

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Class: \_\_\_\_\_

## The Drive-In Movies

By Gary Soto  
1990

*Gary Soto is an American poet, novelist, and memoirist. In this short story, Soto describes his desire to go to the drive-in movies as a kid. As you read, take notes on what the narrator does to get what he wants.*

[1] For our family, moviegoing was rare. But if our mom, tired from a week of candling eggs,<sup>1</sup> woke up happy on a Saturday morning, there was a chance we might later scramble to our blue Chevy and beat nightfall to the Starlight Drive-In. My brother and sister knew this. I knew this. So on Saturday we tried to be good. We sat in the cool shadows of the TV with the volume low and watched cartoons, a prelude<sup>2</sup> of what was to come.



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One Saturday I decided to be extra good. When she came out of the bedroom tying her robe, she yawned a hat-sized yawn and blinked red eyes at the weak brew of coffee I had fixed for her. I made her toast with strawberry jam spread to all the corners and set three boxes of cereal in front of her. If she didn't care to eat cereal, she could always look at the back of the boxes as she drank her coffee.

I went outside. The lawn was tall but too wet with dew to mow. I picked up a trowel<sup>3</sup> and began to weed the flower bed. The weeds were really bermuda grass,<sup>4</sup> long stringers that ran finger-deep in the ground. I got to work quickly and in no time crescents of earth began rising under my fingernails. I was sweaty hot. My knees hurt from kneeling, and my brain was dull from making the trowel go up and down, dribbling crumbs of earth. I dug for a half an hour, then stopped to play with the neighbor's dog and pop ticks from his poor snout.

I then mowed the lawn, which was still beaded with dew and noisy with bees hovering over clover. This job was less dull because as I pushed the mower over the shaggy lawn, I could see it looked tidier. My brother and sister watched from the window. Their faces were fat with cereal, a third helping. I made a face at them when they asked how come I was working. Rick pointed to part of the lawn.

[5] "You missed some over there." I ignored him and kept my attention on the windmill of grassy blades.

While I was emptying the catcher, a bee stung the bottom of my foot. I danced on one leg and was ready to cry when Mother showed her face at the window. I sat down on the grass and examined my foot: the stinger was pulsating.<sup>5</sup> I pulled it out quickly, ran water over the sting and packed it with mud, Grandmother's remedy.

1. to test an egg for freshness or fertility by holding it to a light
2. an action or event serving as an introduction to something larger
3. a small handheld tool with a curved scoop for lifting plants out of the ground
4. a type of grass common in warmer parts of the world

Hobbling, I returned to the flower bed where I pulled more stringers and again played with the dog. More ticks had migrated<sup>6</sup> to his snout. I swept the front steps, took out the garbage, cleaned the lint filter to the dryer (easy), plucked hair from the industrial wash basin<sup>7</sup> in the garage (also easy), hosed off the patio, smashed three snails sucking paint from the house (disgusting but fun), tied a bundle of newspapers, put away toys, and, finally, seeing that almost everything was done and the sun was not too high, started waxing the car.

My brother joined me with an old gym sock, and our sister watched us while sucking on a cherry Kool-Aid cube. The liquid wax drooled onto the sock, and we began to swirl the white slop on the chrome. My arms ached from buffing, which though less boring than weeding, was harder. But the beauty was evident. The shine, hurting our eyes and glinting like an armful of dimes, brought Mother out. She looked around the yard and said, "Pretty good." She winced at the grille and returned inside the house.

We began to wax the paint. My brother applied the liquid and I followed him rubbing hard in wide circles as we moved around the car. I began to hurry because my arms were hurting and my stung foot looked like a water balloon. We were working around the trunk when Rick pounded on the bottle of wax. He squeezed the bottle and it sneezed a few more white drops.

[10] We looked at each other. "There's some on the sock," I said. "Let's keep going."

We polished and buffed, sweat weeping on our brows. We got scared when we noticed that the gym sock was now blue. The paint was coming off. Our sister fit ice cubes into our mouths and we worked harder, more intently, more dedicated to the car and our mother. We ran the sock over the chrome, trying to pick up extra wax. But there wasn't enough to cover the entire car. Only half got waxed, but we thought it was better than nothing and went inside for lunch. After lunch, we returned outside with tasty sandwiches.

Rick and I nearly jumped. The waxed side of the car was foggy white. We took a rag and began to polish vigorously<sup>8</sup> and nearly in tears, but the fog wouldn't come off. I blamed Rick and he blamed me. Debra stood at the window, not wanting to get involved. Now, not only would we not go to the movies, but Mom would surely snap a branch from the plum tree and chase us around the yard.

Mom came out and looked at us with hands on her aproned hips. Finally, she said, "you boys worked so hard." She turned on the garden hose and washed the car. That night we did go to the drive-in. The first feature was about nothing, and the second feature, starring Jerry Lewis, was *Cinderfella*.<sup>9</sup> I tried to stay awake. I kept a wad of homemade popcorn in my cheek and laughed when Jerry Lewis fit golf tees in his nose. I rubbed my watery eyes. I laughed and looked at my mom. I promised myself I would remember that scene with the golf tees and promised myself not to work so hard the coming Saturday.

Twenty minutes into the movie, I fell asleep with one hand in the popcorn.

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5. to vibrate; to expand and contract repeatedly

6. **Migrate (verb):** to move from one region to another

7. a very large wash basin or tub, suitable for use in a factory

8. **Vigorous (adjective):** done with force and energy

9. a comedy film adaption of the classic Cinderella story, released in 1960

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

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### The Drive-In Movies by Gary Soto

- I. Write “S” if the words form a complete sentence. Capitalize and punctuate the sentences. Write “F” if the words are a sentence fragment. Change the fragments into complete sentences.

1. \_\_\_\_\_ going to the movies

\_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_ the house

\_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_ on their best behavior

\_\_\_\_\_

4. \_\_\_\_\_ fell asleep at the drive-in

\_\_\_\_\_

5. \_\_\_\_\_ mom was impressed by her children’s hard work

\_\_\_\_\_

- II. Rearrange the words into a sentence. Add correct capitalization and punctuation.  
(Hint: The first word of the sentence is in **bold**.)

that work **Gary’s** he values actions show hard

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**III. Write about Gary Soto's The Drive-In using the following sentence types.**

**1. Statement ( . )**

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**2. Statement ( . )**

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**3. Question ( ? )**

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**4. Question ( ? )**

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**IV. Complete the sentences about the Drive-In Movies by Gary Soto.**

**1. Although cleaning the entire house was a difficult task, \_\_\_\_\_**

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**2. Since going to the drive-in movies was rare, \_\_\_\_\_**

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V. Expand the kernel sentence.

Kernel: They cleaned the entire house.

Who: .....

When: .....

Why: .....

Expanded sentence: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

VI. Convert the following sentences into key words, phrases, abbreviations, and symbols.

1. The lawn was tall, wet and dewy.

.....

2. Gary was stung by a bee sting, which caused him to dance on one leg and cry.

.....

3. Mom is a hard working woman with three children.

.....

VII. Details from Topic and Concluding Setences

Using key words and phrases, symbols, and abbreviations,write details for the given topic and concluding sentences.

Single-Paragraph Outline

T.S. Gary Soto is willing to work hard to get what he wants.

- 1. ....
- 2. ....
- 3. ....
- 4. ....

C.S. In the end, Gary’s efforts pay off because his mother takes the family to the drive-in.

[illegible]

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_



### The Drive-In Movies by Gary Soto

- I. Write “S” if the words form a complete sentence. Capitalize and punctuate the sentences. Write “F” if the words are a sentence fragment. Change the fragments into complete sentences.

1. F going to the movies

Gary enjoyed going to the movies with his family.

2. F the house

The house had to be cleaned before they could go to the movies.  
The children cleaned the house in order to persuade their mother.

3. F were on their best behavior

Gary’s brother and sister were on their best behavior as well.

4. F fell asleep at the drive-in.

Gary fell asleep at the drive-in.

5. S mom was impressed by her children’s hard work

Mom was impressed by her children’s hard work.

- II. Rearrange the words into a sentence. Add correct capitalization and punctuation.  
(Hint: The first word of the sentence is in **bold**.)

that work **Gary’s** he values actions show hard

Gary’s actions show that he values hard work.



III. Write about The Drive-In Movies by Gary Soto using the following sentence types.

1. Statement ( . )

Gary's mother worked hard all week long.

2. Statement ( . )

Gary and his siblings are rewarded for cleaning the house and washing the car.

3. Question ( ? )

Why was it so rare for Gary's family to go to the movies?

4. Question ( ? )

How does Gary's mother feel about him falling asleep at the drive-in movie?

IV. Complete the sentences about The Drive-In Movies.

1. Although cleaning the entire house was a difficult task, the reward of going to the movies made it worthwhile.
2. Since going to the drive-in movies was rare, Gary and his siblings earned it by cleaning the entire house and washing the car.

V. Expand the kernel sentence.

Kernel: They cleaned the entire house.

Who: Gary + his siblings  
When: Sat. am/morn  
Why: b/c wanted to go /drive-in movies

Expanded sentence: On Saturday morning, Gary and his siblings cleaned the entire house because they wanted to go to the drive-in movies.

VI. Convert the following sentences into key words, phrases, abbreviations, and symbols.

1. The lawn was tall, wet and dewy.

lawn/tall, wet + dewy

2. Gary was stung by a bee, which caused him to dance on one leg and cry.

Gary/stung by bee → dance /1leg + cry

3. Mom is a hard working woman with three children.

Mom = hardworking woman w/ 3 children

## VII. Details from Topic and Concluding Sentences

Using key words and phrases, symbols, and abbreviations, write details for the given topic and concluding sentences.

### Single-Paragraph Outline

T.S. Gary Soto is willing to work hard to get what he wants.

1. completes ↑ chores /persuade mother/take to drive-in
2. made weak coffee + toast w/ jam mom's breakfast
3. swept front steps, took out garbage, hosed patio + put toys away
4. difficult work/his actions → brother + sister lend a hand

C.S. In the end, Gary's efforts pay off because his mother takes the family to the drive-in.

VIII. Convert the Single-Paragraph Outline into a paragraph here.

Gary Soto is willing to work hard for the things he wants. He completes several chores around the house to persuade his mother to take the family to the drive-in movies. For example, Gary makes weak coffee and toast with jam for his mom's breakfast. Additionally, he sweeps the front steps, takes out the garbage, hoses off the patio, and puts all his toys away. Even though it is difficult work, his actions encourage his brother and sister to eventually lend a hand. In the end, Gary's efforts pay off because his mother takes the family to the drive-in.