Selection Summary
As a doctor named Toni sits at her hospitalized father’s bedside, she recalls how – when she was a young girl – he had trained her to be his assistant medical clown. The two did magic tricks and told jokes to calm the fears of frightened children who were being treated in a hospital.

Characteristics of the Text

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Genre</th>
<th>Realistic Fiction</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Text Structure</td>
<td>First-person continuous narrative</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Complex structure including narrator’s recall of past experiences and feelings</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Plot organized into five chapters following an introduction</td>
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<tr>
<td>Content</td>
<td>A father’s importance; remembering a parent’s love</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Volunteering as a hospital clown</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Using humor to allay children’s fears</td>
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<tr>
<td>Themes and Ideas</td>
<td>“Laughter is the best medicine”</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Experience is the best teacher.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Parents have tremendous influence on their children.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Language and Literary Features</td>
<td>Alternating chapters switch from present to past</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Descriptive, informal language</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Multidimensional characters that develop over time</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sentence Complexity</td>
<td>Wide range of declarative, imperative, interrogative sentences</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Some very long sentences</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Complex sentences with phrases and clauses set off by dashes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vocabulary</td>
<td>Some technical words requiring background knowledge or use of dictionary or glossary: stethoscope, transfusion, transplant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Words</td>
<td>Many words with more than three syllables: experienced, phenomenal, elaborate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Illustrations</td>
<td>Realistic illustrations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Book and Print Features</td>
<td>Sixteen pages of text, many without illustrations</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Many lines of text per page, with very little white space</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

My Father, the Clown by Nancy Wu

Build Background
Help students use their knowledge of clowns to visualize the text. Build interest by asking questions such as the following: Where was the last place you saw a clown? Have you ever seen a clown in a hospital? In what ways might hospital clowns be different from circus clowns? Read the title and author and talk about the cover illustration. Explain that this is realistic fiction about a doctor who visits her father in the hospital.

Introduce the Text
Guide students through the text, noting important ideas and helping with unfamiliar language and vocabulary so they can read the text successfully. Here are some suggestions:

Page 3: Explain that the narrator provides a one-page Introduction.
Suggested language: Read the first sentence: I remember when I was five or six years old, sick at home with a cold or some minor illness. . . . The narrator describes her father's face is lighting up like a light bulb. What does it mean for your face to light up like light bulb?

Pages 4–5: Remind students that chapter titles tell us what a chapter is about. This chapter is titled “My Father, the Patient.” Because he's a patient, we know her father is sick. Point out the terms exaggerate and vitality and read the sentences with these words. Ask: How would painted lips exaggerate a clown's smile? How do people with energy and vitality behave? Does a sick person have much energy or vitality? Read the second sentence on page 5: First I have to work through a few of the stormier passages in our parallel lives. Ask: What do you think she means by “parallel lives”? What might a “stormy passage” be?

Page 10: Direct students to the phrase CAT scans in the last line. Explain that a CAT scan is a type of X-ray imaging used to diagnose medical problems.

Page 13: The narrator says her father used to give chocolate milk transfusions.
What is a transfusion?
Now turn back to the beginning to see how the narrator’s experiences as a medical clown working with her father – also a medical clown – affected her life.

Expand Your Vocabulary

exaggerate – to represent as greater than is actually the case; overstate, p. 4
routine – a prescribed, detailed course of action to be followed regularly; a standard procedure, p. 5
transfusion – the transfer of whole blood or blood products from one individual to another, p. 13
transplants – transfers of tissues or organs from one body or body part to another, p. 11
vitality – physical or intellectual vigor; energy, p. 4
Read
Have students read silently while you listen to individual students read aloud. Support their understanding of the text as needed.

Remind students to use the Analyze/Evaluate Strategy and to think carefully about the text as they read and form an opinion about it.

Discuss and Revisit the Text

Personal Response
Invite students to share their personal responses to the text.

* Suggested language: What is most notable about the narrator’s relationship with her father?

Ways of Thinking
As you discuss the text, help students understand these points:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Thinking Within the Text</th>
<th>Thinking Beyond the Text</th>
<th>Thinking About the Text</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Toni, a doctor, is worried about her hospitalized father, who is also an MD.</td>
<td>• Humor and kindness can be used to help people in difficult situations.</td>
<td>• Chapter headings show how the story unfolds.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• He had been her childhood mentor, teaching her to be a medical clown as he was.</td>
<td>• Parents can teach important lessons to their children.</td>
<td>• Introduction provides important background information.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• He recovers and will soon be going home from the hospital.</td>
<td></td>
<td>• Descriptive details complemented by realistic illustrations explain the characters’ thoughts, feelings and actions.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>


Choices for Further Support
• **Fluency** Invite pairs of students to participate in choral reading. Remind them to pay attention to punctuation and to stress certain words to sound as if Toni and her father were actually speaking.

• **Comprehension** Based on your observations of the students’ reading and discussion, revisit parts of the text to clarify or extend comprehension. Remind students to go back to the text to support their ideas.

• **Phonics/Word Work** Provide practice with words and word parts, using examples from the text. The root word *vital* from the word *vitality* on page 4 comes from the Latin root *vita*, which means “life.” A person with vitality is vigorous and energetic. The word *vitamin* shares the same Latin root.
Writing about Reading

Critical Thinking
Have students complete the Critical Thinking questions on BLM 6.9.

Responding
Have students complete the activities at the back of their book, using their Reader’s Notebook. Use the instruction below as needed to reinforce or extend understanding of the comprehension skill.

Target Comprehension Skill

Conclusions and Generalizations
Remind students that details can reveal ideas that aren’t stated or that are generally true. Model how to add details to the Graphic Organizer, using a “Think Aloud” like the one below:

Think Aloud

On page 6, Toni worries that her father is not doing well and thinks if this is true, “It was an unbearable thought . . .” On pages 10–11, Toni reluctantly begins helping her father as a medical clown and realizes “he knew what he was doing, and what he was doing worked.” These details support the conclusion that Toni loves her father and respects his work.

Practice the Skill
Have students share examples of another story from which conclusions and generalizations can be drawn.

Writing Prompt: Thinking About the Text
Have students write a response to the prompt on page 6. Remind students that when they think about the text, they reflect back on the text. They notice and evaluate language, genre, literary devices, and how the text is organized.

Assessment Prompts
• The author probably wrote this selection to

• What is the meaning of transplants on page 11?
• What is the important message in the story?
Critical Thinking

Read and answer the questions. Possible responses shown.

1. Think within the text. Why does the narrator become Dr. Laughalot’s assistant during the summer?

2. Think within the text. Why does Dr. Laughalot decide to call his new assistant “Dr. Ginger Snaps”?

3. Think beyond the text. Do you think medical clowns might be helpful with adult patients? Why or why not?

4. Think about the text. How can you be sure the narrator is positively influenced by her father’s career as a doctor? Support your answer with information from the text.

Making Connections. Think of a time when you felt grateful toward someone. What made you feel this way? Write your answer in your Reader’s Notebook.

**English Language Development**

**Reading Support** Have students listen to the audio or online recordings. Make sure the text matches the students’ reading level. Language and content should be accessible with regular teaching support.

**Idioms** The story contains some idioms that might be unfamiliar. Explain the meanings of *gray as a ghost* (page 6) and *his eye naturally fell on me* (page 8).

**Oral Language Development**

Check student comprehension, using a dialogue that best matches your students’ English proficiency level. **Speaker 1** is the teacher, **Speaker 2** is the student.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Beginning/Early Intermediate</th>
<th>Intermediate</th>
<th>Early Advanced/ Advanced</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Speaker 1:</strong> What is the story about?</td>
<td><strong>Speaker 1:</strong> What clown names do Toni and her father use?</td>
<td><strong>Speaker 1:</strong> How did Toni’s father give children “nose transplants”?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Speaker 2:</strong> father and daughter medical clowns</td>
<td><strong>Speaker 2:</strong> Toni is Dr. Ginger Snaps and her father is Dr. Laughalot.</td>
<td><strong>Speaker 2:</strong> He put fake red noses on those scheduled for organ transplants.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Speaker 1:</strong> Who is the main character?</td>
<td><strong>Speaker 1:</strong> Why does Toni’s father ask her to work with him one summer?</td>
<td><strong>Speaker 1:</strong> How did her father calm children needing a blood transfusion?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Speaker 2:</strong> Toni, the daughter</td>
<td><strong>Speaker 2:</strong> His medical clown partner, Nurse Sneezor, moves away.</td>
<td><strong>Speaker 2:</strong> He had Toni do a silly “chocolate milk transfusion” by sucking milk through straws.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Speaker 1:</strong> What happens when her father gets sick?</td>
<td><strong>Speaker 2:</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Speaker 1:</strong> She sits by his bedside and writes this story.</td>
<td><strong>Speaker 2:</strong></td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Responding**

Conclusions and Generalizations. What conclusion can you draw about the relationship between Toni and her father? Copy and complete the chart below. Add more boxes for text details as needed.

| He became a medical clown like his father? | ? |
| Conclusion: |

**Write About It**

You’ve read funny stories and books. Which one would you share to help a person feel better? Write a paragraph explaining why you would choose that one.
My Father, the Clown

Thinking About the Text

Think about the questions below. Then write your answer in two or three paragraphs.

Remember that when you think about the text, you reflect back on the text. You notice and evaluate language, genre, literary devices, and how the text is organized.

On page 3, you read: “Laughter is the best medicine, someone once said. It’s also the cheapest and the best tasting.” You know that laughter isn’t really medicine and it doesn’t actually have a taste. What do these sentences mean? From reading the text, what kinds of emotions can you tell Toni feels about her father as she writes this story?

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Critical Thinking

Read and answer the questions.

1. **Think within the text**  Why does the narrator become Dr. Laughalot’s assistant during the summer?

2. **Think within the text**  Why does Dr. Laughalot decide to call his new assistant “Dr. Ginger Snaps”?

3. **Think beyond the text**  Do you think medical clowns might be helpful with adult patients? Why or why not?

4. **Think about the text**  How can you be sure the narrator is positively influenced by her father’s career as a doctor? Support your answer with information from the text.

**Making Connections**  Think of a time when you felt grateful toward someone. What prompted this feeling? How did you show your gratitude to that person?

Write your answer in your Reader’s Notebook.
Just before school started in the fall, Pop finally lined up a permanent replacement for Nurse Sneezer. I guess my face fell at the idea that I wouldn’t be doing Dr. Snaps again. But, Pop didn’t berate me for being so difficult at first. Instead, he placed his large, steady hands on my shoulders and said, “Well, you’ll always be there as the reserve if I need you.”

As it turned out, the new assistant, who went by the name Dr. Bea Wildered, proved to be very steady.