

Before You Read

This selection also appears in *Elements of Literature*.

Mother and Daughter by Gary Soto

LITERARY FOCUS: CHARACTER TRAITS

What's your best friend like? funny? a little impatient? a neat freak? The words you choose to describe your friend also describe his or her character traits. **Character traits** are the qualities that are revealed by a character's appearance, spoken words, actions, and thoughts. Character traits are also revealed by how a character affects other characters in the story.

Use the space below to list some character traits of your favorite book or television character.

Book or Television Character
Character Traits

READING SKILLS: MAKING INFERENCES

Imagine that you are eating lunch in your backyard. You leave your sandwich on the picnic table and go to the house for a glass of water. When you return to your lunch, your sandwich is gone and your dog has peanut butter on his nose. What do you think happened? You can use the evidence you have to make an **inference**, or educated guess, that your dog swiped your sandwich. In the same way you can use story details to make inferences about characters in a story.

As you read "Mother and Daughter," collect story details to help you make inferences about the characters.

SKILLS FOCUS

Literary Skills

Understand character traits.

Reading Skills

Make inferences.

Vocabulary Skills

Understand word origins.

VOCABULARY DEVELOPMENT

PREVIEW SELECTION VOCABULARY

Take a few minutes to preview these words before you begin to read “Mother and Daughter.”

matinees (mat'ŋ-āz') *n.*: afternoon performances of a play or a movie.

Yollie and her mother got along well enough to go to matinees together at the local theater almost every Saturday afternoon.

antics (an'tiks) *n.*: playful or silly acts.

People who witnessed Mrs. Moreno's antics couldn't help laughing.

meager (mē'gər) *adj.*: slight; small amount.

Mrs. Moreno remembers that her parents worked hard for their meager salaries.

sophisticated (sə-fis'tə-kāt'id) *adj.*: worldly; elegant and refined.

Yollie admired the way sophisticated people in New York dressed.

tirade (tī'rād') *n.*: long, scolding speech.

Yollie felt bad about her angry tirade against her mom.

UNDERSTANDING WORD ORIGINS

A word's **etymology** (et'ə-mäl'ə-jē) tells you what language the word comes from and how the word has developed through different languages over many years. An etymology is usually listed in brackets or parentheses after the word itself in a dictionary. Definitions of symbols and abbreviations in the front or back of the dictionary will help you read the etymology. For example, this common symbol, "<," means "comes from" or "derived from."

Take a look at the etymology of *student* to understand the word's history. As you read the story that follows, look for sidenotes that help explain the etymology of words.

Etymology	Meaning
student < L <i>studere</i> , to study	<i>Student</i> comes from the Latin word <i>studere</i> , which means "to study."

Mother and Daughter

Gary Soto

WORD STUDY

A muumuu (line 2) is a full, long, loose-fitting dress. Originally worn in Hawaii, muumuus are usually brightly colored with bold patterns.

INFER

Pause at line 7. Why would the low-riders laugh and shout “*Mamacita!*” when they saw Mrs. Moreno in her yard?

IDENTIFY

Circle the detail in lines 8–15 that is an example of **direct characterization**, in which the author directly describes a character for you. Then, underline the details that are examples of **indirect characterization**, which you can use to infer Mrs. Moreno’s personality traits.

Yollie’s mother, Mrs. Moreno, was a large woman who wore a muumuu and butterfly-shaped glasses. She liked to water her lawn in the evening and wave at low-riders, who would stare at her behind their smoky sunglasses and laugh. Now and then a low-rider from Belmont Avenue would make his car jump and shout “*Mamacita!*” But most of the time they just stared and wondered how she got so large.

Mrs. Moreno had a strange sense of humor. Once, Yollie and her mother were watching a late-night movie
10 called *They Came to Look*. It was about creatures from the underworld who had climbed through molten lava to walk the earth. But Yollie, who had played soccer all day with the kids next door, was too tired to be scared. Her eyes closed but sprang open when her mother screamed, “Look, Yollie! Oh, you missed a scary part. The guy’s face was all ugly!”



Orion Press/Black Sheep.

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But Yollie couldn't keep her eyes open. They fell shut again and stayed shut, even when her mother screamed and slammed a heavy palm on the arm of her chair.

20 "Mom, wake me up when the movie's over so I can go to bed," mumbled Yollie.

"OK, Yollie, I wake you," said her mother through a mouthful of popcorn.

But after the movie ended, instead of waking her daughter, Mrs. Moreno laughed under her breath, turned the TV and lights off, and tiptoed to bed. Yollie woke up in the middle of the night and didn't know where she was. For a moment she thought she was dead. Maybe something from the underworld had lifted her from her house and carried her into the earth's belly. She blinked her sleepy
30 eyes, looked around at the darkness, and called, "Mom? Mom, where are you?" But there was no answer, just the throbbing hum of the refrigerator.

Finally, Yollie's grogginess cleared and she realized her mother had gone to bed, leaving her on the couch. Another of her little jokes.

But Yollie wasn't laughing. She tiptoed into her mother's bedroom with a glass of water and set it on the nightstand next to the alarm clock. The next morning, Yollie woke to screams. When her mother reached to turn off the
40 alarm, she had overturned the glass of water.

Yollie burned her mother's morning toast and gloated. "Ha! Ha! I got you back. Why did you leave me on the couch when I told you to wake me up?"

Despite their jokes, mother and daughter usually got along. They watched bargain **matinees** together, and played croquet in the summer and checkers in the winter. Mrs. Moreno encouraged Yollie to study hard because she wanted her daughter to be a doctor. She bought Yollie a desk, a

INFER

Re-read lines 21–22. What can you learn about Mrs. Moreno from the way she speaks?

RETELL

Re-read lines 23–32. What has happened to Yollie?

COMPARE & CONTRAST

Pause at line 43. Think about Yollie's response to her mother's practical joke. What **character trait** do Yollie and Mrs. Moreno have in common?

VOCABULARY

matinees (mat''n-āz') *n.*: afternoon performances of a play or a movie.

Matinee is from the French *matin*, meaning "morning."

COMPARE & CONTRAST

Pause at line 54. In what ways are Yollie and her mother alike and different?

WORD STUDY

Re-read lines 55–58. Circle the English words that Mrs. Moreno uses that give you a clue to the meaning of *estudiar mucho*.

VOCABULARY

antics (an'tiks) *n.*: playful or silly acts.

50 typewriter, and a lamp that cut glare so her eyes would not grow tired from hours of studying.

Yollie was slender as a tulip, pretty, and one of the smartest kids at Saint Theresa's. She was captain of crossing guards, an altar girl, and a whiz in the school's monthly spelling bees.

"*Tienes que estudiar mucho*," Mrs. Moreno said every time she propped her work-weary feet on the hassock. "You have to study a lot, then you can get a good job and take care of me."

60 "Yes, Mama," Yollie would respond, her face buried in a book. If she gave her mother any sympathy, she would begin her stories about how she had come with her family from Mexico with nothing on her back but a sack with three skirts, all of which were too large by the time she crossed the border because she had lost weight from not having enough to eat.

Everyone thought Yollie's mother was a riot. Even the nuns laughed at her **antics**. Her brother Raul, a nightclub owner, thought she was funny enough to go into show business.



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70 But there was nothing funny about Yollie needing a new outfit for the eighth-grade fall dance. They couldn't afford one. It was late October, with Christmas around the corner, and their dented Chevy Nova had gobbled up almost one hundred dollars in repairs.

"We don't have the money," said her mother, genuinely sad because they couldn't buy the outfit, even though there was a little money stashed away for college. Mrs. Moreno remembered her teenage years and her hardworking parents, who picked grapes and oranges, and chopped beets and cotton for **meager** pay around Kerman. Those were the days when "new clothes" meant limp and out-of-style dresses from Saint Vincent de Paul.

The best Mrs. Moreno could do was buy Yollie a pair of black shoes with velvet bows and fabric dye to color her white summer dress black.

"We can color your dress so it will look brand-new," her mother said brightly, shaking the bottle of dye as she ran hot water into a plastic dish tub. She poured the black liquid into the tub and stirred it with a pencil. Then, slowly and carefully, she lowered the dress into the tub.

Yollie couldn't stand to watch. She *knew* it wouldn't work. It would be like the time her mother stirred up a batch of molasses for candy apples on Yollie's birthday. She'd dipped the apples into the goo and swirled them and seemed to taunt Yollie by singing "*Las Mañanitas*" to her. When she was through, she set the apples on wax paper. They were hard as rocks and hurt the kids' teeth. Finally, they had a contest to see who could break the apples open by throwing them against the side of the house. The apples shattered like grenades, sending the kids scurrying for cover, and in an odd way the birthday party turned out to be a success. At least everyone went home happy.

VOCABULARY

meager (mē'gər) *adj.*: slight; small amount.

Meager is derived from the Latin *macer*, meaning "lean" or "thin."

INFER

Pause at line 82. Why do you think Mrs. Moreno is genuinely sad that she cannot afford a new dress for Yollie?

IDENTIFY

What does Mrs. Moreno do to give Yollie a "new" dress (lines 86–90)?

RETELL

Pause at line 102. What happened at the birthday party that Yollie is remembering?

VOCABULARY

sophisticated (sə-fis'tə-kāt'id)
adj.: worldly; elegant and refined.

This word is derived from the Greek *sophistēs*, meaning "wise man."

IDENTIFY

Pause at line 112. Why is the dance so important to Yollie?

IDENTIFY

Underline the details in lines 121–128 that bring the scene to life.

WORD STUDY

Re-read lines 125–128. Circle the context clues that help you understand the word *jitterbugged*. Based on those clues, what do you think the jitterbug is?



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To Yollie's surprise, the dress came out shiny black. It looked brand-new and **sophisticated**, like what people in New York wear. She beamed at her mother, who hugged Yollie and said, "See, what did I tell you?"

The dance was important to Yollie because she was in love with Ernie Castillo, the third-best speller in the class. She bathed, dressed, did her hair and nails, and primped
110 until her mother yelled, "All right already." Yollie sprayed her neck and wrists with Mrs. Moreno's Avon perfume and bounced into the car.

Mrs. Moreno let Yollie out in front of the school. She waved and told her to have a good time but behave herself, then roared off, blue smoke trailing from the tail pipe of the old Nova.

Yollie ran into her best friend, Janice. They didn't say it, but each thought the other was the most beautiful girl at the dance; the boys would fall over themselves asking them
120 to dance.

The evening was warm but thick with clouds. Gusts of wind picked up the paper lanterns hanging in the trees and swung them, blurring the night with reds and yellows. The lanterns made the evening seem romantic, like a scene from a movie. Everyone danced, sipped punch, and stood in knots of threes and fours, talking. Sister Kelly got up and

jitterbugged with some kid’s father. When the record ended, students broke into applause.

130 Janice had her eye on Frankie Ledesma, and Yollie, who kept smoothing her dress down when the wind picked up, had her eye on Ernie. It turned out that Ernie had his mind on Yollie, too. He ate a handful of cookies nervously, then asked her for a dance.

“Sure,” she said, nearly throwing herself into his arms.

They danced two fast ones before they got a slow one. As they circled under the lanterns, rain began falling, lightly at first. Yollie loved the sound of the raindrops ticking against the leaves. She leaned her head on Ernie’s shoulder, though his sweater was scratchy. He felt warm and tender. Yollie could
140 tell that he was in love, and with her, of course. The dance continued successfully, romantically, until it began to pour.

“Everyone, let’s go inside—and, boys, carry in the table and the record player,” Sister Kelly commanded.

The girls and boys raced into the cafeteria. Inside, the girls, drenched to the bone, hurried to the restrooms to brush their hair and dry themselves. One girl cried because her velvet dress was ruined. Yollie felt sorry for her and helped her dry the dress off with paper towels, but it was no use. The dress was ruined.

150 Yollie went to a mirror. She looked a little gray now that her mother’s makeup had washed away but not as bad as some of the other girls. She combed her damp hair, careful not to pull too hard. She couldn’t wait to get back to Ernie.

Yollie bent over to pick up a bobby pin, and shame spread across her face. A black puddle was forming at her feet. Drip, black drip. Drip, black drip. The dye was falling from her dress like black tears. Yollie stood up. Her dress was now the color of ash. She looked around the room. The other girls, unaware of Yollie’s problem, were busy

PREDICT

Pause at line 141. How might the rain affect Yollie’s evening?

INFER

Re-read lines 147–149. Underline the details that help reveal one of Yollie’s **character traits**. What trait do Yollie’s feelings and actions reveal?

**IDENTIFY
CAUSE & EFFECT**

Pause at line 156. What causes the black puddle to form at Yollie’s feet?

CONNECT

Pause at line 165. Does Yollie have good reason to be ashamed of her dress? If this happened to you, would you be embarrassed or just laugh it off?

WORD STUDY

M'ija (line 168) is Spanish for "my daughter."

FLUENCY

Re-read the boxed passage several times, and try to "hear" the characters' voices. Then, read the passage aloud. Vary the tone and volume of your voice to distinguish the narrator from Yollie and her mother.



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160 grooming themselves. What could she do? Everyone would laugh. They would know she dyed an old dress because she couldn't afford a new one. She hurried from the restroom with her head down, across the cafeteria floor and out the door. She raced through the storm, crying as the rain mixed with her tears and ran into twig-choked gutters.

When she arrived home, her mother was on the couch eating cookies and watching TV.

"How was the dance, *m'ija*? Come watch the show with me. It's really good."

170 Yollie stomped, head down, to her bedroom. She undressed and threw the dress on the floor.

Her mother came into the room. "What's going on? What's all the racket, baby?"

"The dress. It's cheap! It's no good!" Yollie kicked the dress at her mother and watched it land in her hands. Mrs. Moreno studied it closely but couldn't see what was wrong. "What's the matter? It's just a bit wet."

"The dye came out, that's what."

180 Mrs. Moreno looked at her hands and saw the grayish dye puddling in the shallow lines of her palms. Poor baby, she thought, her brow darkening as she made a sad face.

She wanted to tell her daughter how sorry she was, but she knew it wouldn't help. She walked back to the living room and cried.

The next morning, mother and daughter stayed away from each other. Yollie sat in her room turning the pages of an old *Seventeen*, while her mother watered her plants with a Pepsi bottle.

190 “Drink, my children,” she said loud enough for Yollie to hear. She let the water slurp into pots of coleus and cacti. “Water is all you need. My daughter needs clothes, but I don't have no money.”

Yollie tossed her *Seventeen* on her bed. She was embarrassed at last night's **tirade**. It wasn't her mother's fault that they were poor.

When they sat down together for lunch, they felt awkward about the night before. But Mrs. Moreno had made a fresh stack of tortillas and cooked up a pan of *chile verde*, and that broke the ice. She licked her thumb and smacked
200 her lips.

“You know, honey, we gotta figure a way to make money,” Yollie's mother said. “You and me. We don't have to be poor. Remember the Garcias. They made this stupid little tool that fixes cars. They moved away because they're rich. That's why we don't see them no more.”

“What can we make?” asked Yollie. She took another tortilla and tore it in half.

210 “Maybe a screwdriver that works on both ends? Something like that.” The mother looked around the room for ideas, but then shrugged. “Let's forget it. It's better to get an education. If you get a good job and have spare time then maybe you can invent something.” She rolled her tongue over her lips and cleared her throat. “The county fair hires people. We can get a job there. It will be here next week.”

INFER

Pause at the end of line 184. Underline the words that tell you what Mrs. Moreno is thinking, what she looks like, and what she is doing. What **character traits** do these details reveal?

WORD STUDY

Pause at line 190. A coleus is a type of plant in the mint family. The word *coleus* comes from the Greek word *koleos*, which means “a sheath.” Part of the coleus plant's flower looks like it has a sheath, or covering, around it. *Cacti* is the plural form of *cactus*, a desert plant.

VOCABULARY

tirade (tī'rād') *n.*: long, scolding speech.

Tirade comes from the Italian word *tirare*, meaning “to draw or shoot.”

INTERPRET

Re-read lines 201–214. What do Mrs. Moreno's words reveal about her personality and her outlook on life?

IDENTIFY

Characters' actions reveal a lot about what they are like. Re-read lines 219–237. What does Ernie do that reveals he is a nice boy who likes Yollie? What does Mrs. Moreno do to show her love for Yollie?

Yollie hated the idea. What would Ernie say if he saw her pitching hay at the cows? How could she go to school smelling like an armful of chickens? “No, they wouldn’t hire us,” she said.

220 The phone rang. Yollie lurched from her chair to answer it, thinking it would be Janice wanting to know why she had left. But it was Ernie wondering the same thing. When he found out she wasn’t mad at him, he asked if she would like to go to a movie.

“I’ll ask,” Yollie said, smiling. She covered the phone with her hand and counted to ten. She uncovered the receiver and said, “My mom says it’s OK. What are we going to see?”

230 After Yollie hung up, her mother climbed, grunting, onto a chair to reach the top shelf in the hall closet. She wondered why she hadn’t done it earlier. She reached behind a stack of towels and pushed her chubby hand into the cigar box where she kept her secret stash of money.

“I’ve been saving a little money every month,” said Mrs. Moreno. “For you, *m’ija*.” Her mother held up five twenties, a blossom of green that smelled sweeter than flowers on that Saturday. They drove to Macy’s and bought a blouse, shoes, and a skirt that would not bleed in rain or any other kind of weather.



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Mother and Daughter

Character Traits Chart Writers bring characters to life by describing how the characters look, talk, act, and think. Sometimes a writer directly describes a character’s traits. For example, a writer might tell you that so-and-so is kind, sympathetic, or tough. Often, however, you have to make inferences about the characters based on details the writer provides.



Literary Focus
Analyze character traits.

Select one of the characters from “Mother and Daughter,” and complete this chart with details you find in the story. Then, review those details and list the character’s traits in the box.

Character:	
Character Traits	
Appearance	Speech
Actions	
Thoughts and Feelings	Other Characters’ Reactions

Skills Review

Mother and Daughter

VOCABULARY AND COMPREHENSION

Word Bank

matinees
antics
meager
sophisticated
tirade

A. Word Origins The partial etymologies given below tell the story of three of the Word Bank words. Select the vocabulary word that matches each etymology, and write the word in the blank provided.

1. < G *sophistēs*, meaning "wise man" _____
2. < Fr *matin*, "morning" _____
3. < L *macer*, "lean; thin" _____

B. Reading Comprehension Answer each question below.

1. What is Mrs. Moreno's personality like? _____

2. Why is Yollie upset about the upcoming dance? _____

3. Why does Yollie leave the dance early? _____

4. What does Mrs. Moreno do to cheer Yollie up after the dance?

SKILLS
FOCUS

Vocabulary Skills
Understand
word origins.

4. The crocodile's **conscience** led him to tell the monkey about his wife's plan. That inner voice, the voice that told the crocodile right from wrong, saved the life of his monkey friend.
- B.**
1. The characters include a monkey, a crocodile, and the crocodile's wife.
 2. The crocodile's wife wants to eat the monkey's heart, but the crocodile doesn't want her to because the monkey is his friend.
 3. The monkey does not get killed. The monkey tricks the crocodile into taking him back to his tree.

COLLECTION 2

Mother and Daughter, page 60

Page 62

INFER

Possible responses: They thought she looked funny. They yelled "*Mamacita!*" meaning "little mama," as if they found her attractive. They were showing friendly respect.

IDENTIFY

The detail that shows direct characterization is "Mrs. Moreno had a strange sense of humor." Details that show indirect characterization are ". . . Yollie and her mother were watching a late-night movie called *They Came to Look*. It was about creatures from the underworld" and "her mother screamed, 'Look, Yollie! Oh, you missed a scary part.'"

Page 63

INFER

Possible response: English is probably not her first language. She is probably not well educated.

RETELL

She has woken up in the living room in the middle of the night, and she is confused about where she is.

COMPARE & CONTRAST

Yollie and her mother both have a good sense of humor.

Page 64

COMPARE & CONTRAST

How Yollie and her mother are alike: They both like movies and games. How Yollie and her mother are different: Yollie is slender; her mother is not. Yollie is smart in school; her mother probably was not.

WORD STUDY

Students should circle "study a lot."

Page 65

INFER

Possible response: It reminds her of her own teenage years when she did not have new clothes.

IDENTIFY

To give Yollie a "new" dress, Mrs. Moreno dyes an old white dress black.

RETELL

The candy apples Yollie's mother made were too hard to eat, so the kids had a contest to see who could break them open by throwing them against the house.

Page 66

IDENTIFY

The dance is important because Yollie is in love with Ernie Castillo.

IDENTIFY

Students should underline details such as "warm but thick with clouds. Gusts of wind picked up the paper lanterns hanging in the trees and swung them . . . like a scene from a movie"; "Everyone danced, sipped punch, and stood in knots . . . talking"; "Sister Kelly got up and jitterbugged with some kid's father" and "students broke into applause."

WORD STUDY

Context clues to the meaning of the word *jitterbug* are "Everyone danced" and "got up . . . with some kid's father. When the record ended." The jitterbug is a kind of dance.

Page 67

PREDICT

Answers will vary. Possible predictions: The rain might not affect her evening at all; the rain might ruin her evening by messing up her hair; if her dress gets wet, the dye might run out of it.

INFER

Yollie's feelings and actions are described by the words "felt sorry for her" and "helped her dry." These details reveal that Yollie is a caring person.

IDENTIFY CAUSE & EFFECT

The rain is washing the dye out of Yollie's dress, causing a black puddle of water to form at Yollie's feet.

Page 68

CONNECT

Answers will vary. Some students may respond that Yollie shouldn't be ashamed of her dress because clothing is relatively unimportant and being poor is nothing to be ashamed of. Others may say that it's embarrassing because the dress was a makeover and not new.

Page 69

INFER

Words that describe what Mrs. Moreno is thinking, what she looks like, and what she is doing include “Poor baby, she thought,” “made a sad face,” and “walked back to the living room and cried.” These details show that Mrs. Moreno is sympathetic, caring, and loving.

INTERPRET

Possible response: Her words reveal that she is hopeful, practical, imaginative.

Page 70

IDENTIFY

Ernie shows he’s a nice boy by calling Yollie to find out why she left the dance and to ask if she was mad at him. Then he asks her to go to a movie. Mrs. Moreno shows her love for Yollie by using her savings to buy her daughter some new clothes.

Possible Answers to Skills Practice

Character Traits Chart (page 71)

Answers will vary. Sample answer:

Character: Mrs. Moreno

Character Traits: funny, caring, loving

Appearance: large, wears a muumuu and butterfly-shaped glasses

Speech: “I’ve been saving a little money every month . . . For you, *m’ija*.”

Actions: She walked back to the living room and cried.

Thoughts and Feelings: She wanted to tell her daughter how sorry she was, but she knew it wouldn’t help.

Other Characters’ Reactions: Everyone thought Yollie’s mother was a riot. Even the nuns laughed at her antics.

■ Possible Answers to Skills Review

Vocabulary and Comprehension (page 72)

- A.**
1. sophisticated
 2. matinees
 3. meager
- B.**
1. Mrs. Moreno is humorous, loving, down-to-earth.
 2. Yollie doesn’t have a new dress to wear.
 3. Yollie is embarrassed because the dye is washing out of her dress, and she doesn’t want her friends to know she is wearing an old dress.
 4. Mrs. Moreno takes Yollie shopping for new clothes.

A Rice Sandwich, page 73

Page 74

IDENTIFY

Clue words that tell you who the narrator is include *My*, *I*, and *me*. The narrator is a schoolgirl who lives close to the school. The narrator is a character in the story.

Page 75

CLARIFY

Words or phrases that help you understand to whom the narrator is speaking include “Where is my favorite daughter you would cry” and “when I came home finally at 3 p.m., you would appreciate me.”

INFER

Possible response: The narrator’s family is poor.

IDENTIFY

Words that identify the kind of school the writer attends include “nun” and “Sister Superior.”

Page 76

INFER

Answers will vary. Sample response: I don’t think Esperanza’s mother took her request seriously because her note sounds insincere and almost humorous.

INFER

Possible response: She cries because she is disappointed. The canteen is not special, and Esperanza went to a lot of trouble to get to eat there.

■ Possible Answers to Skills Practice

Narrator Detector (page 77)

Clue 1: my

Clue 2: I

Clue 3: my

Clue 4: we

The narrator’s name is in the letter from her mother to Sister Superior.

■ Possible Answers to Skills Review

Comprehension (page 78)

1. Esperanza, a girl who attends a Catholic school
2. The kids who eat in the canteen live too far from school to go home, or their mothers aren’t at home during the day. Esperanza calls them “special kids.”