

Crazy Weekend: A Novel Study Guide

Crazy Weekend: A Novel by Gary Soto

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Plot Summary

Crazy Weekend by Gary Soto focuses on two seventh grade boys, Hector and Mando, from East Los Angeles. They travel to visit Hector's Uncle Julio in Fresno and become eyewitnesses to a robbery. When the robbers come after them, the boys must defend themselves.

Hector Beltran and Mando Tafolla are two best friends from East Los Angeles. They are in the seventh grade. They travel to Fresno, California to see Hector's Uncle Julio. They immediately go to work with Julio, who is a photographer. They go to a small airport. They fly in a small plane because Julio is hired by the Inouye farm to take photos of the farm. Hector and Mando are terrified of flying in the small plane. Up in the air, they spot a truck on fire and Julio takes photos of it because it may be news.

Back in Julio's car, they hear on the radio there has been an armed robbery around Central Avenue. The drivers have been bound and gagged. Fifty-thousand dollars has been stolen. The drivers cannot identify the robbers. Julio and Hector realize the truck on fire photos are of this robbery. They develop the photos at home and see the license plate of the robbers' car. Julio calls up The Fresno Bee, a local newspaper with which he has been trying to get a job. They go to the newspaper's headquarters and Julio gets \$300 for the photos. Vicky Moreno, a beautiful reporter, interviews Hector and Mando for the Today's Youth column. They tell her all about the robbers' car and license plate. Uncle Julio likes Vicky.

The next morning, the column comes out. Julio realizes the robbers will come after them. Meanwhile, Freddie Bork and Huey "Crybaby" Walker, the two robbers, plot their revenge against Julio and the boys. Freddie and Huey run Julio and the boys off the road, damaging Julio's car. That night, Julio, Hector and Mando go to dinner with Vicky, who feels terrible because the column had been scheduled to run after the robbers had been apprehended. Julio drops the boys off at his apartment while he goes to Vicky's house. Julio says not to open the door.

Freddie and Huey show up and try to get in Julio's apartment. Hector and Mando throw water, marbles and bowling balls at them. Finally, they barricade themselves in a dark room. When Freddie and Huey enter, Hector takes a photo and the flash blinds the robbers. Hector and Mando punch and kick Freddie and Huey and tie them up. Julio comes home and calls 911. The police come and take the robbers away. Vicky comes over. The four of them discuss where to go on vacation with the \$5000 reward. Julio and Vicky hold hands.



Chapter 1 and Chapter 2

Chapter 1 and Chapter 2 Summary

Crazy Weekend by Gary Soto centers on Hector and Mando, two seventh grade boys from East Los Angeles, who visit Hector's photographer Uncle Julio in Fresno for a weekend. They witness a robbery, and when chased by the robbers, Hector and Mando must defend themselves.

In Chapter 1, Hector Beltran and his blood brother (or best friend) Mando Tafolla are both seventh graders from East Los Angeles, California. It is February. They step off a train in Fresno, California. It is freezing and foggy. They look for Hector's uncle. Hector's mother has sent the boys to Fresno for a three-day weekend because they had been bored. She wants them to see another part of the world. Hector and Mando imagine going to Paris, Madrid or Acapulco. Instead they end up in Fresno.

Hector has not seen Uncle Julio in a couple of years. When Julio had visited Hector, they surfed, went to Disneyland and had a nice dinner. Uncle Julio comes through the fog. He walks with a cane; he had fallen out of an airplane that was parked on the ground. When Julio had been in the air force, he had taken photos of colonels, generals and jets that had gone down. He is still a photographer. Uncle Julio says he will take them to his work right now. He stops by an orange grove and snaps a bunch of photos of a tree that has been hit by a drunk driver. They go to Uncle Julio's apartment, which is above a garage. His furniture is all brown, inherited from his divorce. Hector gives Julio his old records from the 1960s and 1970s (sent by Hector's mother). Julio is excited and shows them a photo of himself as a radical in the 1960s.

In Chapter 2, Uncle Julio takes Hector and Mando on a photo shoot. They go to a little airport. Julio must take photos of a farm. Stewart, the pilot, will take them all up in his little Cessna plane. Hector and Mando get scared. Julio explains farmers take photos of their farms like families take family portraits. He and Stewart team up to do this sometimes and they have never crashed. Once in the air, Uncle Julio snaps photos. The farmer's family comes out and waves at the plane. They see a truck on fire and Julio says maybe it is news. So Stewart dips the plane low and Julio takes close-up photos of it. After they land, they must go to another photo shoot. They go to Mrs. Murguia's house to shoot photos of her cats in bow-ties.

Chapter 1 and Chapter 2 Analysis

The reader does not hear about Hector's father yet. Thus, Uncle Julio represents the father figure to both Hector and Mando. He is the Latin male who will take care of them. He teaches them what he knows about photography and takes them on the job with him. He shows them a photo of himself from the 1960s as a radical, thus he shows them his history. Julio also feeds them and provides them with a home for the weekend.



Thus, Julio does everything a normal father would do for his sons. Julio's motivations are to take care of his nephew and his nephew's friend while they are in his care. Julio embraces the father role so far.

Julio snaps photos of potential events such as the tree a drunk driver hits and a truck on fire. This foreshadows that one of these photos may lead to a bigger event. Usually, Julio takes photos of the mundane; for example, farms or Mrs. Murguia's cats. But something exciting is on the horizon with the other potential photos.

Hector and Mando are two boys on an adventure. Their motivation turns to helping Uncle Julio in his job and trying new things. Even though they are scared of the little plane, they still go up in it. Hector and Mando accept Julio's father figure role and help him in any way they can.



Chapter 3 and Chapter 4

Chapter 3 and Chapter 4 Summary

In Chapter 3, Uncle Julio, Hector and Mando drive back from Mrs. Murguia's house. On the radio, there is a news report about an armed robbery in the area of Central Avenue. The drivers have been bound and gagged. Fifty-thousand dollars is stolen and the drivers cannot describe the robbers. Julio and Hector realize the photo Julio has taken of the truck on fire is the robbed vehicle. Julio speeds up to go home to develop the film. They go into the makeshift darkroom, or Julio's bathroom. They develop the film. There is a photo with a license plate number of the car: XJIP30. They are excited. Julio says he will call the police later, but first he calls the newspaper The Fresno Bee, because he wants to get his foot in the door there. He calls and they tell him to come down with the negatives.

At The Fresno Bee, they meet a newspaper head who is impressed by the photos. Julio will receive \$300 for them. Hector and Mando will have an interview with Ms. Vicky Moreno, a newspaper reporter. Julio thinks she is beautiful and says to put in a good word for him. Julio goes off with the newspaper head. Vicky interviews Hector and Mando, who start to make up stories about their bravery. But then they tell the truth of how scared they had been to fly. Hector describes the robber's car and the robbers. Hector says Julio likes Vicky. Vicky smiles from embarrassment.

In Chapter 4, Freddie Bork and Huey "Crybaby" Walker are the robbers. They read the newspaper and realize Hector and Mando tell on them. They have Hector and Mando's names. Freddie and Huey are gross criminals. Freddie has been married five times and fathered five children, but he hates kids. Freddie is the brains of the operation and says they must get rid of the car. Huey does not want to do this; he likes the car. Freddie says they will go to prison. Huey starts to cry.

Chapter 3 and Chapter 4 Analysis

If Julio represents the father figure, then Freddie represents the anti-father figure. He irresponsibly has fathered five children and hates kids. He even says he does not count one of his children because the kid does not like him. Freddie is cold and has no heart. This is in contrast to Julio who has not irresponsibly fathered children and takes care of his nephew and his nephew's friend. Julio and Freddie represent the conflicting males of society and conflicting ideas of fatherhood.

Hector and Mando begin to lose their innocence as they tell Vicky everything. They are not just children anymore; they are witnesses to a crime. They act responsibly by telling Vicky everything about the photos of the robbers, but they do not think of the consequences. This naivety is due to their still being children. This foreshadows Hector

and Mando's full loss of innocence since they will become more entangled in the aftermath of the crime.



Chapter 5 and Chapter 6

Chapter 5 and Chapter 6 Summary

In Chapter 5, Hector and Mando read the morning edition of *The Fresno Bee*. They are the stars of the *Today's Youth* column. They think they look handsome. Vicky lies a bit and says they are A students, but they are mostly C students. They think they are lazy about school, but not dumb. Mando says he has too many brothers and sisters living at his house and that distracts him from his schoolwork. They have not told Uncle Julio any details about the column because they want to surprise him. Julio wakes up and reads the column. He starts to get upset because he realizes they are a target now because Hector, Mando and Julio are mentioned by first and last name in the column. Stewart is mentioned by first name only. Julio thinks the robbers will come after them. The phone rings and they get scared. It is an angry woman calling for Rick, Julio's old roommate. He hangs up.

Julio tries to pump them for information about Vicky. Hector and Mando walk around the block, but they must stay close to home to be safe. Hector asks Mando where he would like to live when he is older. Mando says Hawaii to be close to the water. Mando says he would live on the moon because it is safer there. They stop in front of a Denny's Restaurant where they see the newspaper headline of armed robbery and underneath, a smaller headline of eyewitness report. Hector says Uncle Julio is right. They are in big trouble. They get scared with honking horns and tire screeches.

In Chapter 6, Freddie and Huey leave their stolen car with the keys in the ignition for someone to steal it. Huey is sad to see the car go because it is his favorite stolen car. They go into Denny's and take a seat by the window to see the car get stolen. Freddie says things are getting worse and worse for them. For example, they had robbed a biker in a bar, but the biker would not go down even though they had punched him many times. The bikers' friends had come after them, but luckily their bikes had run out of gas and Freddie and Huey's car had kept going. If not, they would have been killed. Freddie says they should teach Julio, Hector and Mando a lesson by throwing them in a river and scaring them. Huey says he does not want to hurt kids. They see a man and woman argue about who should steal the car and finally they both steal the car.

Chapter 5 and Chapter 6 Analysis

The reader receives a glimpse into Hector and Mando's home life. Mando says he lives with a lot of people. He shares his bedroom with three others. This is direct social commentary on how Latinos live in lower income households in this society. The reader also sees Julio as low income, since he scrapes by with money, living check to check. He hardly has any food in the fridge. He feeds the boys what he can afford. The author gives a realistic view of the Latin household in America. Latinos struggle economically on a daily basis, but they produce honest, hard work, such as Julio as the hard-working

photographer. The low income Latino is a stereotype in society, but here, the author portrays reality, stereotype or not.

Hector and Mando continue their loss of innocence as they realize the trouble in which they find themselves. Coincidentally, they stop outside Denny's, the restaurant where Freddie and Huey are about to eat. This location represents how Hector and Mando step into the adult world and must leave their childhood behind in order to be safe from the robbers. Hector and Mando's motivations turn to figuring a way out of the situation, which is an adult problem to solve.



Chapter 7 and Chapter 8

Chapter 7 and Chapter 8 Summary

In Chapter 7, Hector and Mando return from their walk. Julio realizes he had been hard on them; he would have spilled the beans to Vicky too if he was a kid. He comforts them and tells them no one is coming after them. After going to The Fresno Bee, Julio had dropped the photos off at Paul Kanzaki's Photo Studio to touch up the farm photos by brightening the colors. The phone rings and they all jump. It is Vicky. She apologizes because the story had not been scheduled to run until a week later when the robbers would probably be behind bars, but Vicky's assistant had made a huge mistake. Uncle Julio says to feel better, she should go with them to dinner. Vicky says yes. So Julio has a dinner date with Vicky and also Hector and Mando.

They go to Paul Kanzaki's studio. Paul has done a good job of touching up the photos. They leave and drive to the Inouye farm. They pass by vineyards and orchards of various fruit. They pass acre after acre. They pull up to the driveway of the Inouye farm. Two German shepherds greet them. Mr. and Mrs. Inouye come out of the house and look at the photo. They love it. Uncle Julio gives them the uncolored photos too. Hector and Mando play with the dogs and get free oranges. As they get in Julio's car to leave the farm, they see a dark and spooky car.

In Chapter 8, Freddie and Huey leave Denny's and go to a used car lot and steal a Buick. They decide to find Stewart, the pilot. They go to his airport hangar. They pretend to want to hire Julio. Stewart tells them everything they want to know including Uncle Julio's phone number and address. He tells them Julio is at the Inouye farm and tells them how to get there. They drive to the Inouye farm and wait. They see Julio, Hector and Mando drive into the farm. Freddie and Huey wait in the car, steal oranges and eat them.

As Julio and the kids leave, Freddie rolls down the window and glares at Julio. Freddie and Huey slam their car into Julio's car. They do this three times, which damages Julio's car. Freddie reaches out to grab Julio's hair, but Julio slams his face and hurts Freddie's nose. Freddie is really angry. Freddie and Huey hit Julio's car so hard that the left front tire explodes and they slam into an orange tree. Freddie and Huey drive away.

Chapter 7 and Chapter 8 Analysis

Paul Kanzaki and the Inouye farmers are Japanese-Americans. The reader receives a glimpse into the Japanese-American lifestyle here. Usually, the focus of the story is on Latinos, but the author gives another perspective of Fresno as well. Uncle Julio's good relationships with the Japanese represent how different cultures can get along with one another. It also represents how, from a business standpoint, the Japanese and Latino

communities have the ability to get along well. Despite the two cultures being drastically different, peace and harmony is possible.

The Inouye farm represents prosperity. In Julio's house, there is hardly anything to eat. He does not have much money for food. In contrast, the Inouye farm is filled with delicious oranges. Driving up to the farm, they pass acres upon acres of fruits and vegetables and even vineyards. Fresno represents a land of prosperity for the farming individual, but for the Latino, that prosperity is an arm's length away. The Latino can only enjoy the prosperity if s/he works for the farm system, like the way Julio takes photographs of the farmers' farms.



Chapter 9 and Chapter 10

Chapter 9 and Chapter 10 Summary

In Chapter 9, Uncle Julio, Hector and Mando all climb out of the car in a daze because they are in shock. They are not hurt. The radiator hose is split and the tire is busted. The car that hit them has driven off. The driver's side is crushed, streaks of paint smear Julio's car and window glass is cracked. Hector had snapped photos from Julio's camera of Freddie and Huey. He believes he has close-up photos of them. Mr. Inouye steps out of the fog and asks if they are okay. Mr. Inouye assumes the car accident is because of the fog, but Hector and Mando say some guys had tried to run them off the road. Mr. Inouye helps Uncle Julio replace the radiator hose and change the tire as the boys wait inside the house. They talk to Mrs. Inouye, who gives them Oreos. They are impressed with the farm house and how much space it has. Their neighborhood in East Los Angeles is cramped, has lots of graffiti and litter and cars are parked on the sidewalk. It is not a nice place to live. Uncle Julio, Hector and Mando leave and drive to the convenience store and ask the cashier to describe the men. She does. They go to Paul's studio and asks to use the darkroom to see what the robbers look like. Julio also does not want to go home yet. They develop the photos and Julio comments on how ugly Freddie is.

In Chapter 10, Freddie and Huey think Julio, Hector and Mando are hurt. Freddie is happy about this, but Huey feels badly. They have been in prison before, but that has not changed them, even though they are afraid to go to prison again. They go to a diner, sit in the window and watch someone steal the Buick. They eat. Freddie says they have to break into Julio's apartment to get the photos. Huey does not want to do this; he is scared. Freddie says not to worry because after stealing the photos, they will leave town tomorrow. Huey says he wants to steal another American car and Freddie agrees, saying American car companies are catching up with the Japanese. Freddie pays for the meal with counterfeit bills.

Chapter 9 and Chapter 10 Analysis

The idea of prosperity now arises within the farm house. Mrs. Inouye has plenty of food for the boys to eat, including the extravagance of Oreos. The farm house is huge, clean and beautiful. The boys have never seen or experienced this before. Compared to their East Los Angeles neighborhood, this is paradise. They are impressed by the space and the beauty of the Inouye farm. Thus, the Japanese represent the prosperity of the region. Even Freddie comments that the Japanese make the best cars. The Japanese are hierarchical figures in this story. They are on top economically and prosper from the land's riches including the fruit and vegetables. Thus, they exploit the land in a good way and employ Latinos to help them. It is a win-win situation with the Japanese in the role of the boss.



Meanwhile, East Los Angeles represents the low income world of Latinos. Both Hector and Mando realize how poor their world is, especially since visiting Fresno. They view their world in a different light now. They see the reality of the graffiti, the litter, and the wine bottles on the sidewalk. Beauty is not a part of this world. It is just about living and surviving in the city. Their loss of innocence continues as Hector and Mando realize East Los Angeles for what it really is: a ghetto for Latinos.



Chapter 11 and Chapter 12

Chapter 11 and Chapter 12 Summary

In Chapter 11, Julio, Hector and Mando leave Paul Kanzaki's studio. They go home. Dr. Femur, the chiropractor who lives in the main house and is Julio's landlord, rakes leaves in the front yard. Dr. Femur asks what has happened to the car and Julio says there has been a little accident and no one is hurt. Julio introduces Dr. Femur to the boys and the doctor says he has seen them before. Hector and Mando say they are featured in Today's Youth column. He says yes and tells the boys to stay out of trouble. Hector remembers the last time he had been in this much trouble; he had started his mother's car and locked himself out. The mother had come home, discovered the car idling and cried because she thought Hector was turning into a bad kid.

Uncle Julio, Hector and Mando go into the apartment. There are two answering machine messages. One is from Rick's crazy ex-girlfriend and one is from Freddie who says they will break Julio's face and camera. Julio is terrified because he has dealt with crazies before. There is a tapping on the door. It is Dr. Femur. He wants Hector and Mando to autograph their column. He will send it to his nephew who is in a correctional facility for stealing a car. Maybe they will inspire the nephew because they are so good. Dr. Femur says Hector and Mando can come get their bones realigned whenever they want. The phone rings again and it is Vicky. They will have dinner at seven. They look at the negatives again and look at Freddie and Huey's faces. Hector and Mando will ask Dr. Femur to realign their bones in a bit.

In Chapter 12, Freddie and Huey drive a stolen Oldsmobile to Julio's apartment. They see Julio's name on the mailbox and know they are in the right place. Freddie tells Huey to hobble so they can see the chiropractor. Dr. Femur lets them in. They pretend to be other people and nice guys. The doctor cracks Huey's bones. He asks Dr. Femur about Julio's photography and the doctor says Julio is a good photographer. Freddie says they will drop in on Julio because they want photos taken. Dr. Femur realigns Freddie too. Freddie pays with counterfeit money. Hector and Mando walk in. They recognize the robbers' faces, but cannot place them. Freddie wants to hurt them, but not there. Freddie says it is their turn to have their necks broken and leaves.

Chapter 11 and Chapter 12 Analysis

Dr. Femur represents a person of healing. He tries to heal Freddie and Huey by realigning their bones. The robbers do feel better, but they cannot truly be healed because they pretend to be other people. From the inside, they are rotten people and no matter how good a chiropractor Dr. Femur is, he cannot heal them from the inside out. Symbolically, Hector and Mando only step in the office to get realigned, but they do not need any part of Dr. Femur's healing. They are purely good, as Dr. Femur sees with



the column, and they may benefit from having their bones realigned, but they do not need any internal healing. They are good kids.

A crazy woman keeps leaving messages for Rick on the machine. Rick is Julio's ex-roommate who has gotten away from this crazy girlfriend. The messages may seem insignificant, but they foreshadow that worse things are to come. Even crazier people are about to come after them. The messages may be funny, but they have a foreboding tone and foreshadowing message of doom.



Chapter 13 and Chapter 14

Chapter 13 and Chapter 14 Summary

In Chapter 13, Hector recognizes Freddie as soon as the robbers leave Dr. Femur's office. Hector and Mando leave. Mando asks if Hector is sure. He is because he remembers how ugly Freddie is. Hector gets chills when he remembers how Freddie says it is his turn to get his neck broken. They go back to the apartment and tell Julio. Julio freaks out and asks how the robbers found them. The phone rings; they all jump. It is Stewart, who has given their information to the robbers. It is not Stewart's fault though because Freddie and Huey had pretended to be farmers looking for a photographer. Hector says they should call the police, but Julio says they will do it later. He does not want to wreck his evening with Vicky. It may be his last evening to have a nice date with a woman. He may be dead soon.

Uncle Julio tries to mend the car. He tells Hector and Mando not to order a lot, since he only has \$60. They go to Vicky's house and it is very nice. She looks beautiful. Julio already hits on her and tells her how beautiful she looks in cheesy ways. Her house is pretty, tidy and clean. Julio tells Hector and Mando, in private, that reporters do not make a lot of money, so she must have family money. She asks what happened to the car. They get in the car and Hector and Mando make conversation, but Uncle Julio tells them to shut up. The back window falls out as they round the corner. Uncle Julio says the car is falling apart.

In Chapter 14, Freddie and Huey are in the hotel. They are sick from their meal. Freddie says they will go back to Julio's house, get the negatives, push Hector and Mando around, tie Uncle Julio up and get out of town with the stolen money.

Chapter 13 and Chapter 14 Analysis

The back window breaking apart symbolizes Julio's life. Even he says that the car is falling apart. His life falls apart before his eyes. He treats this dinner as a last supper because he may not be alive for very long. Julio's life is barely together before he gets involved with the robbery. He lives on a low income budget and lives paycheck to paycheck. He is a divorced bachelor. Thus, the robbery pushes his life into overdrive and it literally and figuratively begins to fall apart at the seams.

Vicky Moreno represents a successful Latina woman. So far, the reader sees poor Latinos in this novel, but Vicky is a Latina with excellent writing skills and with a successful job. She has a nice house and she lives in a nice area. She represents a Latina who has educated herself and now lives an upscale lifestyle. She is the hope for Hector and Mando to break the cycle of poverty. Hector and Mando now have a Latino role model for success.



Chapter 15 and Chapter 16

Chapter 15 and Chapter 16 Summary

In Chapter 15, Julio, Hector, Mando and Vicky are on Julio's date. Hector starts to order dessert, but then remembers Julio does not have a lot of money. They are at a super fancy French restaurant that Vicky has chosen. He decides not to order dessert. Julio spends the whole evening complimenting Vicky in cheesy ways. Julio tells the boys to go walk around the mall. Hector slips Julio \$20 discreetly. Uncle Julio says Hector is a great nephew and they will meet the boys in 10 minutes. Hector and Mando walk around the mall. Hector says Julio is embarrassing when he says all these ridiculous things to Vicky, but Mando says he is in love. They go to Footlocker. Hector tries on shoes, but he has no money. Hector and Mando see two cute girls sharing cotton candy. They wonder why the robbers did not hurt them in the doctor's house. They are about to get in Uncle Julio's car, and Julio says he will drop them off at his apartment. He will go to Vicky's house for a glass of wine. He will not be long. Hector and Mando agree. On the way home, they listen to a country song about a dog who jumps out of a car window and walks from Sacramento back to his home in Merced. Vicky says it is a true story. Uncle Julio drops the boys off and tells them not to answer the door for anyone. Hector and Mando go inside and listen to the machine. It is Rick's girlfriend again, Hector's mother and a warning with eerie laughter from Freddie. Hector punches the machine and tells Freddie to come and get them.

In Chapter 16, Freddie and Huey listen to the same country song about the dog who walks from Sacramento to Merced. They have been parked in front of Julio's apartment for 40 minutes. Freddie says they will hurt the boys and make it quick and painless. Huey says he cannot do that. Julio drops off Hector and Mando. Freddie says it is best the kids are alone. Freddie and Huey enter the yard laughing.

Chapter 15 and Chapter 16 Analysis

The story of the dog represents how Hector and Mando will find their own way back home. Even though they are in an unsafe situation right now, they are resourceful, just like the dog. They know how to fend for themselves, since they are growing up in a tough neighborhood. Like the dog, they will fight and be resourceful whenever they have to do so in order to get back home. This foreshadows that Hector and Mando may have to use their street skills to fend off their attackers, in order to return home safely to their families.

Julio's motivations are strange in this chapter. Though he knows his nephew and his nephew's friend are in grave danger, he is motivated by the allure of Vicky. He is enticed by a woman and her sexual appeal is more important to him than Hector and Mando's safety. Thus, Julio makes an irresponsible decision by leaving the boys at home so he can woo Vicky. Here, Julio turns into the stereotypical, Latino male, not caring about the

children. He represents the Latin lover, yet the kids need him most here. Julio's sexual needs come before his family's safety and this decision may be a dangerous one.



Chapter 17

Chapter 17 Summary

In Chapter 17, Hector breaks the answering machine and the phone. If the robbers come after them, they are in big trouble because they cannot call the police. They look over to Dr. Femur's house. He plays loud opera music. Hector wishes he had never told his mother he was bored because they would not have been sent here and be in danger. Hector sees the negatives of the robbers and he says they will not come to get them; there are laws against hurting minors. Mando says robbers do not care about laws. They have to have an escape plan. Out the window, they see Freddie and Huey waving and laughing at them. There is a huge shoulder pounding against the front door. Hector puts salad dressing through the peep hole into Freddie's eyeball, but the vinegar does not do anything. Hector spots an aquarium full of marbles and water. They bring it to the stairwell. They get Julio's bowling balls.

Freddie climbs across the telephone wire and gets to the apartment ledge. Hector pokes Julio's cane at him and Freddie almost falls, but he does not. Hector and Mando throw the answering machine at Huey's foot and injure him. Freddie and Huey bang at the front door again. Hector and Mando stand at the top of the stairs and release the water, marbles and bowling balls. Freddie and Huey fall down and cannot get up.

Hector and Mando bolt themselves in a room with a dresser and mattress blocking the door. Hector has the idea to make the room dark and blind them with the camera flash. Hector records everything with a tape recorder. He puts a Mexican flag on the floor. Once Freddie and Huey barge in the room, they pull the Mexican flag from under them. They fall down and Hector shoots the camera at them. Freddie and Huey are blinded by the flash. Hector and Mando hit and punch them. Freddie goes unconscious. They tie up Freddie and Huey. A third person comes in. Hector snaps a shot and punches the guy, but it is Uncle Julio.

Chapter 17 Analysis

Hector and Mando use their street smarts in order to save themselves. They call on their resourcefulness to hurt the robbers and ensure their safety. Without this resourcefulness, they would be hurt or dead. They receive their street smarts from the East Los Angeles streets. Though they are not safe or clean, the streets teach Hector and Mando how to fight and not to give up when faced with an insurmountable challenge. Hector and Mando could have given in easily, but they fight instead. The author makes social commentary that those born into low income circumstances are often the best survivors and can overcome any challenge.

Hector emerges as the leader in this situation. He has the ideas and leads Mando to execute them. His motivations are to survive and to not give up. Hector is a survivor. His future looks bright since he will be able to overcome life's challenges.



Chapter 18

Chapter 18 Summary

In Chapter 18, Uncle Julio finds an old phone in his closet and calls 911. He explains what has happened to the 911 operator. He apologizes to Hector and Mando for leaving them alone. Freddie and Huey are bound and tied. Freddie tells Huey it is all his fault. Julio says it is the other way around. Freddie says he had the right to rob the truck because he is broke. Julio and Mando say they are broke too. The phone rings and it is Rick's crazy ex. They get the room back into shape so the policemen can enter. It is 11:47 at night. The officers get excited when they see Freddie and Huey tied up. They handcuff them. Julio, Hector and Mando explain the events to the police officers, who take Julio's film and the answering machine for evidence.

They call Vicky. She comes over. She says she feels terrible for putting them in danger with the story. They tell her everything that has happened. She says they are brave boys. All four of them stay up all night cleaning the house and patching two broken windows. They listen to music and dance. They remember there is a \$5000 reward. They plan a vacation. They decide to go to Hawaii, Mexico or Acapulco. Vicky asks if they mean her too. They say of course. Vicky and Uncle Julio hold hands. The four of them dream of the beach and the waves breaking at their feet.

Chapter 18 Analysis

The author makes social commentary that no one should steal. Freddie says he has the right to steal, since he is broke. Uncle Julio and Mando say they are also broke, but they do not resort to stealing. The author makes a point to children that stealing is never acceptable, even if someone is poor and in dire circumstances. Children end the book understanding that stealing is wrong no matter what.

The relationship of Uncle Julio and Vicky represents the blending of the Latino spectrum. On one side of the spectrum, Julio is not educated and is poor. On the other side, Vicky is educated and successful and she has money. These two Latinos together represent a fusion of rich and poor, saying that all types of Latinos can get along. There can be peace within the race.



Characters

Hector Beltran

Hector Beltran is a seventh grader from East Los Angeles, California. He is from a rough neighborhood that is dirty and has low income inhabitants. He is bored with living there, since it is the same day in and day out. Therefore, he travels to Fresno to see Uncle Julio, his mother's brother. Hector is a cheeky boy who likes to talk about himself and his experiences. He often tries to command the conversation when he, Julio and Mando are around. But he is also scared when they go flying in a small plane. Hector feels scared when he realizes the robbers are probably after them. He tries to console Mando, but he knows they are in trouble. Hector has never been in trouble like this. He had caused mischief as a young boy, but nothing this extreme.

When the robbers come to Julio's apartment, Hector shows his leadership skills. All of the ideas to defend themselves against the robbers are Hector's ideas. It is Hector's idea to throw water, marbles and bowling balls at the robbers. It is also his idea to blind them with a camera flash. Thus, Hector shows creativity and ingenuity. He can rise to a challenge when necessary, which is a product of his tough upbringing in East Los Angeles. Hector is also very in tune to money and class, especially when he observes people who have more than he does. He is sensitive to financial trouble as he slips his uncle \$20 to help pay for an expensive meal. Hector is a caring and talkative Latino boy, but when it comes to a challenge, he is tough and does not give up.

Uncle Julio

Uncle Julio is Hector's uncle who lives in Fresno, California. He is a photographer, a career he learned in the air force. He does not have much money; he is lower middle class. He rents a small apartment above a garage. He lives paycheck to paycheck as a freelance photographer. Julio is a caring uncle. He takes care of the boys when they visit. He feeds them and provides shelter to the best of his ability. He cares very much about his job as well. He takes his photography very seriously and has ambitions to work for The Fresno Bee newspaper. Julio is clever enough to call the newspaper first (before the police) to make sure they pay for his photos of the robbery. He is also clever enough to take photos of anything that looks suspicious, just in case he can get money for them.

Julio had been a radical in the 1960s. He had been a Mexican version of a hippie, but now he lives a quiet life in Fresno. Julio is also a man motivated by his sexual attraction to Vicky. He gives her cheesy compliments and does not hide his attraction to her. He is the Latin lover who wants to catch Vicky, a beautiful woman. Julio's sexual desires overcome his protective side because he leaves Hector and Mando unsupervised at his apartment, even though the robbers are after them, to go to Vicky's apartment. This is Julio's biggest flaw: his motivation to follow his sexual attraction.



Mando Tafolla

Mando Tafolla is Hector's best friend. He is a seventh grader from East Los Angeles. Mando is Hector's sidekick and is quieter than Hector. Mando says he is poor and lives in a house with tons of relatives. Mando follows Hector's lead when necessary such as when they must defend themselves against the robbers.

Stewart

Stewart is the pilot who takes them up in the small plane for Julio to take photos of the farm.

Mrs. Murguia

Mrs. Murguia is Julio's best photography customer. She is a little old lady who pays in cash for Julio to take photos of her cats in bow-ties.

Clarence T. Wearwell

Clarence T. Wearwell is the head of The Fresno Bee newspaper. He pays \$300 to Julio for photos of the robbery.

Vicky Moreno

Ms. Vicky Moreno is the reporter at The Fresno Bee who interviews Hector and Mando for the Today's Youth column. She is beautiful. She agrees to go on a date with Julio and Hector and Mando. She lives in a nice house in a nice part of town.

Freddie Bork

Freddie Bork is a robber who is the brains of the operation. He hates kids, even though he has five of his own. He plots his revenge against Hector, Mando and Julio. He wants to physically harm them. He is low class, ugly and disgusting.

Huey Crybaby Walker

Huey "Crybaby" Walker is a robber who is dumb. Freddie bosses him around. Huey acts like a child and cries when he is upset or scared. He does not want to hurt anyone.



Paul Kanzaki

Paul Kanzaki owns a photo studio. Julio goes there to touch up his photos.

Mr. Inouye

Mr. Inouye hires Julio to take photos of his farm. He is happy with the photos.

Dr. Femur

Dr. Femur is Julio's landlord. He is a chiropractor who realigns bones. He asks Hector and Mando to autograph their column to send to his delinquent nephew.



Objects/Places

Fresno

Fresno is a cold and foggy city in central California. Uncle Julio lives there. Hector and Mando spend a three-day weekend in Fresno.

East Los

East Los is East Los Angeles, California. It is a rough neighborhood full of litter, broken wine bottles, graffiti and cars parked on the sidewalk. It is a low income, Latino neighborhood where Hector and Mando grow up.

Crank call

A crank call is when a caller hangs up immediately or plays a joke on the person s/he calls.

Super Bowl Salad

Super Bowl Salad is Uncle Julio's salad creation. He makes the salad in a large bowl with peas as spectators, cottage cheese as the football field, toothpicks for goals, olives for teams, cherries for cheerleaders, peppercorns for referees and an olive pit for a football.

Nikon

Nikon is Uncle Julio's preferred brand of camera.

Cessna 143

Cessna 143 is a small plane.

The Fresno Bee

The Fresno Bee is the local newspaper where Uncle Julio sells the photos of the robbery and Hector and Mando are featured for the Today's Youth column. Vicky is a reporter for The Fresno Bee.



Inouye Farm

Inouye Farm is a farm that grows oranges. It is owned by the Japanese-American Inouye family.

Paul Kanzaki's Photo Studio

Paul Kanzaki's Photo Studio is where Uncle Julio goes to get his photos touched up.

Uncle Julio's apartment

Uncle Julio's apartment is small and above a garage. There is only brown furniture, which is left over from his divorce. There is hardly any food in the refrigerator.



Themes

Loss of Innocence

One major theme of *Crazy Weekend* is loss of innocence. As the book progresses, Hector and Mando continue to lose their innocence. They start out as seventh graders from East Los Angeles, a rough, Latino neighborhood. Though they are not sheltered due to growing up in East Los, they are a bit naïve and still children. When they visit Uncle Julio, they are fresh-faced and excited. They are scared to ride in a small plane. They are naïve enough to tell the reporter all about the robbers' car and license plate, thus marking themselves as targets. Hector even tries to convince himself and Mando that the robbers will not come after them.

Slowly, Hector and Mando realize the severity of the situation. This is when they start to lose their innocence. When the robbers run Julio and the boys off the road, Hector snaps photos of them. He starts to think like a clever adult, making sure they have evidence. When Julio leaves them in the apartment alone, they start to put together an escape plan. When the robbers try to break in, Hector and Mando spring into action. They think like adults about how to defend themselves. Hector comes up with creative ways for defense as Mando follows. They are no longer children at this point; they are the men of the house who defend it. When the robbers are arrested, Hector and Mando fully see what a life of crime leads to. They lose their wide-eyed innocence of the world after they rise to challenges and protect themselves and Julio's apartment.

Class Division

One major theme of *Crazy Weekend* is class division. There is a class divide in Uncle Julio's city of Fresno. The Latinos seem to be the workers who comprise the lower to lower middle socio-economic class. This is also true of Hector and Mando's East Los Angeles neighborhood. The Latinos do not have much. Mando must live with a ton of relatives. Uncle Julio lives paycheck to paycheck. He is broke most of the time. In this world, the Latino race seems to struggle. However, there is Vicky Moreno, who is an educated Latina with a reporting job and a nice house. Julio comments that her family must have money because reporting does not pay much. There seems to be no way out of the lower income class for Latinos unless they are lucky, like Vicky.

The Japanese-Americans are of the upper middle class in Fresno. When Julio, Hector and Mando drive past the farms, they are beautiful and have delicious fruit. These farm owners seem prosperous, something to which Hector, Mando and Julio are not accustomed. Mr. and Mrs. Inouye have a large farm of oranges. They have a beautiful farm house that is spacious and clean. They have luxuries such as dogs and Oreos. Paul Kanzaki, another Japanese-American, owns his own photo studio. He seems to be prosperous because he has a constant flow of customers. It seems the Japanese-



Americans own businesses and employ the Latinos. There is an obvious class division between the two groups, but they do seem to coexist happily and peacefully.

Father Figure

One major theme in *Crazy Weekend* is the father figure. Hector and Mando do not have fathers about whom the reader knows. They do not mention having fathers throughout the entire book. Instead, they travel to Fresno to visit Uncle Julio. He fills the role of the father figure. He feeds them to the best of his ability. He gives them a sofa bed on which to sleep, even though it is uncomfortable. He spends his paychecks to provide food and activities for them. He is their substitute father. He also brings them to work with him, like a real father would do. Hector and Mando help Uncle Julio and learn about his job. They go on adventures with Uncle Julio in the airplane and in the whole robbery situation. Hector even slips Julio \$20 to help pay for a fancy dinner. It is a moment much like between father and son.

The absentee father figure is apparent with Freddie, the robber. He has five kids by five different women. He hates them all. One of his kids hates him so he does not count that child. Thus, Freddie represents the ultimate absentee father figure. He is too selfish and uncaring to provide for them, so he just provides for himself. Freddie is the opposite of Uncle Julio, a caring father figure. Freddie also represents many fathers out there who should not be fathers. Even though Hector and Mando do not seem to have fathers, it is better than having a father like Freddie. Uncle Julio is a good father figure whom the boys love and admire.



Style

Point of View

Crazy Weekend is told from a third person point of view. This perspective allows the reader to see a wide scope of each situation and all the characters. For example, the reader is introduced to Hector and Mando, two boys from East Los Angeles. The reader receives an outside perspective of these boys including what they look like and how they act. However, when Hector and Mando feel fear or uncertainty, the perspective is close up so the reader can feel they are scared. There are a lot of characters in the book, thus the third person point of view stays omniscient so the reader can gain a wide perspective of each character. This works because it is a book for children in which the characters need a bit of explanation and each situation needs explanation as well.

The story is told through exposition and dialogue. The reader focuses on the narration of the overall story and how the story plays out over three days visiting Uncle Julio. Each voice of each character, especially the voices of Hector, Uncle Julio and Mando, are heard, but through dialogue. The author uses dialogue for the characters to express their concerns or their happiness. The book moves through a three day time span and throughout these three days, the characters express their feelings in the form of dialogue. The third person omniscient narrator allows the reader to see the events unfold, especially the exciting events of the robbers breaking in, through a distant perspective, so the reader can move along with the events easily.

Setting

Crazy Weekend is set in Fresno, California. It is a foggy and cold city in central California. Uncle Julio lives here. Fresno is covered with fog, but it is also very beautiful with acres and acres of farms of delicious fruit. In contrast, Uncle Julio's apartment is small and above a garage. It only has brown furniture, left from his divorce. He hardly has any food in the fridge. His apartment reflects his monetary difficulties. Fresno is filled with excitement. Julio and the boys go to a small airport and fly in a small plane for Julio to take photos. They visit Mr. Inouye's beautiful farm and farm house to deliver photos. They even get run off the road by the robbers. Meanwhile, robbers Freddie and Huey go from Denny's Restaurant to a greasy diner to have food. The settings are fairly generic and could be in any American town.

The author describes the setting of Hector and Mando's East Los Angeles neighborhood as rough with low income Latinos. The neighborhood is filled with litter, wine bottles on the street, graffiti and cars parked on the sidewalk. It is not a nice place to live. The author describes East Los as a virtual ghetto. This compares to the quiet and pretty setting of Fresno. The book ends in Uncle Julio's apartment, trashed by the robbers, as they talk about their dream settings of vacations in Hawaii, Mexico and Acapulco.



Language and Meaning

The language of *Crazy Weekend* is very informal. There are a lot of Spanish words interspersed throughout the book. The words originate from Mexican Spanish. The author provides a glossary at the back of the book to translate these words into English. Many of the Spanish words are Mexican slang. The language of *Crazy Weekend* is not without rules as the author writes in a grammatically perfect way. The sentences follow grammar rules and complex rules of literature. On occasion, the author stays true to reality when Julio speaks in a lower form of English. For example, Julio will use a wrong noun-verb agreement such as, "He don't know," instead of the correct form of, "He doesn't know."

The language holds steady throughout the novel. The language overall is tight and well-constructed. Descriptions are generic; for example, the farms are beautiful and have delicious fruit, but that could be anywhere in the US. Only when the author describes Hector and Mando's East Los Angeles neighborhood are the descriptions detailed. The overall effect of the language is to bring the reader into Hector, Mando and Julio's Latino world. Through the language, the reader can see the economic struggle of being Latino. The language shows the reader that Latinos are intelligent and achievers, but they hold their Latino identity and culture in strong regard.

Structure

Crazy Weekend is comprised of 18 chapters. The chapters are unnamed; they only have numbers. Chapter length varies from three pages to approximately 14 pages long. The chapters have short paragraphs with generic descriptions of the places the characters visit. The exact time span of the book is three days. The book goes event by event and the reader can easily follow along with the time line. The book is a children's thriller, so the events lead up to one big event, a thrilling ending for the characters.

The plot of the novel is simple and without subplots. The novel is about Hector and Mando, two boys from East Los Angeles, who visit Hector's Uncle Julio in Fresno. As eyewitnesses to a robbery, the robbers come after them and force Hector and Mando to defend themselves.

The novel's pace is normal and moves moderately. It is neither fast-paced nor slow. It is the right speed for a young, modern day reader. It is an easy read with some age-appropriate, difficult vocabulary interspersed throughout the story. The plot engrosses the reader with the world of a young adult crime thriller and the Latino race. The story moves in linear fashion with Hector having a couple memories of the mischief in his younger days. Back story is virtually nonexistent except for a few passages. The novel is a relatively easy read and entertains as a whole.



Quotes

"You and Mando should travel." Chapter 1, p. 2

"All four of them climbed into the little airplane." Chapter 2, p. 16

"We're in trouble. These guys are probably gonna come after us." Chapter 5, p. 43

"Mi darkroom es tu darkroom." Chapter 9, p. 76

"That kid had a camera. I think maybe he took a picture." Chapter 10, p. 78

"Stay out of trouble, boys. It's a terrible world." Chapter 11, p. 84

"It's your turn to have your neck broken." Chapter 12, p. 95

"A bass-thumping country song called 'Robbers in the Night' blared in the speakers."
Chapter 13, p. 100

"Okay, clown face. Come and get us." Chapter 15, p. 115

"Once the car was out of sight, Freddie and Huey entered the yard, chuckling." Chapter
16, p. 118

"You've got no right to rob an armored car." Chapter 18, p. 134

"Time flies when you're throwing pleitos." Chapter 18, p. 135



Topics for Discussion

How do Hector and Mando overcome the obstacles of their East Los Angeles neighborhood? What neighborhood traits do they use to defend themselves against the robbers? What traits do Hector and Mando have that are not representative of the tough neighborhood in which they grow up?

How has Hector changed by the end of the book? Has he grown in any ways? If so, what are they? How can Hector continue to grow and better himself despite his neighborhood?

How is class discussed in this book? What economic and social class are each of the characters? What racial group ranks in a higher class? What do you think the author tries to say about class issues?

What does the author say about race in this book? How are Latinos portrayed? How are Japanese-Americans portrayed? How is Julio different than Vicky, even though they are both of the same race?

What do you think about Julio's decision to leave Hector and Mando alone? What does this say about Julio as a father figure? Why is Julio so motivated by his attraction to Vicky?

Do you think of Julio as the typical "Latin lover" character? What traits make Julio inherently Latin? How is he also an American character? Can Julio be a father figure and a Latin lover at the same time?

Why do you think the author kept including the answering machine messages for Rick? It seems out of place, but what is the literal message of these messages? What does Rick represent? What does his crazy girlfriend represent?