

Grade 12 NTI Day #35 ELA

Teacher: Mrs. Lee

Text:

Snowstorm

By Bruna Dantas Lobato

Assignment Instruction:

- Task 1 – Read and Annotate the Short Story
 - Underline key ideas and details
 - Make notes in the margin every 5-10 lines – write a summary or ask a question
- Task 2 – Complete the text dependent questions (1-5). Be sure to respond to short answer prompts with complete sentences.

Important:

This assignment will also be available in Google Classroom. Please feel free to contact Mrs. Lee with any questions via email: andrea.lee@pineville.kyschools.us

Name: _____

Class: _____

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By Bruna Dantas Lobato

2022

Bruna Dantas Lobato is a writer and translator from Natal, Brazil, currently living in St. Louis, Missouri. She attended college in Vermont, where this story takes place.

As you read, take notes on how the key events develop the story's meaning.

- [1] Snow started to leave a tinge of lifelessness on everything, and I stopped going outside, stayed indoors as much as I could, in layers of fleece. Everyone left the campus for warmer places for the break, and I stayed there, in the dorm that looked like a milk carton, with its modern shape and single gable, never went anywhere too far from it.



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In the afternoons, I worked at the campus mailroom, where I watched the stacks of letters grow, unopened. I put slim envelopes in their slots. I sorted Amazon deliveries, media mail, care packages in padded envelopes sent Priority from loving parents. Dubrowsky, Dunn, Dunton. There was intimacy in watching the movements of the campus, the coming and going, even in everyone's absence.

Then, in the evenings, I went back to my room and read until I ran out of pages. Then I called my mom on Skype.¹

And have you been eating? she asked. Have you been going outside? Being careful out there? Washing your undies in the shower, like I taught you?

- [5] She worried about me all alone on campus. She worried about me in the dead of winter. She worried about me living so far away, alone in America.

She'd watched a movie about a couple of girls left behind at a boarding school upstate. The snow made the campus look bleak. Emma Roberts had dark circles under her eyes. Everyone died.

Don't go down into the basement, she said. Avoid long hallways. Don't go out late at night.

1. a software for video or audio calls over the Internet

When she heard on the news that a snowstorm was passing through Vermont, she e-mailed me to ask if I needed company. A friend to marvel at the thunder with, she wrote.

I called her as soon as I woke up, before I ate my breakfast.

[10] I've never seen a snowstorm, she said. She brought her face closer to the screen. Where is it?

It's over, I said.

I showed her my window. The sky looked blank like a sheet, icicles hanging from the frame like teeth in a child's drawing. Sunlight flooded the Webcam, and for a moment my corner of the screen was all white. I reappeared as a silhouette, and then as my full self again.

Call me if something happens, while it's still happening, she said. I want to see it live.

Then she went on to list every storm fact she knew.

[15] Sandstorms on Mars, other storms on the moon. Every tragedy on Earth. Floods, tsunamis, earthquakes. She talked until I had to say, Mom, it's getting late. I have to get ready for work.

On a particularly cold day, I sent my mother a picture of the snow falling onto the soccer field out my window, which I knew she found serene, beautiful even, but this time she found it scary.

Does walking outside feel like being buried alive? she asked.

And I said that it didn't, though the truth was that sometimes it did. I'd have to dust the snow off my shoulders and the creases in my coat before I walked in, my legs heavy, my jaw frozen, my hands burning.

She told me to stay indoors as much as I could, not to leave my room again until it was warm outside.

[20] Then she shook her head.

No, don't listen to me.

She yawned then looked past me, at something behind her screen. A lock of her hair fell on her eyes, and she didn't move it away.

It was later there than where I was, way past midnight. I let her go to bed, and I stayed up, all the lights in my room still on.

I sat in front of the computer, wondering what I should do next, now that I was alone. The Victorian novels I had to read for the upcoming semester sat unopened on my desk. I felt it would take too much effort to enter their world that night, to move between Brazil and the United States and then England in the course of a day.

[25] The computer screen went dark, and I saw my own face reflected in it. I looked pale and tired, papery, even, as if covered in mildew.² I got up and splashed cold water on my face in the bathroom down the hall, then put on my coat and boots and went out on a walk.

From the middle of the soccer field, in the dark, I could see into my bedroom on the third floor, and into the bedrooms of my neighbors. A shadow moved across a room. Two girls laughed together in another, tilting back their heads, with no sound. In my room, the window framed a perfect image of stillness. The whole world seemed to quieten down for that moment, for me to look at what my life looks like.

I called her again when I thought she'd be awake, and her face glowed in the dark, lit up by nothing but the computer screen.

Were you asleep?

The light was giving me a headache, she said, and took her hand to her brow.

[30] Everything gave her migraines in those days. She felt dizzy, her ears rang, her eyes twitched. To protect herself, she had to live in a world of blandness, often in silence, often in the dark, warm gauze over her eyes.

It occurred to me that she'd love the milk carton and the campus. The carpeted halls and the snow muffling every sound, the dining-hall food, the constant darkness, nighttime always spilling into mornings.

I told her this, and she said, Can you imagine? If the moment I got there and ate your food and slept on your bed and walked around in your clothes I was suddenly cured?

I told her about my walk to the soccer field.

She smiled and said, So it turns out you do listen to what I say.

[35] I do, I do.

Just don't go on these walks when it's dark out, she said. Have you heard about the Filipino student who got murdered somewhere in New York last week? Not too far from you.

I laughed, happy that she was back to being so unmistakably herself.

When winter break was almost over, my mother e-mailed me to say that she'd received the package I'd sent her for Christmas, a few weeks too late, when I'd already forgotten about it.

On Skype, she waited with the box on her lap so we could open it together, her hands on my address.

[40] I can't believe this came all the way from America, she said.

She turned the box to the screen to show me the customs label I'd filled out.

Look, I'm touching your handwriting, she said. Might as well be touching your hand.

2. a fungus that grows on plants and materials made from living things

She cut the tape open with her kitchen shears and found the card I'd written for her, a brown dog running down a snowy hill.

Read it to me, I said.

[45] Querida mãe, she said. Feliz Natal.³

But then she couldn't make out what the rest of it said.

Your handwriting has changed, she said. I can barely recognize it.

I don't write in cursive anymore, I said. Not since I was a kid.

That's it, she said. It's very grownup now. I no longer see my little girl in it.

[50] Show it to me and I'll read it.

She placed the open card in front of the camera and I tried to make sense of what I'd written, but all I saw was a blur. Neat lines of blur.

She went through the rest of the contents of the box: a tiny bottle of maple syrup, a little bag of peppermint candy, a blue shawl.

She put the computer on the coffee table then stood up and draped the shawl over her shoulders, swaying from side to side.

It's like a hug, she said. A cocoon.

[55] She sat back down and curled up on the couch, covering the length of her body with it, the shawl as a blanket, all the way up to her chin.

Will you talk me to sleep?

I nodded, but then I couldn't think of anything to say.

I thought maybe I could read her a story instead. Something soothing, nothing like the news.

I looked around my room for a book in Portuguese, something we could both understand, and then I realized there was nothing. All the books around me were in English, and every flyer, magazine, brochure. Even my own diaries.

[60] Read in English, then, she said. I don't mind. I just want to hear your voice.

3. Portugese for "Dear mother, Merry Christmas"

She closed her eyes and waited, stroking the tassels at the edge of the shawl.

I grabbed one of the Victorian novels I'd been studying and opened it to a random page. I told her all it said about orphans, and fortunes, and fate.

I read for what felt like an hour. Twenty-eight pages' worth of story.

Sometimes she nodded, until she didn't, her lids shut, her head heavy over one shoulder.

[65] And then what? Was I supposed to hang up on her, on my own mother?

I muted my mike and kept watch for most of the night. Her occasional stirs, her face glowing in the dark, her hair over her eyes. The restlessness of her sleep.

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Text-Dependent Questions

Directions: For the following questions, choose the best answer or respond in complete sentences.

1. Select TWO statements that identify central themes of the text.
 - A. People find ways to express love across great distances.
 - B. The best cure for loneliness is to find ways to connect with peers.
 - C. Persistent worrying is a behavior that one learns from one's family.
 - D. Being an individual is more rewarding than blending in with the crowd.
 - E. Learning in a new place provides great opportunities for fun experiences.
 - F. Feeling split between different places can cause melancholy and homesickness.

2. How does the narrator's description of her campus during winter break impact the story as a whole?
 - A. The narrator describes her campus as cheerless and desolate, emphasizing her fears about being alone.
 - B. The narrator describes her campus as whimsical and lively, demonstrating her excitement about her new home.
 - C. The narrator describes her campus as still and quiet, illustrating her feelings of calm and isolation in an empty campus.
 - D. The narrator describes her campus as foreboding and mysterious, conveying her fascination with unfamiliar surroundings.

3. What is the effect of the following sentence on the meaning of the story?

"I reappeared as a silhouette, and then as my full self again." (Paragraph 12)

 - A. It shows that the narrator feels content after watching the snowstorm in Vermont.
 - B. It illustrates that the narrator feels more confident the more time she spends in Vermont.
 - C. It implies that conversing with her mother makes the narrator feel depleted and uncertain.
 - D. It suggests that the narrator feels disconnected from herself because she is far from home.

4. Which detail from the text suggests the narrator is grappling with her identity as a result of living in the United States?
 - A. "There was intimacy in watching the movements of the campus, the coming and going, even in everyone's absence." (Paragraph 2)
 - B. "It was later there than where I was, way past midnight. I let her go to bed, and I stayed up, all the lights in my room still on." (Paragraph 23)
 - C. "She cut the tape open with her kitchen shears and found the card I'd written for her, a brown dog running down a snowy hill." (Paragraph 43)
 - D. "I looked around my room for a book in Portuguese, something we could both understand, and then I realized there was nothing." (Paragraph 59)

5. How does the author's choice to end the story with the narrator watching her mother sleep contribute to the overall meaning of the story?
