

Common Core Projects | Pre-Reading Activities

Dear Santa: Please Come to the 19th Floor

Written by Yin and illustrated by Chris Soentpiet.

About the Book

Willy wants to cheer his best friend, Carlos, up. And what better way to do so than a Christmas visit from Santa Claus himself? But when Santa answers Willy's e-mail pleading with him to visit the 19th floor of their inner-city apartment building, he doesn't quite know what is in store for him. Yin and Chris Soentpiet, the author-illustrator pair who created the ALA notable Coolies, bring us a heartwarming and modern Christmas story with the lush illustrations that Soentpiet fans have come to love..

Pre-Reading Activity

Fill in the following letter before reading the story:

Dear Santa,

Please come to _____ to see my _____.
(place:city and state) (relationship: friend, sister).

The easiest way to get into this _____ is to go through the _____.
(thing: house, apartment) (thing: door, chimney, lobby)

You may need a key or code, so I will leave it _____. Don't give up! I know it would
(place)

mean a lot to _____ who could use some cheering up this season.
(person's name)

Your friend,

(your name)

P.S. Leave your reindeer _____ to avoid getting in trouble!
(place)



Common Core Projects | Reading Comprehension

Discussion Questions:

Use the questions below to discuss the details of the story or have students answer them in complete sentences.

1. What do Carlos and Willy like to play outside?
2. Do they live in the city or the country? What clues help you give that answer?
3. List five important things to know about Carlos.
4. Why do they sometimes answer in Spanish instead of English?
5. Jose holds the door as everyone sandwich their way into the crowded elevator. Jose was exercising manners. How do you show your manners?
6. Why does Mrs. G feel like an aunt to Willy? Do you have any adults in your life who feel like family even though they technically are not?
7. List the reasons why the kids think Santa doesn't visit them. What's the idea that could change all that?
8. Summarize Willy's directions to Santa. Which part do you think is most important? Why?
9. Why is Willy staring out the window on Christmas Even night? What does he finally see?
10. Why do you think the illustrator makes a whole double page illustration with no words?



Common Core Projects | Reading Comprehension

Discussion Questions (continued):

11. Why does Willy go down to meet Santa? What does he learn about the intercom? If Willy had not gone down what might've happened?
12. Explain why they decide to walk the stairs instead of taking the elevator. Why is Santa looking at his watch?
13. Determine why Santa gave his watch away.
14. What does it mean to work overtime? What does Santa reward Manny with for his hard work?
15. Who do they run into next? Infer why Santa gives her the gift that he does.
16. Why do you think Santa is leaving so many parts of his costume behind?
17. Evaluate why Carlos is at first disappointed in who comes to visit. Do you blame him? How is he truly surprised?
18. What gifts do the boys receive? Why does Santa give each of them these particular packages?
19. Who else does Santa visit before he leaves? Why must he hurry along his way? What does Willy mean when he says that Santa brought them "hope"?
20. Which illustration is your favorite? Why? Which one do you learn the most about each character? Why?



Common Core Projects | Reading: Finding Evidence

No matter what type of story it is there are always some parts (or elements) that a reader can see. With your reading partner, fill in notes or ideas of key parts of Carlos and Willy's story:

Key CHARACTERS (people or animals)	SETTING (time and place)	Key PLOT Points (events)



Common Core Projects | Vocabulary

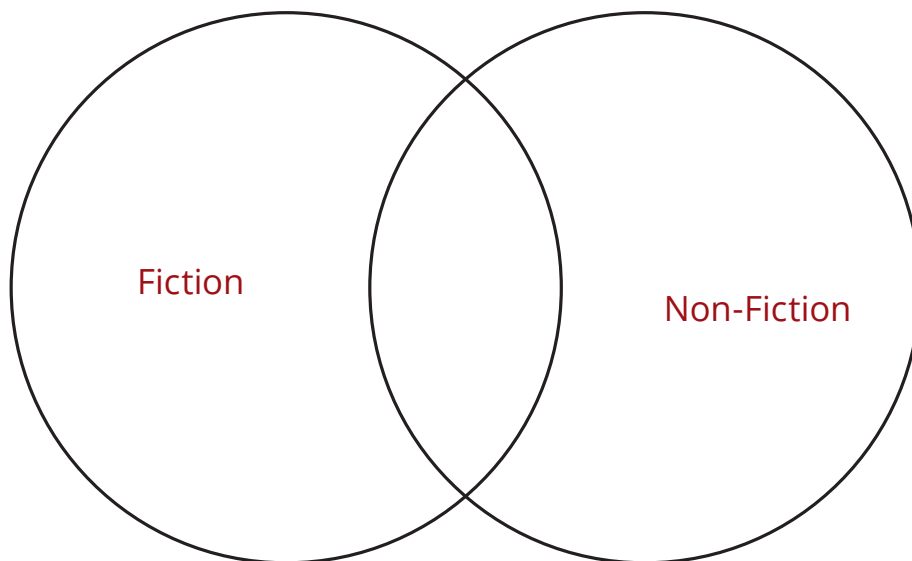
It's important when you're reading to be able to identify what a word means just by the way it is used in a sentence. There are clues embedded in writing so be a word detective! On your own or with a friend, try to figure out what the underlined word means in each instance.

1. No one is supposed to get into our building without the key. I know for someone to open the locked **lobby** door.
2. Mrs. Perez, clutching her bag full of groceries from the local **bodega**, shuffles out.
3. After dinner, Carlos is **frustrated** that he has to do his therapy exercises with Mrs. G.
4. When you arrive at my building, ring the **intercom** #11A.
5. Our **entire** neighborhood is scary and rough.



Common Core Projects | Fiction vs. Non-Fiction

Draw a Venn diagram below on the board and explain how these shapes are used to compare things. You might want to do a couple examples that are easy if the kids are unfamiliar with the graphic (summer compared to winter, outside to inside). Then, put the kids in small groups of no more than three and provide them with examples of both fiction and non-fiction books. Give each group the list below and a copy of the Venn diagram to sort words where they belong.



Words to sort:

facts	characters	definitions	glossary	index	settings
magic	conflict	charts	graphs	maps	timelines



Common Core Projects | Character Motivations

It's important that a reader recognizes why a character acts the way they do. (Actually, this is a skill that can help a person in real life, too.) What a character wants is called their **MOTIVATION**. It drives them to act and make choices that change the way a story unfolds. Fill out the following chart considering character motivation based on the story.

Character	Motivation: (What does this character WANT to happen?)	Choice or Action: (How do they TRY to make it happen?)
Santa	<i>He wants to deliver presents to everyone on the same night.</i>	<i>He visits the apartment building where the boys live and even climbs lots of stairs to make his deliveries.</i>
Willy		
Carlos' Mom		
Jose		
Rachel		
Carlos		



The Lesson Guides which have been created for the books *Coolies*, *Brothers* and *Dear Santa* have been aligned to the Common Core standards for informational text for the 3rd grade. If you teach a different grade, simply visit the Common Core Website to find a similar standard in the same strand.

Key Ideas and Details

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.3.1

Ask and answer questions to demonstrate understanding of a text, referring explicitly to the text as the basis for the answers.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.3.3

Describe characters in a story (e.g., their traits, motivations, or feelings) and explain how their actions contribute to the sequence of events

Craft and Structure

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.3.4

Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, distinguishing literal from nonliteral language.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.3.5

Refer to parts of stories, dramas, and poems when writing or speaking about a text, using terms such as chapter, scene, and stanza; describe how each successive part builds on earlier sections.

Integration of Knowledge and Ideas

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.3.7

Explain how specific aspects of a text's illustrations contribute to what is conveyed by the words in a story (e.g., create mood, emphasize aspects of a character or setting)

Speaking and Listening / Comprehension and Collaboration

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.3.1

Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grade 3 topics and texts, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.3.1.A

Come to discussions prepared, having read or studied required material; explicitly draw on that preparation and other information known about the topic to explore ideas under discussion.

Vocabulary Acquisition and Use

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.3.4.A

Use sentence-level context as a clue to the meaning of a word or phrase.