

Graphic Organizer for Active Reading

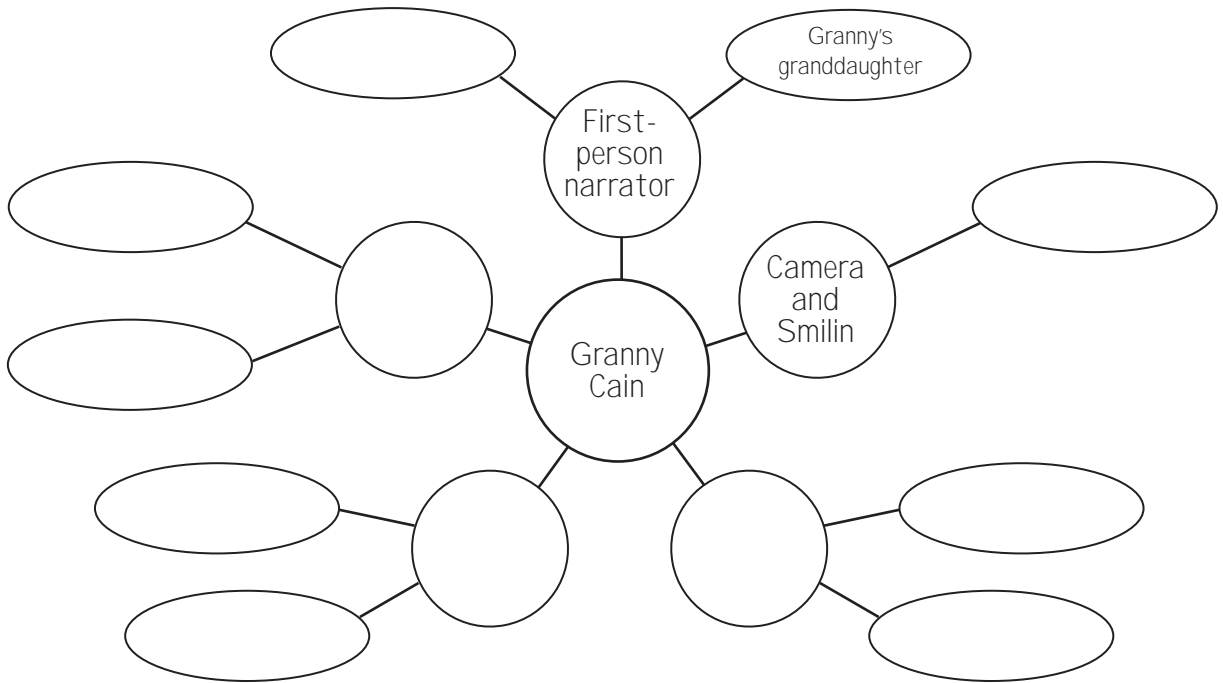
Blues Ain't No Mockin Bird

Toni Cade Bambara

Pupil's Edition page 266

Singing the Blues

“Blues Ain't No Mockin Bird” contains many characters. To better understand who the characters are and how they relate to one another, complete the following cluster diagram. Write the name of each family or film crew member in a circle connected to the circle for Granny Cain. Then, in the ovals, write a description of the relationship or feelings between the two characters. An example has been done for you.



1. How does the character of Cathy help the reader to better understand the story?

2. If you could be a character in the story, which one would you be? Explain why. Support your explanation with at least one example from the story.

Circle the letter next to the best way to revise or combine each underlined section. If the section needs no change, mark "Correct as is."

The title of this story from an old blues song
¹
sung by African Americans as a response to
trouble. The song says that blues music is not about
 self-pity or death. Blues songs are fighting songs,
²
they help people survive.

- | | |
|---|--|
| <p>1 A The title of this story coming from an old blues song sung by African Americans as a response to trouble.</p> <p>B The title of this story comes from an old blues song sung by African Americans as a response to trouble.</p> <p>C The title of this story from an old blues song being sung by African Americans as a response to trouble.</p> <p>D Correct as is</p> | <p>2 F Blues songs are fighting songs they help people survive.</p> <p>G Blues songs are fighting. Songs they help people survive.</p> <p>H Blues songs are fighting songs; they help people survive.</p> <p>J Correct as is</p> |
|---|--|

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Language Link

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Dialect Reveals Character

Yous are all invited to the party.
I'm fixin to wash the car.
 We're **going up** the mall.

Have you ever heard any of these expressions? They are all examples of dialect. **Dialect** is a variation of language (written or spoken) characteristic of a particular region or group of people. Dialects have special grammar, vocabulary, expressions, and pronunciations.

In "Blues Ain't No Mockin Bird," Toni Cade Bambara reproduces an African American dialect of the South so that the reader can "hear" the characters. This dialect has the nonstandard pronunciations, nonstandard grammar, unusual expressions, and unique vocabulary typical of most dialects. Some key examples of dialect in the selection appear in the chart below.

Characteristics of Dialect	Example	Explanation
Nonstandard grammar and nonstandard pronunciation	"The puddle had frozen over, and me and Cathy went stompin in it."	The phrase <i>me and Cathy</i> is nonstandard; the standard expression would be <i>Cathy and I</i> . The word <i>stompin</i> shows nonstandard pronunciation of the <i>-ing</i> ending.
Unique vocabulary	". . . Granny was onto the steps, the screen door bammin soft and scratchy against her palms."	The word <i>bammin</i> is an example of a dialect's unique vocabulary. <i>Bammin</i> is considered nonstandard.
Unusual expressions	"And Granny just stared at the twins till their faces swallow up the eager . . ."	Reproducing expressions of a particular dialect, like <i>swallow up the eager</i> , can give creative writing a flavor all its own.

Exercise A Describing Examples of Dialect

On the lines provided, describe each example of dialect from the story.

EXAMPLE: "Tyrone whispers all loud and noisy and from the city and don't know no better."

Description: Nonstandard grammar

1. Example: "And the frozen patch splinterin every which way underneath kinda spooky."

Description: _____

2. Example: "She was on the porch, Granny was, making the cakes drunk."

Description: _____

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NAME _____ CLASS _____ DATE _____

3. **Example:** “Granny wasn’t sayin nuthin.”

Description: _____

4. **Example:** “And the two men movin up on tiptoe like they was invisible or we were blind, one.”

Description: _____

5. **Example:** “The camera man duckin and bendin and runnin and fallin, jigglin the camera and scared.”

Description: _____

Exercise B Revealing Character Traits Through Dialect

On the first line of each of the following items, write a sentence from the story that reveals a character trait through dialect. (Be sure to use quotation marks.) Write the name of the character on the next line. Then, describe character traits that are revealed by that dialect example.

EXAMPLE: Dialect Sentence: “And said he had engines in his train throw him off and couldn’t nobody turn him round.”

Character Name: Granddaddy Cain

Character Traits: determined, unstoppable, powerful, stubborn, strong, balanced, coordinated, skillful

1. **Dialect Sentence:** _____

Character Name: _____

Character Traits: _____

2. **Dialect Sentence:** _____

Character Name: _____

Character Traits: _____

3. **Dialect Sentence:** _____

Character Name: _____

Character Traits: _____

4. **Dialect Sentence:** _____

Character Name: _____

Character Traits: _____

5. **Dialect Sentence:** _____

Character Name: _____

Character Traits: _____

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**One-Stop Planner CD-ROM and
print ancillaries
include Answer Key here.**

Answers are not available Online.