Dear Diary
by Rubí Borgia

Fountas-Pinnell Level M
Realistic Fiction

Selection Summary
Marisela is new to her school and she also has a stutter. When her teacher announces that each student will have to present a skit, she is scared. Inspired by her favorite story, she asks her grandmother for advice. In the end, Marisela's skit is a success, and she learns that her stutter is not as great an impediment as she once thought.

Characteristics of the Text

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Genre</th>
<th>• Realistic fiction</th>
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</table>
| Text Structure | • First-person narrative organized in 10 diary entries, most of which are one page long  
• Problem presented on first page |
| Content        | • Public speaking  
• Overcoming a speech impediment  
• Reference to folktale within the text: The Harvest Birds  
• Making friends in new situations |
| Themes and Ideas | • Teachers and family can give support in times of need.  
• Literature can be a source of comfort and wisdom.  
• Courage and determination in overcoming obstacles are rewarded. |
| Language and Literary Features | • Repeated references to parallel text: The Harvest Birds |
| Sentence Complexity | • One hypothetical question (“Will I ever have any friends?”) and various exclamations |
| Vocabulary     | • A mix of simple and compound sentences |
| Words          | • Content words related to story plot and themes: stutter, stammered, skits, costume, practicing, audience, scarves  
• Some challenging words, such as especially, nervous, tongue, character, continued
| Illustrations  | • Soft watercolor illustrations; one half-page illustration per page  
• Some illustrations include Spanish words: Diario (Diary), p. 2; Pájaros de la Cosecha (The Harvest Birds), p. 4 |
| Book and Print Features | • Thirteen pages of text, with illustrations on each page  
• Italics used when referring to book (The Harvest Birds) and word, friend (p. 10) |

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Build Background
Build interest by asking questions such as the following: Have you ever felt nervous when you went to a new place or met new people? What were you nervous about? Read the title and author and talk about the cover illustration. Note that the book is divided into a series of diary entries that each begin with “Dear Diary”. Ask: Have you ever kept a diary or a journal? Tell students that this story is realistic fiction, so the characters will probably act like real people.

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 2: Explain that this is a story about a girl named Marisela. Marisela has two problems: first, she is new to her school, so she doesn’t have any friends and second, she has a stutter when she speaks.
Suggested language: Turn to page 2 of this book. This is the first page that Marisela writes in her diary. She starts each page the same: Dear Diary, just like a letter. She writes: When I speak, especially when I am nervous, my tongue gets all twisted up. What would it be like to be a new kid in school and not be comfortable talking to people?

Page 4: Read the first sentence: My teacher said that we are going to put on skits about our favorite stories. Marisela chooses a story about a farmer named Juan Zanate, who works hard to grow a good harvest, with lots of fruits and vegetables. How do you think Marisela could show in her skit what Juan has harvested from his garden?

Page 6: Explain that Marisela decides to ask her grandma for advice with her problem. What kind of advice do you think her grandma might give Marisela about being nervous about speaking in public? Now turn back to the beginning of the story and read to find out if Marisela solves her problem.

Target Vocabulary
- advice – someone’s opinion about what someone else should do, p. 6
- ashamed – feeling embarrassed or guilty about something you did or did not do
- borrow – having permission to take something, use it, and then return it, p. 12
- harvest – the crop that is gathered during one growing season, p. 4
- patch – a small area of land where certain plants or a crop grows, p. 7
- separate – v. to divide a group of objects into smaller groups or categories
- serious – caring a lot about what you are saying or doing
Read
Have students read silently while you listen to individual students read. Support their understanding of the text as needed.

Remind students to use the Infer/Predict Strategy and to use clues to figure out more about the selection.

Discuss and Revisit the Text

Personal Response
Invite students to share their personal responses to the story.
Suggested language: Have you ever been nervous or scared about something you had to do? What did you do to make yourself feel better?

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>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Marisela is scared about acting out her skit because she is afraid she will stutter.</td>
<td>• Having trouble talking would make it difficult to meet new people.</td>
<td>• Marisela takes comfort from her favorite story, and uses it to help her with her own problems.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Her grandma gives her a good idea that helps her feel better and helps her perform her skit.</td>
<td>• Asking advice from adults is a good way for children to get help.</td>
<td>• She talks about her fears in her diary, as if the diary were a friend.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• She does a good job on her skit, and realizes that her stutter is not such a big problem when making friends.</td>
<td>• Books can be a source of comfort and knowledge.</td>
<td>• The pictures help you understand how her costume works in the skit.</td>
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Choices for Further Support
• **Fluency** Invite students to choose a passage from the text to act out or use for Readers Theater. Remind them to pay attention to punctuation, and to stress certain words to sound as if the narrator, Marisela, 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 as needed with words and word parts, using examples from the text. Remind students that longer words are often formed from adding letters or letter clusters to the beginning or ending of a base word. For example, the word *especially* on page 4 includes the base word *special*. The word *colorful* on page 7 includes the base word *color*. 

Writing about Reading

Critical Thinking
Have students complete the Critical Thinking questions on BLM 8.7.

Responding
Have students complete the activities at the back of the book. Use the instruction below as needed to reinforce or extend understanding of the comprehension skill.

Target Comprehension Skill

Conclusions
Remind students that they can draw conclusions about a character or situation by looking for key details in a story. Model the skill, using a “Think Aloud” like the one below:

Think Aloud
The conclusion on the chart on page 15 says that Marisela worked hard to perform her skit. On page 9, the author says that Marisela has been practicing in front of the mirror. This shows that she was spending a long time practicing. I can add this detail to the chart.

Practice the Skill
Have students write two details that helped them conclude that Marisela worked hard on her costume.

Writing Prompt: Thinking Beyond the Text
Have students write a response to the prompt on page 6. Remind them that when they think beyond the text, they use what they know and their own experience to think about what happens in the story.

Assessment Prompts
• On page 4, find the word that means “short plays or scenes that you act out from a story.”
• How did Marisela’s colorful scarves help her act out her skit?
• Complete the following sentence in your own words: Marisela feels better at the end of the story because ______________________________________________.
English Language Development

Reading Support Assign each pair of students a diary entry to read together. Then have one student read the diary entry while the other student acts out how Marisela feels and what she does.

Vocabulary Marisela explains that the main character in her favorite story asked a wise man for help and that her grandma is the wisest person she knows (p. 6). Explain that in English, superlatives are created by adding -est to the base adjective, sometimes, as in wisest, after dropping the final e.

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>Speaker 1: Who is telling the story?</td>
<td>Speaker 1: What are Marisela’s problems in the beginning of the story?</td>
<td>Speaker 1: How does Marisela change by the end of the story?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speaker 2: Marisela</td>
<td>Speaker 2: Marisela is new and she doesn’t have any friends. Also, she has a stutter.</td>
<td>Speaker 2: Marisela doesn’t worry about her stutter any more. She is too busy with her new friends.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speaker 1: Where has she written the story?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speaker 2: in her diary</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</table>

Responding

Conclusions Copy the chart below. Fill in two story details that show how Marisela got ready for her skit.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Detail</th>
<th>Detail</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>She practiced the words many times.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>She worked hard to perform her skit.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Write About It

Think of another story you know with a character who has a problem at school. Write a paragraph that tells what happens in the story. Tell the author’s ideas in your own words.

Critical Thinking

Read and answer the questions. Possible responses shown.

1. Think within the text Why doesn’t Marisela like talking in front of her class? She’s afraid she won’t be able to say the words clearly and that the other students will laugh at her.

2. Think within the text What story does Marisela choose for her skit? Marisela chooses a story called The Harvest Birds.

3. Think beyond the text Do you think Marisela’s classmates will continue to be good friends with her? Explain. Responses will vary.

4. Think about the text Why do you think Marisela’s classmates feel differently about her after she does her skit? Marisela’s classmates liked how she did her story and how she used the colorful scarves.

Connecting: In Dear Diary, Marisela works hard for something that is important to her. Think of something you have worked hard on, and tell why it was important to you. Write your answer in your Reader’s Notebook.
Dear Diary

Thinking Beyond the Text

Think about the question below. Then write your answer in one or two paragraphs.

How does Marisela use her favorite story, *The Harvest Birds*, to help her? Find three examples from the story that show how thinking about the folktale and connecting to the character of Juan Zanate inspires Marisela to solve her real-life problems.
Critical Thinking

Read and answer the questions.

1. **Think within the text**  Why doesn’t Marisela like talking in front of her class?

2. **Think within the text**  What story does Marisela choose for her skit?

3. **Think beyond the text**  Do you think Marisela’s classmates will continue to be good friends with her? Explain.

4. **Think about the text**  Why do you think Marisela’s classmates feel differently about her after she does her skit?

**Making Connections**  In *Dear Diary*, Marisela works hard for something that is important to her. Think of something you have worked hard on, and tell why it was important to you.

**Write your answer in your Reader’s Notebook.**
Dear Diary • LEVEL M

Dear Diary:

My teacher said that we are going to put on skits about our favorite stories. Just thinking about speaking on a stage scares me. But then I think about my favorite story, *The Harvest Birds*. The main character, Juan Zanate, tries so hard to have a good harvest. I can try hard too. I can learn how to talk to people without being afraid.

Dear Diary:

This afternoon I went to my favorite tree to think. I love going there when the weather is beautiful. In *The Harvest Birds*, Juan Zanate always went to his favorite tree to think.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Behavior</th>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Error</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Read word correctly</td>
<td>cat</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Repeated word, sentence, or phrase</td>
<td>cat</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Omission</td>
<td>cat</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Comments:

Accuracy Rate

\[
\text{Accuracy Rate} = \left( \frac{\# \text{ words read correctly}}{101} \times 100 \right)
\]

Total Self-Corrections

Grade 3
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