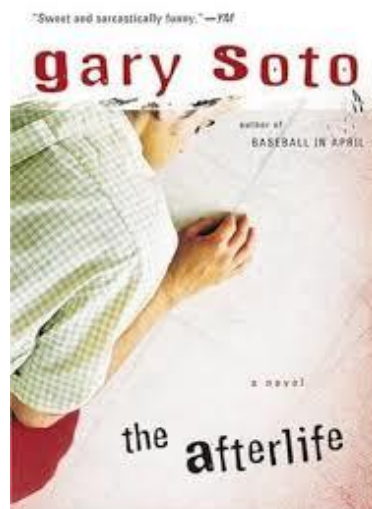


## The Afterlife



|             |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
|-------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| ISBN-10     | 0-15-204774-3                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| ISBN-13     | 978-0-15-204774-0                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| Author      | Soto, Gary                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
| Publisher   | HMH Books for Young Readers; 1 edition                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| Copyright   | 2003                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| Lexile      | 810L                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| Genre       | Speculative fiction                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| Synopsis    | After his murder in the opening chapter, teenaged Chuy tells the story of what it is like for him to be dead, what he observes among the living in his former Fresno neighborhood, and how he alters his ethical choices from those he made while living. |
| Themes      | Life after death                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
| Protagonist | Male                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| Note        | Over the years, these books have been published in multiple editions. The page numbers in your book may be different than the ones on the lesson plan.                                                                                                    |

More Information [www.scu.edu/character](http://www.scu.edu/character)



## Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

### *The Afterlife, Day 1*



#### Key Paragraph

As I rose out of my body, I realized the pain was gone. But so was my last year in high school. So was the fall dance, my time with Rachel, who was not yet *mi novia*- my girl - but might have been if I could have brought her into my arms and convinced her that I was one marvelous thing. That evening I would have had every chance. After all, I had borrowed my uncle Richard's Honda, which was tricked-out and lowered like a cat, with ten-inch speakers in the panels and clear lights that cut a path on the dark streets. My uncle, only seven years older than me, was a true guy - he had filled up the gas tank for me, vacuumed the floor mats, and run a rag over the dash. He had even replaced the air freshener, a tiny cardboard tree that swayed under the dash when later I took a sharp corner, tires chirping. The wind of those turns helped scent the air with pine.

The night was full of promise for a young man. He had a sweet ride, or at least better than his own bike, a good friend, and plans to meet up with a girl. He was *Senior GQ*. Chuy's plans were thwarted by a thug with a knife, who killed him in the bathroom. He was upset about all the things he would miss out on, because there would be no future for him.

Have you even been excited or looking forward to something special (like going somewhere special, a gift, or time with someone), only to have it ruined or not happen? How did you handle it at the time?

Write an argumentative paragraph explaining how to deal with disappointing and unanticipated events. Using your personal example, include three ideas to convince your reader how you best to deal with unexpected circumstances (or how you should have dealt with the disappointing events).

## Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

### *The Afterlife, Day 2*



#### Key Paragraph

At my parents' house, there would be others to lament my death at such a young age. Angel, *mi carnal*, would be there, with the cement bags of guilt on his shoulders. *I should have been with him*, he would argue with himself. We could have took the dude! "He would be alive," he would cry, and I would cry in return, "*Chale*, we would both be dead!" In the three fights that I seen Angel in, he had lost them all. The guy was just a chubby, peace-loving dude.

Angel feels terribly guilty for his best friend's death. He feels that he is somehow responsible, because he wasn't there to help defend Chuy. His guilt didn't come from committing a wrong, rather from not preventing one. Guilt can influence people's choices of how they respond and deal with the loss; whether or not they make responsible choices.

When you felt guilty or regretful, either because you truly had committed a wrongdoing or because you hadn't done anything about a situation? Write an argumentative letter to convince those hurt by your wrongdoings to forgive you. Include three reasons why they should forgive you. End your letter with one paragraph of an apology.

## Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

### *The Afterlife, Day 3*



### Key Paragraph

I howled my ghostly breath on the newspaper, and the bits of dirt arranged themselves like a beard on my photo. I was dead, I realized, but I could still have my say. I had influence. For all I cared, the no-good husband was going to get religion, or at least the dishes were going to get done without his old lady getting on his case.

With his presence, Chuy helps a lazy husband get motivated to do the dishes and clean up a broken plant. This probably satisfied the wife, at least temporarily.

Write a paragraph about a time when you had a good solution to a problem. Write an argumentative paragraph that proves it was a good solution. Provide three reasons on why your solution was a suitable solution to the problem.

Consider the following questions in your paragraph:

- Tell about the problem, who was involved?
- What was your solution?
- How did the whole situation turned out in the end?

### Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

#### *The Afterlife, Day 4*



### Key Paragraph

I stepped back. I had so much to tell him, my bro since the first grade. But I had no voice other than the icy chill of my breath. I had no

other way to reach him than the vague feeling of touch. But he was aware that I stood in front of him.

When someone you care about passes away, or moves, it can be very difficult to say good-bye, to say everything you want to communicate about how much you will miss him/her, the magnitude of the influence he/she has had on your life.

Write an argumentative letter to persuade a family member or friend not to move. Include three reasons why they should stay and at least one reason why they shouldn't move.

Consider the following questions:

- Describe your relationship to this person.
- Why are they moving?
- How will their life and your life change after the move?

## **Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt** ***The Afterlife, Day 5***



### **Key Paragraph**

“Rachel,” I said in a pleading voice. I wanted her as my girl. My loneliness was as deep as that mirror. What could I do but feel self-pity because the one life I had was gone?

Seeing Rachel is the first time that Chuy feels loneliness and regret about his life ending. Do you think money, food, or drugs can cure loneliness? Write an argumentative paragraph defending your position. Include your opinion on what can cure loneliness. Provide three reasons to support your position.

**Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt**  
***The Afterlife, Day 6***



**Key Paragraph**

*Grandpa, I'm the one, I confessed in my heart. You know-the lighter, the pennies.*

Chuy feels guilt or remorse for having stolen the lighter and pennies from his grandfather, even after all these years. He knows he was naughty

and shouldn't have stolen them. Chuy offers a sincere apology to his grandfather's grave.

Pretend you are Chuy. Write an argumentative letter to prove to your grandfather that you are sorry for stealing from him. Include three reasons why you were sorry and what you do next time if you had a second change. End your letter with a sincere apology.

**Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt**  
*The Afterlife, Day 7*



**Key Paragraph**

The kid from my childhood played beautifully. I felt terrible that I couldn't go back in time and try to beat up the bully for him. We could have done it together.

Chuy, when he sees the trumpet player at the basketball game who plays taps, wishes that he had helped the kid stand up to a bully. He surmises that, together, they could have taken the bully (although, beating him up, may not have been the most responsible choice). Write about an

event in your life when you should have taken action. Did you act, even if it was difficult? Or did you not act, like Chuy?

Write an argumentative letter to persuade your *past* self to act. Provide three convincing reasons explain why you should take the most responsible action.

Consider the following when writing your letter:

- Tell about the circumstances of the event, and what the problem was.
- Tell what actions you took and what obstacles you faced.
- What would have been the most responsible action in that situation?
- Provide three reasons why you chose (or should have chosen) the most responsible action.

## Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

### *The Afterlife, Day 8*



### Key Paragraph

“Don’t be scared,” I said in a slow, deliberate manner. I wanted to be understood, trusted.

Chuy wanted Crystal to trust him and feel safe with him. He tried to impress her with letting the car drive through him. He tried to be confident, so she would be secure. Another person’s trust must be earned. It may or may not come easily, but if broken, takes a long time to mend.

Write about a time when you wanted to be trusted, either by a person (or animal). How did you show and prove your trustworthiness? In an argumentative paragraph, explain how you prove to be trustworthy. Include

three ways in which you showed that you were trustworthy. How did the other person respond? Did they eventually trust you?

**Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt**  
***The Afterlife, Day 9***



**Key Paragraph**

I stepped back, scared. His ghost was starting to peel away from his body. It started to rise, but I quickly got down on my knees and applied my stumps to cool the man's fever. *Don't die*, I begged. *Please don't die*. I touched his face with my stumps, pulled them away, and applied them again.

Chuy came across a sick and dying homeless man in the park, who may not have showered in a long time. Yet, he tried to help the sick man's fever, by sticking the ghostly chill of his stumps (arms) in the man's chest. Chuy tried to help a total stranger. There was no reward or prize for this act. He just did it. Or maybe he did have a reward: the admiration, respect, or love of a girl he wanted to trust him. Or was the act of helping the homeless man its own reward?

In an argumentative paragraph, explain why you think Chuy helped the homeless man. Describe what truly motivated his actions. Provide three reasons to support your position.

**Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt**  
***The Afterlife, Day 10***



**Key Paragraph**

I remember Dad saying that life is a journey that ends in the same place where you begin. He was philosophizing after the Raiders lost a playoff game-the attempted field goal that would have put the team up by one point hit the uprights and bounced left, also bouncing the air out of every Raider fan from Oakland to Los Angeles....

Chuy met up with Crystal, as ghosts. But he soon realizes that he had met her, many years ago, when he worked on her family's farm. Of all the farms in Fresno, it had to be hers. What a small world. Chuy's dad says that life brings you back to the same place. What does that mean?

Write an argumentative paragraph **explaining** how the world is a small place. Provide a "small world experience" where you met up with someone from your past or had an interesting connection to another person. What was the connection and how did you discover it?

**Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt**  
***The Afterlife, Day 11***



**Key Paragraph**

Crystal fumed. “Don’t you understand? I got rejected!”

Crystal has always been the successful over-achieving student. Excellent grades, extra curricular activities, and cheerleading rounded out her resume. But they weren’t enough to get her into Harvard and Stanford. She was accepted to USC. Crystal was devastated that she didn’t get into her first choice schools, so much so that she was willing to kill herself over it.

Write an argumentative letter to Crystal to encourage her to look on the positive side of things. What other things did Crystal have to look forward to in her life? Provide Crystal with three positive aspects about attending USC over Harvard and Stanford.

**Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt**  
***The Afterlife, Day 12***



**Key Paragraph**

His longing was familiar. Crystal suffered from that longing, and I had suffered it, too. Home is what ghosts seek out after they die-it was just natural.

Robert Montgomery asks Chuy about going home. They refer to it as a longing they suffer from and say that ghosts go in search of home. But the homeless guy doesn't have a house or apartment. What does it mean to go home? Is it the place you lived or somewhere else that you felt most comfortable?

Write an argumentative paragraph defending your definition of *home*. Is home simply the place where one sleeps? What is home? Include three reasons to support your answer.

**Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt**  
***The Afterlife, Day 13***



**Key Paragraph**

The telephone began to ring...*Beep*. Then my mother's voice in a whisper. "Eddie, you can find him, *mi'jo*. Please find him. I have more bullets if you need more. I'll see you at the rosary in a little bit." There was the sound of a television in the background. Then the final prodding. "*Mi'jo*, he loved you a lot. He would do it for you."

Eddie is receiving a lot of pressure from his aunt to find Chuy's killer. He's trying to get his own life together and go to school and doesn't want to get into any more trouble. What makes his predicament more difficult is that his aunt is family, and an authority figure, to whom he should be obedient and respectful. She even attempts to use guilt to convince him to do it (He loved you a lot. He would do it for you.).

Pretend you are Eddie. Write an argumentative letter to your aunt convincing her that taking revenge would not be a good solution. Provide three reasons to support your answer that will motivate your aunt to see things more clearly and to keep her from holding a grudge. End your letter encouraging your aunt to forgive her son's murder and explain holding a grudge only keeps anger within and does not solve any problems.

**Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt**  
***The Afterlife, Day 14***



**Key Paragraph**

A roar burst forth from the soul of every man and woman who wanted to go home winners. They wanted a good memory of the evening, something to say tomorrow at work, "Yeah, I was there last night. Stacked up the Chiefs good." That roar had a powerful spirit to it and it sent me sailing from the coliseum. I rose laughing, rose tumbling like a poorly thrown football, rose and slowly descended into the parking lot. I had seen enough.

Chuy had a great time at the Raider game. Seeing them play in person was one of his all time goals and he was able to fulfill it before his body completely disappeared. Being a ghost made it even better! What is one of your wishes that you wish to fulfilled before your death?

Write an argumentative letter to yourself explaining why you should accomplish this wish in the next year. Include reasons why you should accomplish this wish in the next year.

**Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt**  
***The Afterlife, Day 15***



**Key Paragraph**

They say autumn is the color of death, and for Crystal and me, it was true. We were like the tint of fallen leaves, grass burnt by the first frost, and the ashen-colored fog that sometimes rises from the valley floor and smothers our dream. My dream had been to grow up, work a regular job, nothing special, hang out with friends, and be with someone special like Crystal. I received a portion of that dream and felt grateful for it. I loved her like no other. She flew at my side, southward toward what, I now knew, is called the afterlife.

Chuy dreamt that he would grow up, work a regular job, hang out with his friends, be with someone special. As the last entry to your autobiography, write about your dreams and wishes for your future. What do you hope to accomplish? How will you measure your success?

**Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt**  
***The Afterlife*, Final Assignment**



**Unit: Change Requires Effort**

**Novel: *The Afterlife* by Gary Soto**

**Final Assignment: Argumentative Essay**

**Task:** Write an autobiographical essay.

**Directions:** Over the past three weeks, you have read the novel *The Afterlife* by Gary Soto. In the novel, Soto guides the reader through the experience of Chuy, a Mexican-American Fresno, California native, whose life only really gets interesting once he is dead. In Soto's novel, Chuy wanders invisibly through town, observing his family and friends and how they respond and mourn his death. He meets the ghost of a girl and thinks he has found true love, but can he hold onto it as his ghostly body begins to disappear? Through the story the reader is given insight into Chuy's views through his reflections and commentary on the happenings around him. He shares who he is and what he hopes for through the story.

Review the writing argumentative assignments from the past three weeks. Choose one prompt to expand and write an argumentative essay.

Remember that one paragraph should flow into the next. In order to produce this effect, you may have to re-write some sentences or paragraphs from your daily snapshots. You may also need to add leading or unifying sentences at the beginning or end of paragraphs to aid your reader in following the direction of your essay.

Type your essay.

Spell-check it.

Save it.

Print it and trade with a peer. Edit each other's essay using the rubric discussed in class.

Revise your essay.

Save and print again.

If you have a portfolio, place the final autobiographical writing inside the folder.