

Prereading: U.S.A. Culture

Best friends are valued and treasured around the world. In "Tawanda!" the author describes a special friendship between two young girls whose shared experiences include universal elements of friendship as well as particularly American events, thoughts, and activities. *Fried Green Tomatoes*, the film to which the author refers, is based on a novel by Fannie Flagg and would provide an excellent supplementary reading to this story, or perhaps "Tawanda!" would serve as an interesting introduction to the study of the novel and/or the film.

The Three Stooges is a series of black and white films featuring three actors appearing in slapstick comedies which were televised during the fifties and sixties and are rerun widely now in the U.S.

"Blank Disks" (page 57) may be a good story for your students to read and discuss along with "Tawanda!" as it evokes feelings around **separation, friendship, and family** similar to those explored in "Tawanda!"

Reading and Conversation

Before reading the story, ask students to **think about someone to whom they feel very close** and to talk about that person with a partner. Then, ask students to read the story aloud (each student perhaps reading a paragraph, stopping if need be to clarify any points or to go over new vocabulary). After a first interrupted reading, read the story aloud a second time, asking students to just listen to the story. Have them then return to their partner to discuss the story as well as **similarities and differences** between the friendship described in the story and the friendships they have just discussed with one another.

Writing



As well as celebrating friendship, "Tawanda!" also takes on the **themes of loss and change**. When close friends move away from one another, the relationship may or may not continue. In some cases, those friendships are always treasured; in other instances, they may fade away as people grow older. Ask students to **reflect on the qualities of lasting friendship** and to speculate about why they may or may not remain close, in the future, to someone who is currently in their lives. Encourage students not only to write about their friendship, but also to take into account whatever thoughts they might have about their own plans for the future.

Name _____ Date _____

Vocabulary: Words to Watch

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- sleepovers** parties where young people (most often girls) sleep at one another's homes, usually staying up late at night, talking, giggling, listening to music, and playing with makeup
- craving** wanting something badly; having a strong desire for something
- brownies** chewy, chocolate cake-like squares
- whimpering** crying softly
- No one was there for me** no one offered support or comfort

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- squinting** looking with one or both eyes partly closed
- high dive** a diving board elevated fairly high off the ground
- visualize** imagine
- Umbros** a brand name of shorts
- Keds** a brand of sneakers or running shoes
- . . . or Bust!** slogan used in traveling; Destination or Bust means "may we get to where we're going or die trying, or give up everything else in the attempt."

Comprehension Check for "Tawanda!"

Please circle the letters of all correct answers. Some questions may have more than one correct answer.

1. When she says it was the "last day" (page 29), the author is referring to
 - a. the last day of school
 - b. the day her best friend moved away
 - c. the last day of summer vacation
 - d. the last day of the month
2. Kristen is the narrator's
 - a. sister
 - b. neighbor
 - c. cousin
 - d. best friend
3. Kristen and the narrator
 - a. helped one another
 - b. spent a lot of time together
 - c. did silly things together
 - d. all of the above
4. The narrator is able to describe Kristen's house as she remembered it because
 - a. she likes to study interior design
 - b. she helped to paint the house
 - c. she spent a great deal of time there
 - d. she chose the furniture