

Blank Disks

by Morgan Heintz (p. 57)



Teacher's Page

Prereading: U.S.A. Culture

"Blank Disks" looks at a close **relationship between a brother and sister**. When families are able to afford tuition or financial assistance is available, children are encouraged after high school to continue their education at a college or university. In this story, the narrator is still living at home and finishing her own high school education while her older brother is already in his second year at college. She reminisces about the years her brother lived and studied at home and clearly misses his presence there.

"Tawanda!" (page 29) may be a good story for your students to read and discuss along with "Blank Disks," as it evokes similar feelings and issues around **separation, friendship, and family**.

Reading and Conversation

"Blank Disks" uses two phrases repeatedly: "I remember back to two years ago . . ." and "My brother is gone now." Read the story aloud, asking students to listen for the way in which the author makes use of **rhythm**. After they've heard the story read aloud, ask them if they notice anything unusual about the story. If upon a first reading they don't take note of **the use of repetition** in opening lines, ask them to read the story silently, paying attention to the way in which the author begins her paragraphs. The line "My brother is leaving now" marks the **transition** between the narrator's recollection of her brother and her feelings after his departure to the university.

Writing



Ask students to write about any topic of their choosing, using the phrase **"I remember back to two years ago"** as the first sentence of their writing. Allow them to choose any genre (for example, fiction, non-fiction, a journal entry, an essay, a letter to a friend). Encourage students to talk about their topic with a partner before writing and to share drafts with their partner. Each partner should ask the other questions to help develop the writing. When all the writings are completed, invite students to share their writing with the whole class.

Name _____ Date _____

Vocabulary: Words to Watch

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- Macintosh** a commonly used home computer made by Apple Computer
- furiously** with great anger, speed, or enthusiasm
- wham** word indicating a loud sound or sudden movement
- exhilaration** state of great happiness or excitement
- Image Writer** a dot-matrix printer, used with Apple computers
- connnndggo-in-do-ee!** onomatopoetic word (a word having a sound like the thing it describes); a nonsense word used to describe the sound of the dot-matrix printer
- carriage** the moving part of the printer which carries the inked ribbon over the paper being printed

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- Nestlé** a food manufacturer
- fire** terminate employment; force someone to leave a job
- distract** divert one's attention; cause to lose concentration; disturb

Comprehension Check for "Blank Disks"

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

1. The narrator of "Blank Disks" writes about her
 - a. boyfriend
 - b. brother
 - c. cousin
 - d. classmate
2. When Grover was working in the computer room, the narrator would
 - a. try to make him watch TV
 - b. try to distract him
 - c. make him chocolate chip cookies
 - d. ask him to help her use the computer
3. When Grover was in high school, he would
 - a. work until late at night doing homework
 - b. hang out with his friends in the computer room
 - c. go to the movies every night
 - d. seldom concentrate on school work
4. Grover was accepted to
 - a. the Army
 - b. Harvard
 - c. Trinity College
 - d. the police academy
5. When Grover's family took him to college, the narrator felt
 - a. happy because his computer wouldn't keep her awake at night
 - b. sad because she knew she didn't want him to leave
 - c. nervous because she was afraid college would be very difficult for him
 - d. angry because she didn't like riding in the car
6. After Grover left for school, the narrator
 - a. missed him very much
 - b. bought a new computer
 - c. tried to make the computer room a special place
 - d. a and c