the fifteen dollars."

The principal muttered something I couldn't understand under his breath, and walked over to the window. He stood looking out at something outside. He looked bigger than usual when he stood up; he was a tall gaunt⁴ man with gray hair, and I watched the back of his head while I waited for him to speak.

"Why?" he finally asked. "Your grandfather has the money. Doesn't he own a small bean farm?"

I looked at him, forcing my eyes to stay dry. "He said if I had to pay for it, then it wouldn't be a scholarship jacket," I said and stood up to leave. "I guess you'll just have to give it to Joann." I hadn't meant to say that; it had just slipped out. I was almost to the door when he stopped me.

"Martha—wait."

I turned and looked at him, waiting. What did he want now? I could feel my heart pounding. Something bitter

⁴ A **gaunt** person is thin and bony.

Vocabulary

withdrawn (with drôn') *adj.* shy, quiet, or unsociable

and vile tasting was coming up in my mouth; I was afraid I was going to be sick. I didn't need any sympathy speeches. He sighed loudly and went back to his big desk. He looked at me, biting his lip, as if thinking.

"Okay. We'll make an exception in your case. I'll tell the Board, you'll get your jacket."

I could hardly believe it. I spoke in a trembling rush. "Oh, thank you sir!" Suddenly I felt great. I didn't know about adrenalin⁵ in those days, but I knew something was pumping through me, making me feel as tall as the sky. I wanted to yell, jump, run the mile, do something. I ran out so I could cry in the hall where there was no one to see me. At the end of the day, Mr. Schmidt winked at me and said, "I hear you're getting a scholarship jacket this year."

His face looked as happy and innocent as a baby's, but I knew better. Without answering I gave him a quick hug and ran to the bus. I cried on the walk home again, but this time because I was so happy. I couldn't wait to tell Grandpa and ran straight to the field. I joined him in the row where he was working and without saying anything I crouched down and started pulling up the weeds with my hands. Grandpa worked alongside me for a few minutes, but he didn't ask what had happened. After I had a little pile of weeds between the rows, I stood up and faced him.

"The principal said he's making an exception for me, Grandpa, and I'm getting the jacket after all. That's after I told him what you said."

Grandpa didn't say anything, he just gave me a pat on the shoulder and a smile. He pulled out the crumpled red handkerchief that he always carried in his back pocket and wiped the sweat off his forehead.

"Better go see if your grandmother needs any help with supper."

I gave him a big grin. He didn't fool me. I skipped and ran back to the house whistling some silly tune.

⁵ A chemical released into the blood in times of stress or excitement, **adrenalin** (ə dren' əl in) increases the body's energy.

Vocabulary

vile (vil) *adj.* very bad; unpleasant; foul

Conflict and Resolution
How is Marta's conflict resolved?

BQ BIG Question

How do you think this experience influences Marta's view of her grandfather?

After You Read

Respond and Think Critically

1. What is the scholarship jacket? [Recall]
2. Why is the jacket so important to Marta? Explain. [Interpret]
3. Why are Mr. Schmidt and Mr. Boone arguing? Why might Mr. Schmidt have sounded so angry? Include details from the story in your answer. [Infer]
4. Why do you think the original policy regarding the scholarship jacket was changed? Explain. [Infer]
5. What does Grandpa mean when he says, "Then if you pay for it, Marta, it's not a scholarship jacket, is it?" Explain. [Interpret]
6. **BQ** **BIG Question** What might Marta's experience teach other people? Explain. [Analyze]

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."

coincidence
withdrawn

eavesdrop
policy

vile

1. With my ear up to the wall, I could _____ on the discussion.
2. The cough medicine had a _____ taste that I hated.
3. The store's _____ on refunds was cash back for all items with a receipt.
4. My sister smiled and was _____ with the gift I made her.
5. We never _____ that the contest would be easy.
6. It was a _____ that I saw my cousin twice in one day.
7. On Jack's first day at his new school, he was quiet and _____.

Academic Vocabulary

Grandpa helps Marta **clarify** her thoughts about whether she should have to pay for the scholarship jacket. In the preceding sentence, *clarify* means "to clear up confusion." *Clarify* also has other meanings. Read this sentence: The muddy water will **clarify** when the dirt sinks to the bottom of the bucket. What does *clarify* mean here? What is the difference between the two meanings?

TIP

Inferring

To answer this question, use details from the story and your own experience. To remember the original policy, reread the original requirements for winning the jacket as explained at the beginning of the story.

- Reread the argument between Marta's teachers.
- Use information from the argument to piece together a reason for the policy change. Think about what the principal tells Marta when he calls her into his office.
- Not all of the information is included in the story. You will have to use clues that the author gives you.

FOLDABLES
Study Organizer

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

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Selection Resources

For Selection Quizzes, eFlashcards, and Reading-Writing Connection activities, go to glencoe.com and enter QuickPass code GL29763u4.

Literary Element Conflict and Resolution

1. Reread the description of the principal's behavior during his conversations with Marta. What details show that the principal is facing an internal conflict? Explain.
2. What happens at the resolution of "The Scholarship Jacket"? What problem is solved? How do the characters feel? Explain.

Review: Symbol

As you learned on page 420, a **symbol** is an object, a person, a place, or an experience that stands for something else. For example, a soaring bird may represent freedom.

3. What does the scholarship jacket symbolize to Marta? Use details from the story to support your answer.
4. What might the bean plants in Grandpa's fields symbolize to him? Explain.

Reading Strategy Make Predictions About Plot

Test Skills Practice

5. Based on the story, which prediction accurately describes how Marta will try to solve problems in the future?
 - A She will listen in on other people's conversations.
 - B She will easily accept things that she dislikes.
 - C She will ask for her grandfather's advice.
 - D She will complain to her friends about her problems.

Grammar Link

Comparative and Superlative Adverbs

A comparative adverb compares two actions. A superlative adverb compares more than two actions. Most short adverbs add *-er* to form the comparative and *-est* to form the superlative.

He spoke *louder* than Marta.

He spoke the *loudest* of them all.

Long adverbs, and a few short adverbs, add *more* to form the comparative and *most* to form the superlative.

Marta rode the bus *more often* than Ricky did.

Of all the students, Marta rode the bus *most often*.

The words *less* and *least* are added to adverbs to form the negative comparative or negative superlative.

She spoke *less* quickly to him.

She spoke *least* quickly to Grandpa.

Some adverbs have irregular comparative and superlative forms.

Adverb	Comparative	Superlative
well	better	best
badly	worse	worst
little	less	least

Practice Find two sentences in the story with adverbs. Write the comparative and superlative forms of the adverbs. Then write new sentences with the adverb forms that you created.

Write with Style

Apply Figurative Language Imagine that you are writing a graduation speech. Think of a symbol that represents your graduation. Describe how the symbol represents the accomplishments of your class.