

Breaking Through - Comprehension Questions Part 1

Name: _____
Period: _____

Chapter 2 - "Home Alone" - Page 19

1. Francisco and Roberto wake up early to do household chores every morning before going to school. What does this show you about their character?

2. How do Francisco and Roberto's responsibilities compare to your responsibilities and daily life?

Chapter 3 - "Stepping Out" - Page 29

3. How does school help Francisco deal with his loneliness?

4. In what ways do Francisco and Roberto try to live up to their father's saying, "If you respect others, they will respect you?"

5. What does Francisco's Elvis impersonation show you about his personality?

6. Why do you think Peggy starts to ignore and avoid Francisco after she has asked him to walk her home from school? What is Francisco's reaction to her ostracism, or exclusion?

Chapter 4 - "Together Again" - Page 42

7. Why do you think that Roberto and Francisco spend so much time fixing up and decorating their home before their family arrives?

Chapter 5 - "Back to the Fields" - Page 48

8. Why does Papa decide to become a sharecropper? How does this decision ultimately affect him? How does it affect his family?

Chapter 6 - “Saint Christopher Medal” - Page 56

9. What does Papa’s gift of a religious medal show about his feelings toward Francisco?

10. Francisco tells the story of a day when he was skimming a history book, and “...my eye caught the name Hernan Cortes. I was fascinated. It was the first time I had read about someone with a Spanish name. I read the paragraph several times and said the name Hernan Cortes out loud. I liked the sound of it. His name ended with a ‘z’ sound just like my family’s last name. I felt proud” (57).

This seems to be a big moment in Francisco’s life. Why do you think this was an important moment for Francisco?

Chapter 7 - “Summer Skirmishes” - Page 61

11. Why does the Jimenez family take such pains to prepare for Mr. Ito’s weekly visit? What are the different ways that they try to demonstrate respect for him?

12. Based on his paycheck, how many hours per day does Papa usually work, typically working at least 6 days a week?

13. Why does Mr. Ito not tell Papa about Francisco's behavior in the fields?

Chapter 8 - "Becoming a Saint" - Page 70

14. When Francisco first meets with his new high school counselor, Mr. Kinkade, they discuss what Francisco wants to do after high school. What assumptions does Mr. Kinkade first make about Francisco and his plans for the future? Why might he make these assumptions?

15. How does Francisco feel about high school? How does his attitude compare to high schoolers that you know or have heard of?

Breaking Through - Comprehension Questions - PART 2

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Chapter 9 - "If the Shoe Fits" - Page 80

18. How does having his gym shoes lost or stolen affect Francisco? How does the loss affect his family? If you were to lose your gym shoes, would you be affected similarly?

Chapter 10 - "A Promotion" - Page 83

19. What are the reasons for Papa's nearly constant bad mood? Does he deserve to feel this way? Why or why not?

20. Why do you think Mike Nevel hires Roberto and Francisco on the spot?

21. Why does Francisco not touch the cookies until the sign says, "Janitor, please help yourself"? What does this show you about Francisco?

Chapter 11 - “A Typing Machine” - Page 91

22. What need does Mr. Twitchel see in Francisco that causes him to sell him the typewriter and new ribbon for five dollars instead of just giving it to him? Why is this observation important?

Chapter 12 - “Making Connections” - Page 94

23. Why do you think his English teacher, Miss Bell, gives Francisco the novel The Grapes of Wrath to read? *John Steinbeck's The Grapes of Wrath, Tom Joad and his family are forced from their farm in the Depression-era (1930's) Oklahoma Dust Bowl and set out for California along with thousands of others in search of jobs, land, and hope for a brighter future.*

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24. Have you ever had the same experience as Francisco connecting with a book? What exactly do you think he learned from reading this book?

Chapter 13 - “Broken Heart” - Page 103

25. What does this story tell you about stereotyping and prejudice?
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26. Does rejection like Roberto experiences still happen today, more than fifty years later? Why or why not?

Chapter 14 - "Behind the Wheel" - Page 109

27. Why does Roberto allow Francisco to ride with him to school in his car?

28. Why do you think the two brothers are always helping each other, even at great personal sacrifice? Do you have a similar relationship with your siblings or know someone who does? What is the driving force behind such a close relationship?

Chapter 15 - "Turning a Page" - Page 113

29. What are the things that Francisco worries about with regard to college? Do you think these are the same things that other kids worried about then? What do you think you will worry about as you prepare for college?

Chapter 16 - “Los Santitos” - Page 117

30. How is Francisco’s suggestion to collect food donations for needy families ironic?

Chapter 17 - “Choosing Sides” - Page 122

31. What is Papa’s explanation for why people are prejudiced? Do you think this is true?

Chapter 18 - “Junior Scandals” - Page 127

32. What skills and abilities does Francisco show in his decision to participate in the Junior Scandals variety show? Why do you think he decides to perform?

Chapter 19 - “Running for Office” - Page 135

33. Why is it important that Francisco meets Paul Tagaki?

34. How would you describe Francisco's way of campaigning and dealing with his competition in the school election? Do you think this a good strategy? Why or why not?

Breaking Through - Comprehension Questions - PART 3

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Chapter 20 - "A New Life" - Page 147

35. Why did the author call this chapter "A New Life?" Is he only referring to Roberto, or are there other people with new lives?

36. How does Roberto's decision to marry affect the lives of his entire family?

Chapter 21 - "A Test of Faith" - Page 151

37. When Francisco gets sick, why is it so hard for Francisco and his family?

Chapter 22 - “A Fumble” - Page 157

38. Why is Francisco invited to the Rotary Club luncheon?

39. What do you think of Francisco’s reaction when asked to give an impromptu speech? Do you think this reaction is to be expected from him? Why or why not?

Chapter 23 - “A Breakthrough” - Page 163

40. Why do you think Mr. Penney goes to extraordinary lengths to help Francisco to apply for college and scholarships?

41. Why do you think Papa reacts to Francisco’s desire for college as he does? What are the emotions that Papa must be feeling?

Chapter 24 - “Graduation Day” - Page 175

42. Why is it such a big decision for Francisco to apply for a college loan of \$1,000?

43. Why do you think Papa always gets sick on graduation day?

44. Papa did not attend Roberto’s high school graduation but does attend Francisco’s ceremony. This is the first event that he has ever attended. Why do you think he decided to go?

Chapter 25 - “Still Moving” - Page 185

45. How does his entire family help Francisco to go off to college successfully?

46. As Francisco drives away toward college in Santa Clara, he sees other migrant workers in the strawberry fields. “I felt sad, then angry” (191). Why do you think Francisco feels sadness and anger on what should be one of the happiest days of his life?
