

## Response Essay

Gary Soto's short story, "The No-Guitar Blues," tells about a boy trying to collect enough money to buy a guitar. The response essay below analyzes the story's plot and character development to reveal the main theme.

### Beginning

The beginning names the story and author and focuses on the theme (underlined).

### Fausto's Guilt

In Gary Soto's short story, "The No-Guitar Blues," the main character, a teenage boy named Fausto, takes advantage of some rich folks. As a result, he is consumed by guilt. The story shows that deep down, people want to do the right thing.

The story begins with Fausto wanting to play guitar in his own band. He wonders how he can get a guitar. Soto uses idioms to illustrate that Fausto's family does not have a lot of money. For example, Fausto worries that if he asks for a guitar, his parents will say, "Money doesn't grow on trees," or "What do you think we are, bankers?" (56). When he does ask for a guitar, his mother replies, "Honey, a guitar costs a lot of money . . . but we'll see" (57).

But Fausto is determined. He hops on a bike and rides north, away from his home near the vacant lot on Olive Street. In the nicer section of Fresno, he goes door-to-door searching for work, hoping to be paid enough to buy a guitar. The author says that Fausto only earns a "grimy, dirt-caked quarter" (58) and one juicy orange. Little does Fausto know that this orange will lead him straight into a lie.

As Fausto sits eating the orange, a sad-eyed dog comes along. Fausto begins feeding it orange slices. Fausto has an idea: "At that moment, a light came on inside Fausto's head" (59). He notices that the dog looks healthy and well fed. He spots a collar and tag, and he realizes that "Roger" probably belongs to rich people. The address is only six blocks away. This is when Fausto decides to tell a lie. He will say that he found Roger near the freeway, and maybe the owners will give him a reward big enough to buy a guitar.

Fausto feels guilty at the thought of lying. The guilt steadily builds. It increases as he stands on the porch knocking on the door. It gets worse as the man and woman

### Middle

Each middle paragraph explains a different stage in the development of the theme.

**Middle**

The last middle paragraph focuses on decisions that cause the main character to change.

**Ending**

The ending paragraph analyzes the theme.

of the house are nice and offer him turnovers to eat. The guilt is unbearable when the woman stuffs a \$20 bill into Fausto's shirt pocket, a reward for rescuing Roger. Because of his guilt, Fausto tries to give the money back, but the couple insists that he take it. The man says, "You have to. You deserve it, believe me" (60). Fausto takes it. He starts up the street "like a zombie," saying under his breath, "Oh man, I shouldn't have lied" (60).

Now, Fausto has a choice to make; he can use the money for a guitar and continue to feel guilty, or he can find a way to get rid of his guilt. He thinks about going to confession, but confession hours are over. Instead, he goes to mass at Saint Theresa's Church. Fausto kneels, prays, and says some Hail Marys, but the guilt stays with him. He cannot stop thinking about lying to the folks who were so nice to him. Finally, when the wicker basket comes his way, Fausto drops the \$20 bill inside. Almost immediately, he feels better. The guilt leaves him, and he concentrates on forgetting about the guitar.

Fausto has changed. He realizes now that it is wrong to go selfishly after something he wants, not caring about how it might affect others. As he thinks about the kindness of the man and woman and the guilt he felt, Fausto understands that it feels good to do the right thing. In the end, he gets his guitar. His mother gives him an old bass guitarron (an oversized guitar used in Mexican bands) that belonged to his grandfather. It is one of the happiest days of Fausto's life.



**Respond to the reading.** Answer the following questions about the sample response essay.

**Ideas** (1) How does the main character change by the end of the story? (2) Which detail in the analysis clearly reveals this theme?

**Organization** (3) How is the middle part of the response essay organized?

**Voice & Word Choice** (4) Does the writer sound knowledgeable about the story? Explain.