

Mexican Whiteboy
Passage Analysis: Diction and Syntax

For this activity, you will look at how Matt de la Pena uses diction and syntax to construct meaning. Your task will be to determine why and how the passages are **significant to the work as a whole**. How does it relate to one of the essential questions? How is it significant to character development?

Passage 1:

“This is why sometimes he feels as out of place at his grandma’s as he does at Leucadia Prep.

And when his grandma passes out homemade tortillas, hot off the griddle, she does it based on family rank. It’s a subtle and unspoken ranking system, but one each and every person in the house understands. And ‘cause he’s so *guapo* and gets such good grades and lives in such a better neighborhood these days- and ‘cause in a weird way Grandma’s almost *ashamed* of being Mexican- he’s always the first to eat. Even before his uncles. His dad when he was still around.

And sure, that’s when it *seems* like he belongs, but it’s more complicated than that” (Chapter 5).

Passage 2:

“Danny digs into his arm more until Uncle Ray notices and smacks his hand away. ‘Wha’chu doin’, D-Man?’ He holds Danny’s arm and takes a look. See the new markings, the old scars. He looks Danny in the eyes for a few seconds with a serious face, lets go his arm. But he doesn’t say anything. Instead he stares at the fence that separates Grandma’s small backyard from the neighbor’s, pulls another drag. ‘Well, I know this,’ he finally says. ‘Your popl loves you, D. More than you could ever know. Right now you ‘bout all he’s got.’

Danny nods” (Chapter 9).

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