

Lesson

19



Vocabulary in Context

1

urge

Teachers can **urge**, or coax, students to get involved in helping their community.



2

minimum

The food collected by students exceeded the **minimum**, or least, amount needed.



LANGUAGE DETECTIVE

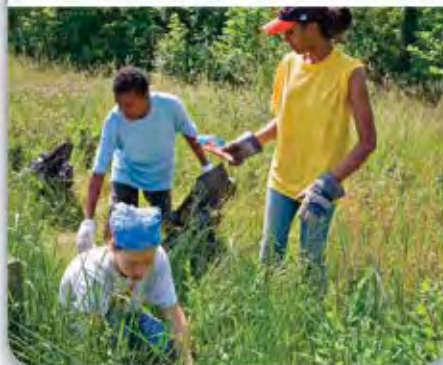
Talk About the Writer's Words

Work with a partner. Choose one of the Vocabulary words. Add words to the sentence below it to explain more details about the photo.

3

effective

Picking up litter can be **effective** in keeping parks and beaches clean. It gets results.



4

deteriorating

Many **deteriorating** buildings will only get worse if volunteers don't help repair them.



- ▶ Study each **Context Card**.
- ▶ Use a thesaurus to find an alternate word for each Vocabulary word.

5 **dependent**

A literacy group may be **dependent** on volunteers. It needs them as reading tutors.



6 **violations**

If they pollute too much, companies can be fined for **violations** of clean air laws.



7 **granted**

The principal **granted**, or gave, these students and teacher permission to hold a car wash.



8 **issue**

Providing better care for senior citizens is an **issue**, or concern. You can help in many ways.



9 **ordinance**

An **ordinance**, or city law, can create volunteer community service groups.



10 **exception**

With the **exception** of rainy days, this class works in the school garden every day.





Read and Comprehend

✓ TARGET SKILL

Author's Purpose In "Darnell Rock Reporting," two characters present arguments about the best use for a piece of land near their school. As you read the story, use a graphic organizer like the one below to record details about how both arguments are presented and about how the story turns out. Then use this text evidence to identify the **author's purpose**, or reason for writing the story.



✓ TARGET STRATEGY

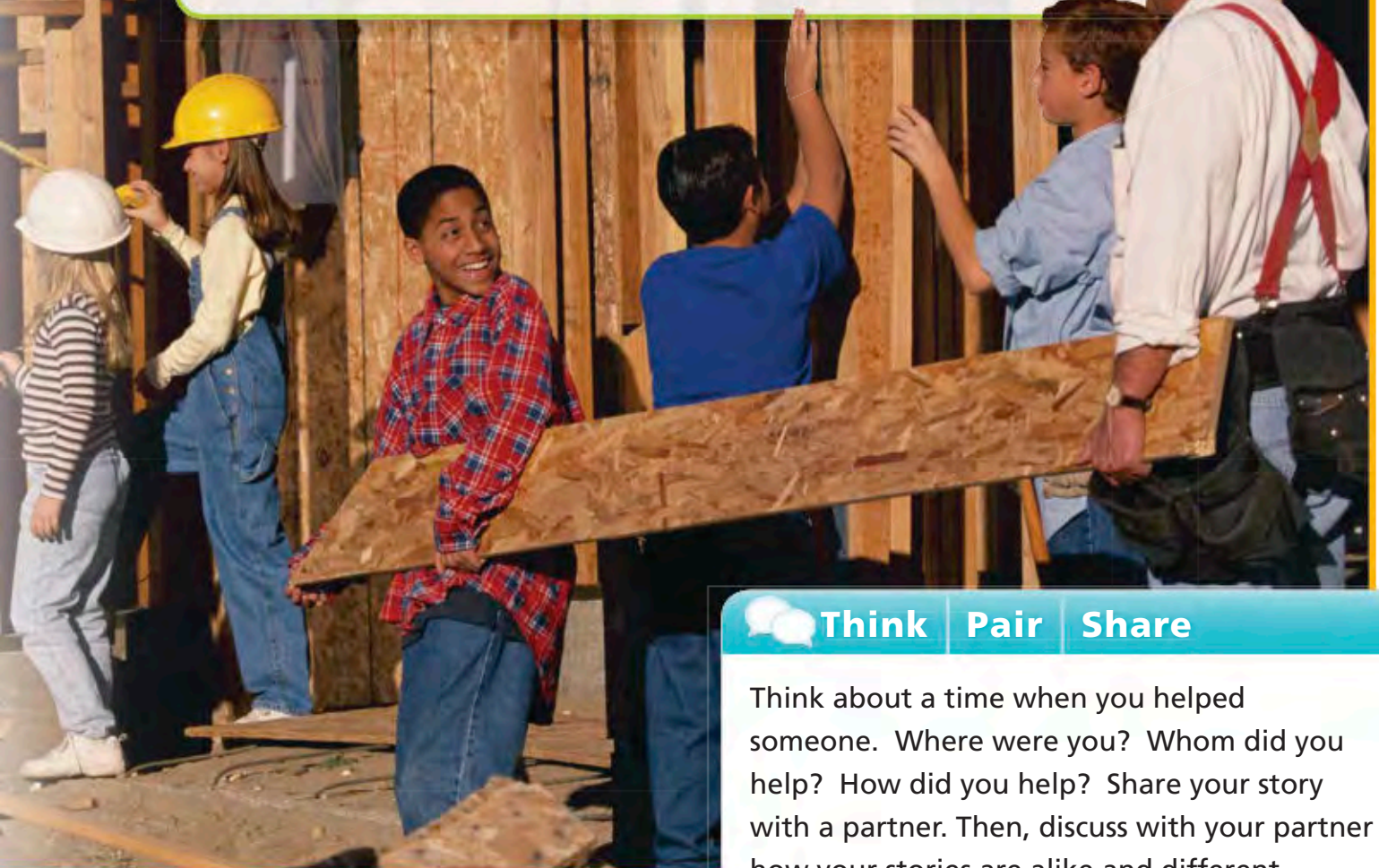
Summarize To help you understand the author's purpose, pause to **summarize** each part of the story, retelling the important ideas in your own words.

PREVIEW THE TOPIC

Community Involvement

Have you ever looked around your school or community and noticed things that need improvement? In the story you are about to read, the main character does just that. He could simply wait for someone else to solve the problem. Instead, he decides to take responsibility himself.

In the real world, many people have the same reaction. That's why they get involved in community projects. Some projects are people-oriented, such as food or clothing drives. Others focus on making the community safer or more enjoyable. No matter what the project, the important thing is to get involved!

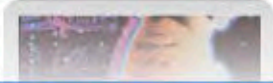
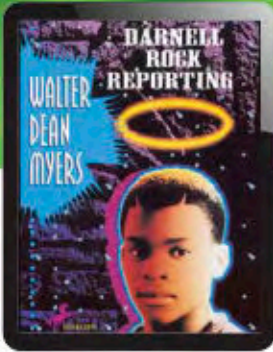


Think | Pair | Share

Think about a time when you helped someone. Where were you? Whom did you help? How did you help? Share your story with a partner. Then, discuss with your partner how your stories are alike and different.

Lesson 19

ANCHOR TEXT



✓ GENRE

Realistic fiction has characters and events that are like people and events in real life. As you read, look for:

- ▶ realistic characters and events
- ▶ details that help the reader picture the setting
- ▶ challenges and problems that might happen in real life

MEET THE AUTHOR

Walter Dean Myers

Like Darnell Rock, Walter Dean Myers was nervous about speaking in public when he was young. But when his fifth-grade teacher invited students to read aloud their own writing, Myers found that he was able to relax. He began to write more and hasn't stopped since!

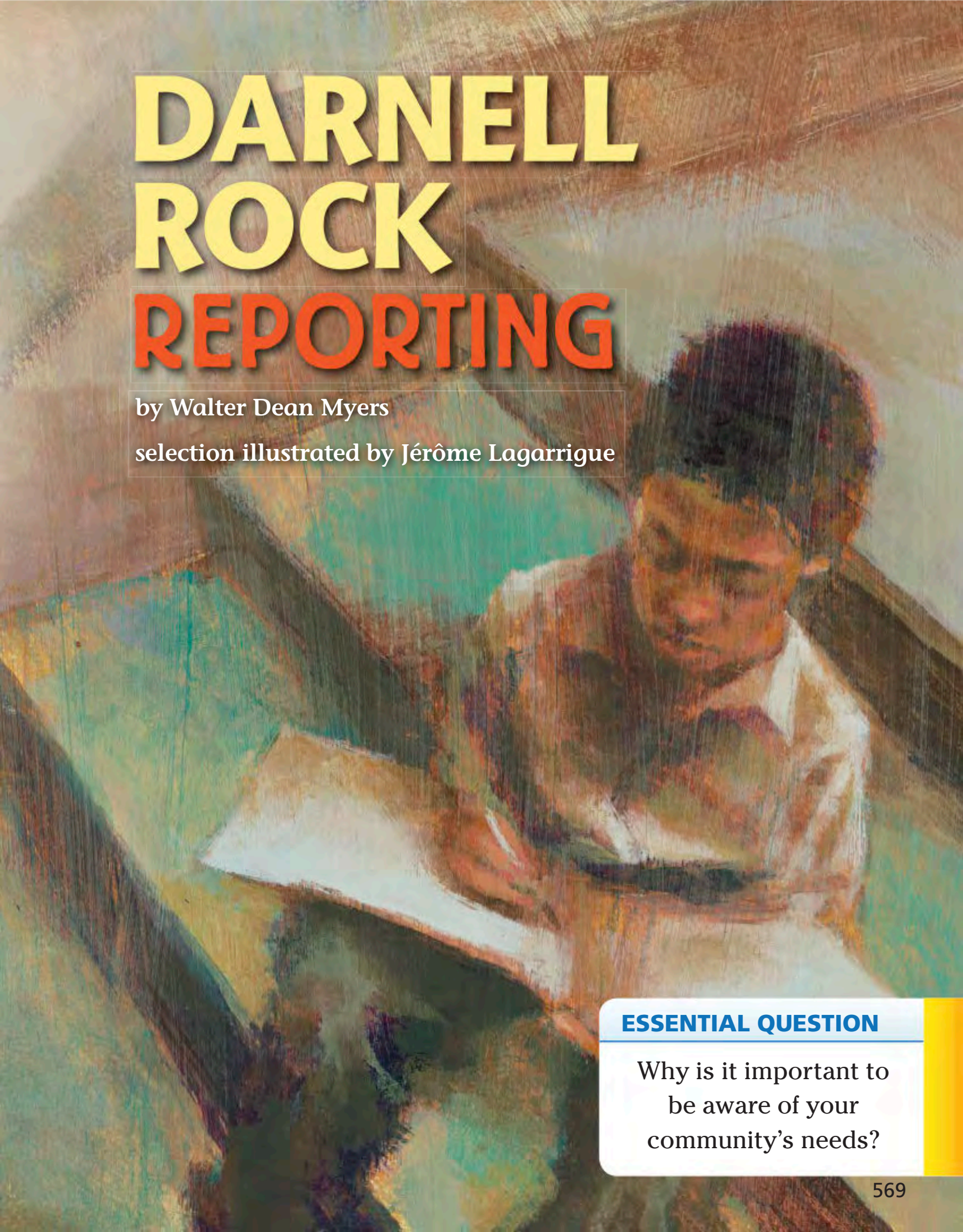


MEET THE ILLUSTRATOR

Jérôme Lagarrigue

Born in Paris, France, Jérôme Lagarrigue came to the United States to attend art school in the 1990s. In 2002, he won the Coretta Scott King–John Steptoe Award for best new talent for his illustration of the children's book *Freedom Summer*.





DARNELL ROCK REPORTING

by Walter Dean Myers

selection illustrated by Jérôme Lagarrigue

ESSENTIAL QUESTION

Why is it important to be aware of your community's needs?

Darnell Rock feels that his teachers only notice him, his friends, and his sister Tamika, when they get into trouble. Then a homeless man, Sweeby Jones, inspires Darnell to write an article in his school newspaper about turning a **deteriorating** basketball court into a garden to feed the homeless. Soon editor Peter Miller publishes Darnell's article in the town newspaper. Not everyone agrees with him, though, including student Linda Gold and teacher Miss Joyner. A city council meeting will decide what to do with the basketball court. Darnell is nervous about presenting his opinion, but his parents, and teachers like Mr. Baker and Miss Seldes, all support him. Before the meeting, everyone at school has read Darnell's article (pictured below) and an opposing article written by Linda that ran in the school newspaper (shown on page 571).

"Nobody wants to be homeless," Sweeby Jones said. He is a homeless man who lives in our city of Oakdale. It is for him and people like him that I think we should build a garden where the basketball courts were, near the school. That way the homeless people can help themselves by raising food.

"You see a man or woman that's hungry and you don't feed them, or help them feed themselves, then you got to say you don't mind people being hungry," Mr. Jones said. "And if you don't mind people being hungry, then there is something wrong with you."

This is what Mr. Sweeby Jones said when I spoke to him. I don't want to be the kind of person who says it's all right for some people to be hungry. I want to do something about it. But I think there is another reason to have the garden.

Things can happen to people that they don't plan. You can get sick, and not know why, or even homeless. But sometimes there are things you can do to change your life or make it good. If you don't do anything to make your life good, it will probably not be good.

"I was born poor and will probably be poor all my life," Mr. Sweeby Jones said.

I think maybe it is not how you were born that makes the most difference, but what you do with your life. The garden is a chance for some people to help their own lives.

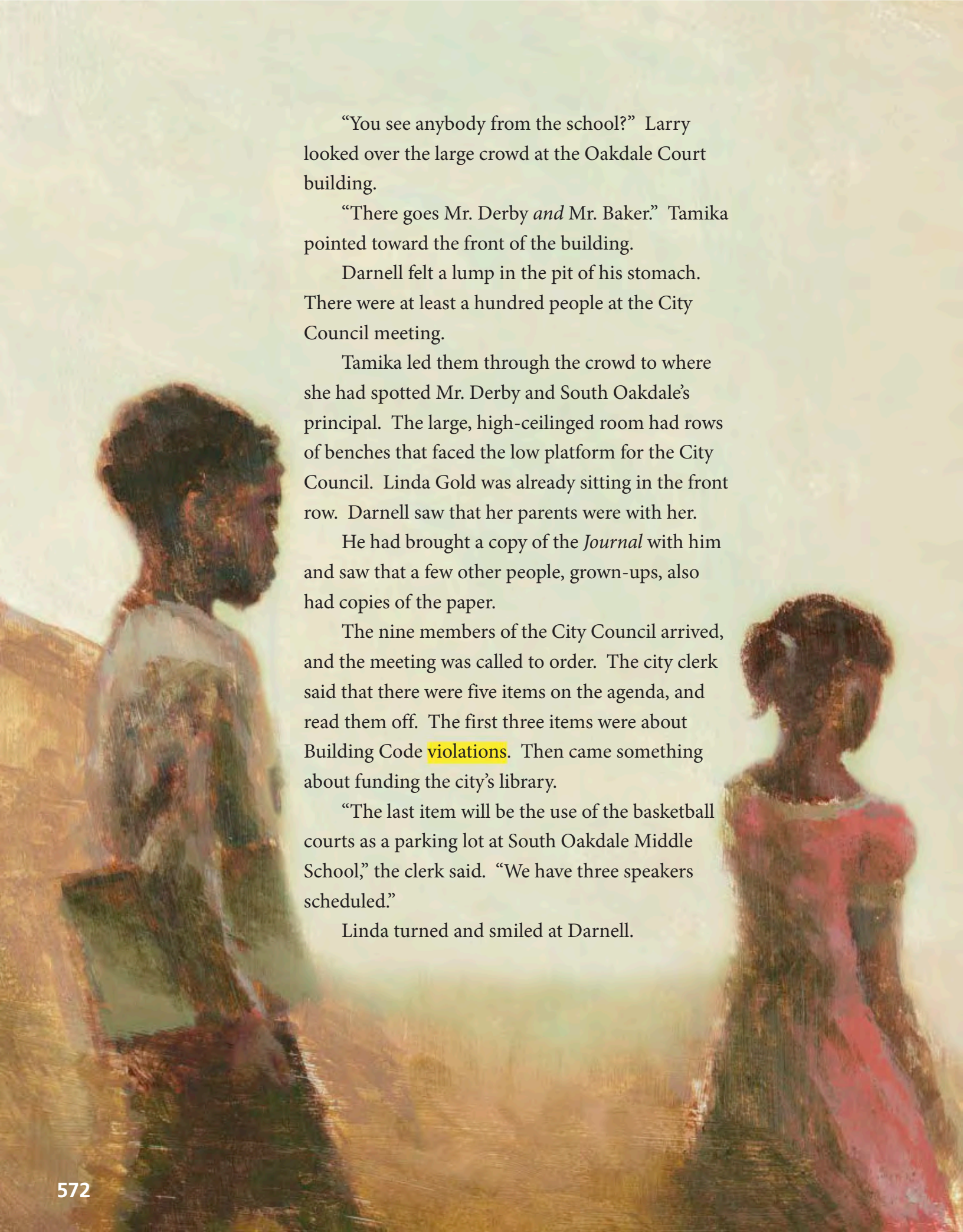
*Darnell Rock is a seventh-grader at South Oakdale Middle School. The school board has proposed that the site that Mr. Rock wants to make into a garden be used as a parking lot for teachers. The City Council will decide the **issue** tomorrow evening.*

Teaching is a difficult profession. Teachers need as much support as they can possibly get. After all, we are **dependent** on them for our future. Education is the key to a good and secure future, and teachers help us to get that education. We must give them all the support we can. This is why I am supporting the idea of building a parking lot near the school.

There are some people in our school who think it is a good idea to build a garden so that the homeless can use it. Use it for what? Homeless people don't have experience farming and could not use the land anyway. This is just a bad idea that will help nobody and will hurt the teachers. The teachers give us good examples of how we should live and how we should conduct ourselves. The homeless people, even though it is no fault of theirs, don't give us good examples.

On Friday evening at 7:00 p.m., the City Council will meet to make a final decision. I **urge** them to support the teachers, support education, and support the students at South Oakdale.





“You see anybody from the school?” Larry looked over the large crowd at the Oakdale Court building.

“There goes Mr. Derby *and* Mr. Baker.” Tamika pointed toward the front of the building.

Darnell felt a lump in the pit of his stomach. There were at least a hundred people at the City Council meeting.

Tamika led them through the crowd to where she had spotted Mr. Derby and South Oakdale’s principal. The large, high-ceilinged room had rows of benches that faced the low platform for the City Council. Linda Gold was already sitting in the front row. Darnell saw that her parents were with her.

He had brought a copy of the *Journal* with him and saw that a few other people, grown-ups, also had copies of the paper.

The nine members of the City Council arrived, and the meeting was called to order. The city clerk said that there were five items on the agenda, and read them off. The first three items were about Building Code **violations**. Then came something about funding the city’s library.

“The last item will be the use of the basketball courts as a parking lot at South Oakdale Middle School,” the clerk said. “We have three speakers scheduled.”

Linda turned and smiled at Darnell.

Darnell didn't know what Building Code violations were but watched as building owners showed diagrams explaining why there were violations. The first two weren't that interesting, but the third one was. A company had built a five-story building that was supposed to be a **minimum** of twenty feet from the curb, but it was only fifteen feet.

"You mean to tell me that your engineers only had fifteen-foot rulers?" one councilman asked.

"Well, er, we measured it right the first time"—the builder shifted from one foot to the other—"but then we made some changes in the design and somehow we sort of forgot about the er . . . you know . . . the other five feet."

To Darnell the builder sounded like a kid in his homeroom trying to make an excuse for not having his homework.

"Can you just slide the building back five or six feet?" the Councilman asked.

Everybody laughed and the builder actually smiled, but Darnell could tell he didn't think it was funny.

Somebody touched Darnell on his shoulder, and he turned and saw his parents.

"We have this **ordinance** for a reason," a woman on the Council was saying. "I don't think we should lightly dismiss this violation. An **exception granted** here is just going to encourage others to break the law."

"This is going to ruin me," the builder said. "I've been in Oakdale all of my life and I think I've made a contribution."

"Let's have a vote." The head of the Council spoke sharply.





“Let’s have a vote to postpone a decision,” the woman who had spoken before said. “We’ll give Mr. Miller an opportunity to show his good faith.”

“What do you want me to do?” the builder asked.

“That’s up to you,” the woman said.

“Next time you’d better get it right!” Tamika called out.

“She’s right,” the councilwoman said.

There was a vote, and the decision was postponed. The builder gave Tamika a dirty look as he pushed his papers into his briefcase.

The city library funding was next, and eight people, including Miss Seldes, spoke for the library, but the Council said it didn’t have any more money. There was some booing, including some from Tamika and Larry. Darnell knew that if he didn’t have to speak he would have enjoyed the meeting.

“The issue at South Oakdale is should the old basketball courts be used as a parking lot, or should they be used as a community garden?”



“Who’s going to pay for paving the lot?” a councilman asked. “Does it have to be paved?”

“It’s my understanding that it doesn’t have to be paved,” the head of the Council answered. “Am I right on that?”

“Yes, you are,” Miss Joyner spoke up from the audience.

“We have two young people from the school to speak,” the councilwoman said. “The first is a Miss Gold.”

Linda went into the middle aisle, where there was a microphone. She began reading her article in the snootiest voice that Darnell had ever heard. He felt a knot in his stomach. He turned to look at his mother, and she was smiling. On the stage some of the councilmen were looking at some papers.

“I hope I don’t mess up,” he whispered to Tamika.

“You won’t,” Tamika said.

Linda finished reading her article and then turned toward Darnell.

“Although everybody would like to help the homeless,” she said, “schools are supposed to be for kids, and for those who teach kids! Thank you.”

There was applause for Linda, and Miss Joyner stood up and nodded toward her. Darnell felt his hands shaking.

Darnell's name was called, and he made the long trip to the microphone.

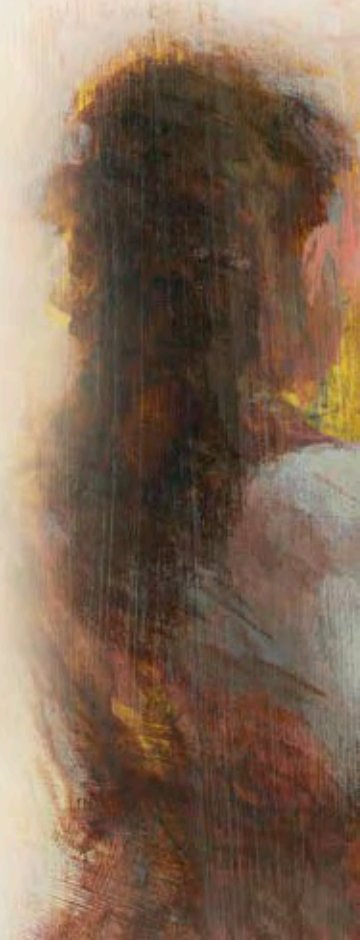
"When I first thought about having a garden instead of a parking lot, I thought it was just a good idea," Darnell said. "Then, when the *Journal* asked me to send them a copy of my interview with Mr. Jones, I was thinking that it was mainly a good idea to have a garden to help out the homeless people. But now I think it might be a good idea to have the garden to help out the kids—some of the kids—in the school.

"Sometimes, when people go through their life they don't do the things that can make them a good life. I don't know why they don't do the right thing, or maybe even if they know what the right thing is sometimes.

"But I see the same thing in my school, South Oakdale. Some of the kids always do okay, but some of us don't. Maybe their parents are telling them something, or maybe they know something special. But if you're a kid who isn't doing so good, people start off telling you what you should be doing, and you know it, but sometimes you still don't get it done and mess up some more. Then people start expecting you to mess up, and then *you* start expecting to mess up. Teachers get mad at you, or the principal, or your parents, and they act like you're messing up on purpose. Like you want to get bad marks and stuff like that. Then you don't want people getting on your case all the time so you don't do much because the less you do the less they're going to be on your case. Only that doesn't help anything, and everybody knows it, but that's the way it goes."

"You seem to be doing all right, young man," the head of the City Council said.

"I wasn't doing too hot before," Darnell said, taking a quick look over to where Mr. Baker sat. "But when I got on the paper and the *Journal* printed my article, then everybody started treating me different. People came up to me and started explaining their points of view instead of just telling me what to do. And you people are listening to me. The kids I hung out with, they called us the Corner Crew, are mostly good kids, but you wouldn't listen to them unless they got into trouble.



“In South Oakdale some kids have bad things happen to them—like they get sick—and I don’t know why that happens, but all they can do is to go to the hospital. And some kids just get left out of the good things and can’t find a way of getting back into them. People get mad at them the same way they get mad at the homeless people or people who beg on the street. Maybe the garden will be a way for the homeless people to get back into some good things, and maybe seeing the homeless people getting back into a better life will be a way for some of the kids to think about what’s happening to them. Thank you.”



ANALYZE THE TEXT

Characterization How are Linda’s and Darnell’s arguments different in tone and purpose? What do their actions and arguments reveal about each character?

There was some applause as Darnell turned to go back to his seat.

“Just a minute, young man,” one of the councilmen called to him. “The girl said that these people don’t know anything about raising a garden. Is that true?”

“It doesn’t matter,” someone said from the audience. “I’m from the college, and we can help with technical advice.”

“I didn’t ask you,” the councilman said.

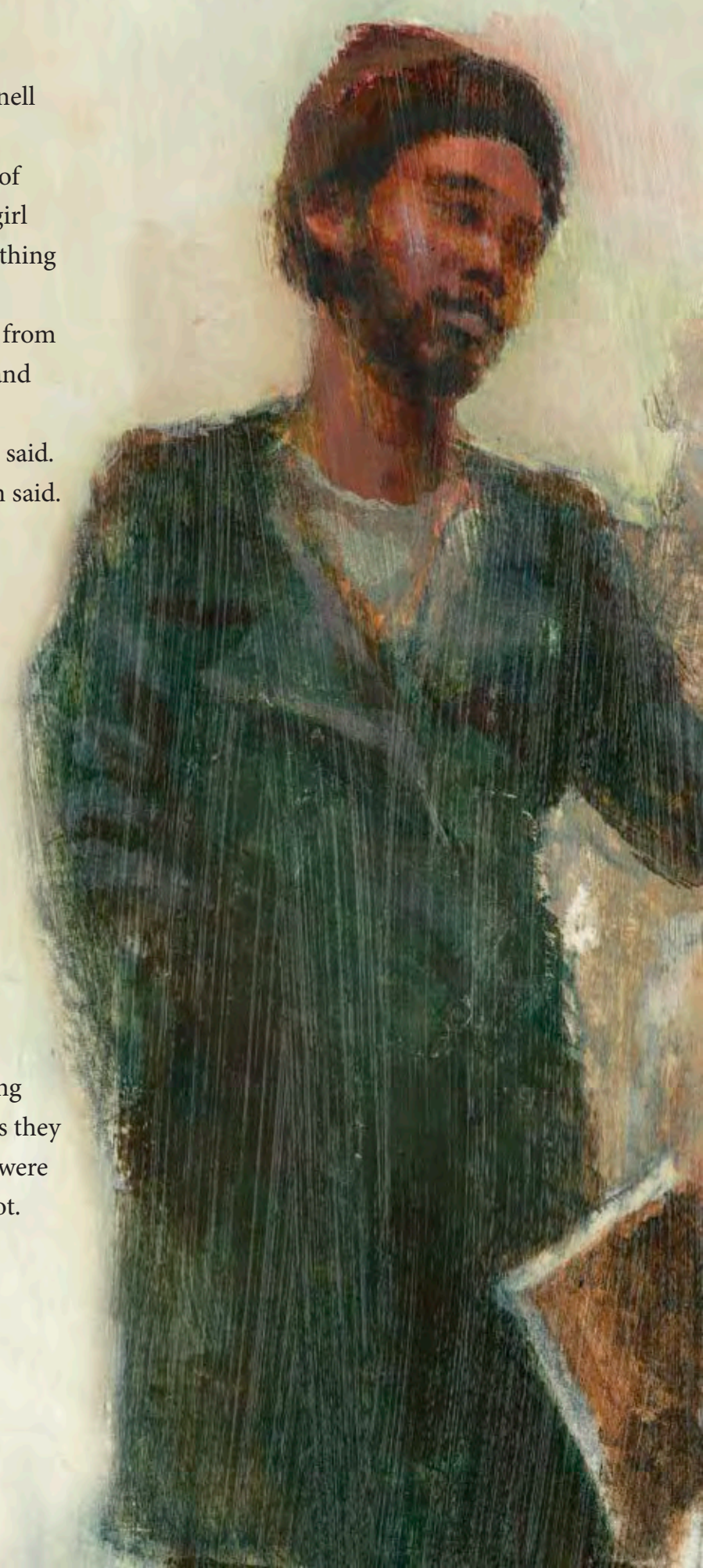
“I’m telling you anyway,” the man said.

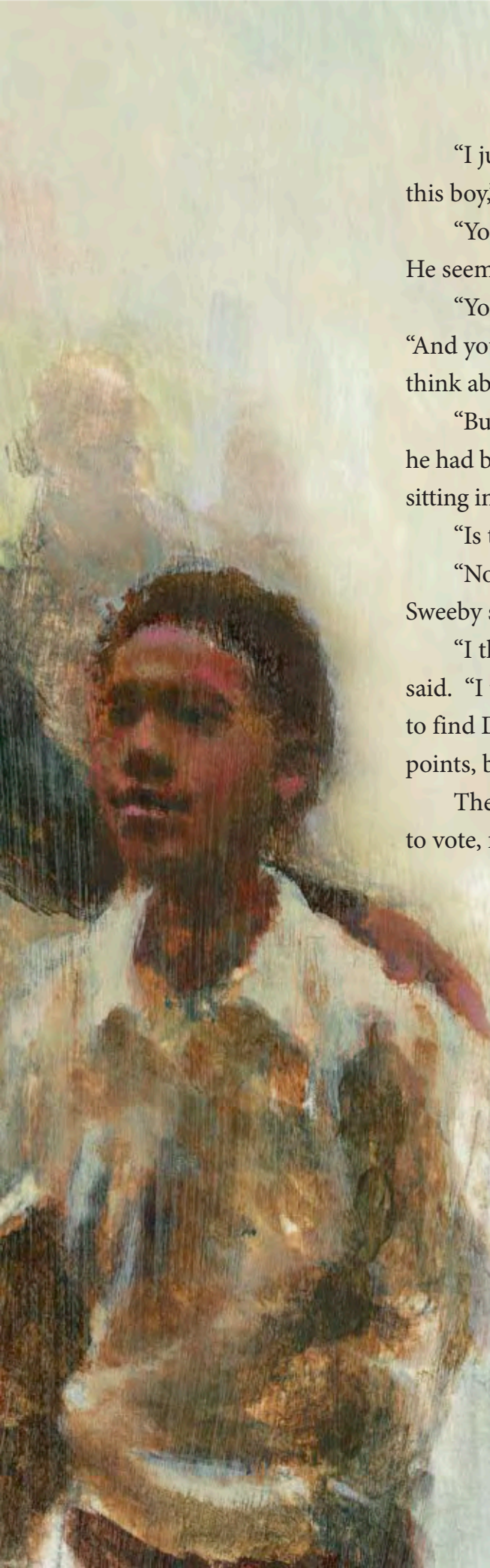
“I don’t know how **effective** a community garden would be,” the councilman said. “You can’t feed people from a garden.”

“You could sell what you grow,” Darnell heard himself saying.

“I think bringing people who are . . . nonschool people into that close a contact with children might not be that good an idea,” the councilman said. “Who’s the last speaker?”

“A Mr. Jones,” the clerk said. Sweeby came into the middle aisle, and a lot of people began to talk among themselves. There were a lot of things they were interested in, and most of them were not interested in the school parking lot.





“I just wanted to ask you why you don’t want to listen to this boy,” Sweeby asked.

“You have four minutes to speak,” the councilman said. He seemed angry. “We don’t have to answer your questions.”

“You don’t have to answer my questions,” Sweeby said. “And you don’t have to have the garden. You don’t have to think about us—what did you call us?—nonschool people?”

“But it’s a shame you don’t want to listen to this boy. I wish he had been my friend when I was his age. Maybe I would be sitting in one of your seats instead of being over here.”

“Is there anything more?” the councilman asked.

“No, you can just forget about the whole thing now,” Sweeby said. “Go on back to your papers.”

“I think we can vote on this issue now,” the councilman said. “I think Mr.”—the councilman looked at the agenda to find Darnell’s name—“Mr. Darnell Rock had some good points, but it’s still a tough issue. Let’s get on with the vote.”

The vote went quickly. Three councilpeople decided not to vote, five voted against the garden, and only one voted for it.

Darnell took a deep breath and let it out slowly. Tamika patted him on his hand. When he looked at her she had tears in her eyes.

Darnell felt he had let Sweeby down. His father patted him on his back, and Miss Seldes came over.

“You did a good job,” she said. “Really good.”

“I lost,” Darnell said.

“Sometimes you lose,” Miss Seldes said. “But you still did a good job.”

ANALYZE THE TEXT

Dialogue Compare and contrast the different tones and words that the meeting participants use. How do their different ways of speaking make the story more realistic?



Sweeby and some of his friends were waiting outside the Council meeting, and they shook hands with Darnell. Sweeby was telling him how the members of the Council didn't really care about people when Darnell saw Linda through the crowd. She waved and he waved back. She was smiling.

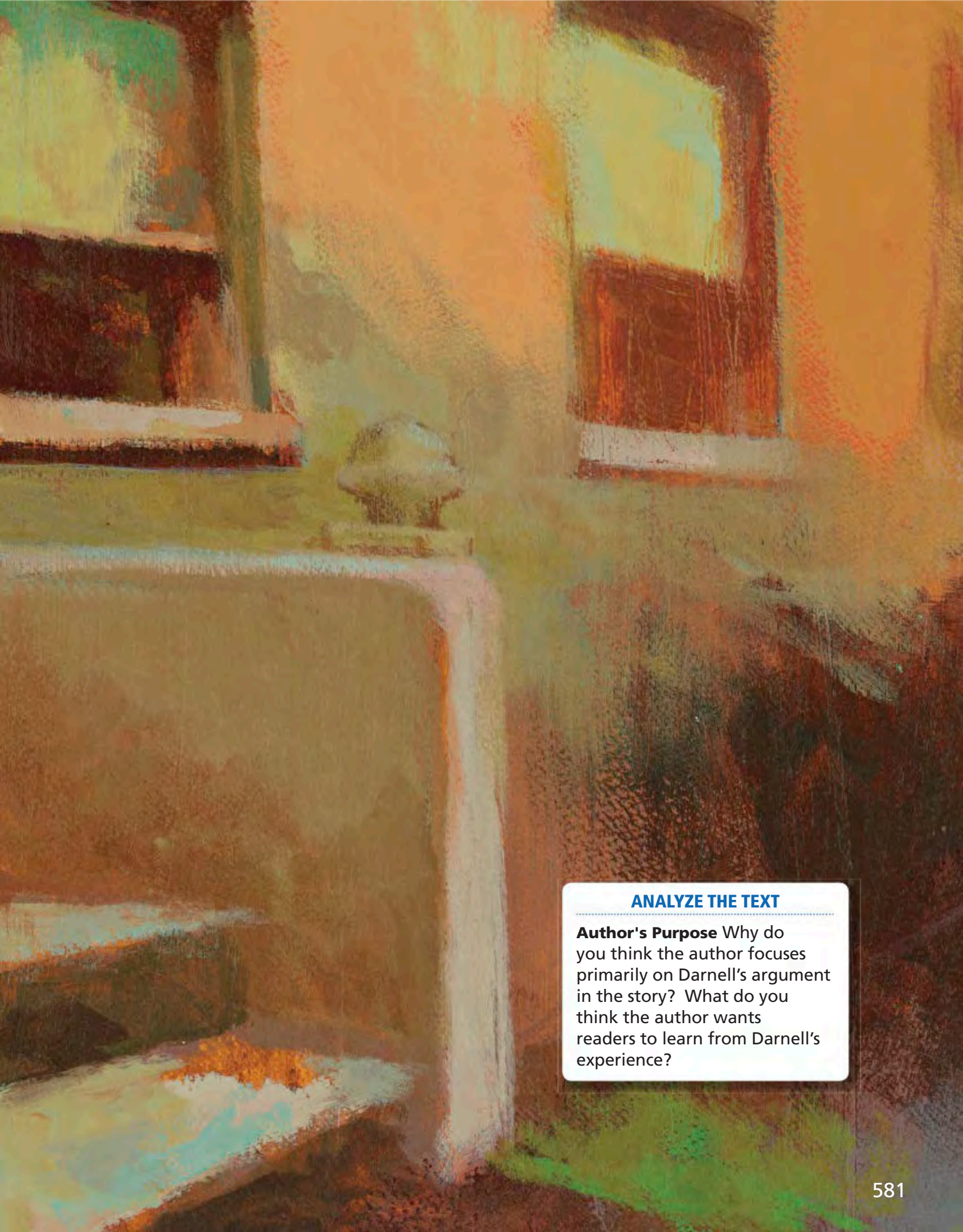
Larry's mother came over and asked his father for a lift home, and they were waiting for Larry when Peter Miller from the *Journal* came over.

"Hey, you want to write another article for the paper?" he said. "There's a guy who wants to donate a couple of lots for a garden in another location. My boss wants to run it as a human interest piece."

"Yeah, sure," Darnell said. "You want a long article or a short one?"

"I don't know. Call the paper tomorrow and ask for the city desk," the reporter said. "My editor will give you the word count."

"Okay!" Darnell said.



ANALYZE THE TEXT

Author's Purpose Why do you think the author focuses primarily on Darnell's argument in the story? What do you think the author wants readers to learn from Darnell's experience?



Dig Deeper

Use Clues to Analyze the Text

Use these pages to learn about Author’s Purpose, Dialogue, and Characterization. Then read “Darnell Rock Reporting” again to apply what you learned.

Author’s Purpose

The author of “Darnell Rock Reporting” has a **purpose**, or reason, for writing his story. He wants to convey to his readers a particular **theme**, or message about life. The author creates a contrast between two characters, Darnell and Linda, to reveal his message.

As you reread the story, note details about Darnell’s relationship with the homeless man, his article in the newspaper, his speech before the city council, and his feelings. Also look for text evidence related to Linda’s argument, her speech, and her character. Finally, note how the story ends. Why does the author focus more on Darnell’s argument than on Linda’s? How does this focus help you identify the theme and the author’s purpose for writing?



Dialogue

Dialogue adds realism to a story and reflects characters' purposes and feelings. For instance, Sweeby Jones says to the council, "I just wanted to ask you why you don't want to listen to this boy." The councilman responds angrily, "You have four minutes to speak. We don't have to answer your questions." Sweeby's tone is respectful. The councilman's is scornful. The dialogue shows the characters' differences.



Characterization

Characterization includes all the ways in which an author shows readers what a character is like. Authors might describe a character's words, actions, and feelings, and show how other characters respond to him or her. For example, Miss Seldes congratulates Darnell on his speech. Her admiration reinforces readers' impression that Darnell is a person worthy of respect. This kind of text evidence can help you get to know story characters. Details about characters can also help you compare and contrast them.



Your Turn

RETURN TO THE ESSENTIAL QUESTION

Turn and Talk

Review the selection to prepare to discuss this question: *Why is it important to be aware of your community's needs?* Use text evidence and your prior knowledge to support your answer.



Classroom Conversation

Continue your discussion of “Darnell Rock Reporting” by using text evidence to explain your answers to these questions:

- 1 What does Darnell think is needed for people to reach their potential and to succeed?
- 2 What do you think Darnell learns about himself from his experience at the city council meeting?
- 3 Is this story realistic? Explain.

POWERS OF PERSUASION

Partner Discussion Think about the speeches that Linda and Darnell give at the city council meeting. With a partner, discuss how the two students use persuasion to gain support for their arguments. Then evaluate which student is more convincing and why. Point out quotes from the text that support your position.



Performance Task

WRITE ABOUT READING



Response Do you agree with the city council’s vote against the garden proposal? Do you think they made their decision based on the facts that Linda and Darnell presented or on some other reason? Write a paragraph explaining your view on whether the council made the right decision in voting down the garden. Use quotes and details from the story as evidence to support your position.



Writing Tip

State your opinion at the beginning of your paragraph. Be sure to include strong reasons and text evidence to support it.