

Amigo Brothers

Short Story by Piri Thomas

What happens when friends COMPETE?

We face competition all the time, whether we are competing for the best grade or for someone’s attention. Some competitions can be friendly and fun; other can be brutal. In “Amigo Brothers,” best friends Antonio and Felix find out if their deep friendship can withstand an explosive competition.

QUICKWRITE Jot down a list of times when you competed with one or more friends. Then review your list and decide which of those experiences helped or hurt your friendship. Write briefly about that experience.

Times I’ve Competed Against Friends

1. a trivia contest

2. Accept all reasonable responses.

3. _____

My Experience

Accept all reasonable responses.

Text Analysis: Theme and Setting

A story’s **theme** is the message about life or human nature that the writer wants you to understand. A story has at least one theme, and it usually takes at least one complete sentence to express a theme—for example, “Life’s biggest rewards come from taking risks.”

Sometimes the theme of a story is stated directly by the narrator or a character. Most often, you must infer the theme by looking for clues in the text. You may find clues to a theme by noticing how the conflict is resolved or by observing the lesson a main character learns. The **setting**, or time and place of the action, is often a key element of the theme. Use the questions shown to help you identify the theme of “Amigo Brothers.”

Clues to Theme

Setting



A setting (place and time) can suggest theme through its effects on the characters and on the events of the story. Ask

- How does the setting influence the characters?
- How does the setting affect the conflicts?
- What might the setting represent? (For example, a historical setting, such as London in the mid-1800s when many people lived in poverty, may suggest a theme of generosity or greed.)

Reading Skill: Compare and Contrast

Comparing and contrasting characters can help you better understand a story. When you **compare** two or more people or things, you look for ways they are similar. When you **contrast** two things, you look for ways they are different. As you read, notes in the side column will ask you to compare and contrast Felix and Antonio, the two main characters in “Amigo Brothers.”

Vocabulary in Context

Note: Words are listed in the order in which they appear in the story.

barrage (bə-rāzh') *n.* a rapid, heavy attack

*The **barrage** of punches stunned his opponent.*

devastating (dēv'ə-stā'tīng) *adj.* very effective in causing pain or destruction **devastate** *v.*

*He recovered slowly from a shower of **devastating** jabs.*

pensively (pēn'sīv-lē) *adv.* thoughtfully

*He paused for a moment, **pensively** considering his next move.*

torrent (tōr'ənt) *n.* a violent, rushing stream

*A **torrent** of rain washed over the city streets.*

perpetual (pər-pěch'ōō-əl) *adj.* continual; unending

*His **perpetual** optimism allowed him to hope for the best.*

unbridled (ūn-brīd'ld) *adj.* lacking restraint or control

*The crowd's roar of **unbridled** enthusiasm welcomed the opponents to the ring.*

dispel (dī-spəl') *v.* to get rid of

*His intense training helped **dispel** doubts that he was unprepared.*

bedlam (bēd'ləm) *n.* a noisy confusion

***Bedlam** erupted as the final bell clanged again and again.*

flail (flāl) *v.* to wave wildly

*He watched his opponent **flail** helplessly against the ropes.*

clarity (klār'ī-tē) *n.* clearness of mind

*He struggled for **clarity** as the bout drew to an end.*

Vocabulary Practice

Review the vocabulary words and think about their meanings. “Amigo Brothers” is about a boxing match between two friends. From your review of the vocabulary words, how fierce do you expect the fight to be?

Accept all reasonable responses.

**SET A PURPOSE
FOR READING**

Read “Amigo Brothers” to discover what happens when two boys face a conflict that threatens their friendship.

Amigo

BROTHERS

Short Story by

PIRI THOMAS



BACKGROUND “Amigo Brothers” features two boys who are entered in the Golden Gloves, an amateur boxing tournament. Boxing matches consist of three-minute rounds. Fighters are given one minute to rest between rounds. A fighter who is knocked down has ten seconds to get up and continue fighting. A fighter who cannot get up is considered knocked out, or down for the count. When this happens, his opponent is declared the winner. If neither fighter is knocked out after fighting a specified number of rounds, judges determine the winner.

Antonio Cruz and Felix Vargas were both seventeen years old. They were so together in friendship that they felt themselves to be brothers. They had known each other since childhood, growing up on the lower east side of Manhattan in the same tenement building¹ on Fifth Street between Avenue A and Avenue B. **A**

Antonio was fair, lean, and lanky, while Felix was dark, short, and husky. Antonio’s hair was always falling over his eyes, while Felix wore his black hair in a natural Afro style.

10 Each youngster had a dream of someday becoming lightweight champion of the world. Every chance they had the boys worked out, sometimes at the Boys Club on 10th Street and Avenue A and sometimes at the pro’s gym on 14th Street. Early morning sunrises would find

A THEME AND SETTING

Underline the names of the main characters and circle their ages. Underline the setting.

1. **tenement building:** a rundown apartment building in which mostly poor families live.



them running along the East River Drive, wrapped in sweatshirts, short towels around their necks, and handkerchiefs Apache style around their foreheads.

While some youngsters were into street negatives, Antonio and Felix slept, ate, rapped, and dreamt positive.

20 Between them, they had a collection of *Fight* magazines second to none, plus a scrapbook filled with torn tickets to every boxing match they had ever attended and some clippings of their own. If asked a question about any given fighter, they would immediately zip out from their memory banks divisions,² weights, records of fights, knockouts, technical knockouts, and draws or losses.

Each had fought many bouts representing their community and had won two gold-plated medals plus a silver and bronze medallion. The difference was in their

30 style. Antonio's lean form and long reach made him the better boxer, while Felix's short and muscular frame made him the better slugger. Whenever they had met in the ring for sparring sessions,³ it had always been hot and heavy. B

Now, after a series of elimination bouts,⁴ they had been informed that they were to meet each other in the division finals that were scheduled for the seventh of August, two weeks away—the winner to represent the Boys Club in the Golden Gloves Championship Tournament.

40 The two boys continued to run together along the East River Drive. But even when joking with each other, they both sensed a wall rising between them. **PAUSE & REFLECT**

One morning less than a week before their bout, they met as usual for their daily workout. They fooled around with a few jabs at the air, slapped skin, and then took off, running lightly along the dirty East River's edge.

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- 2. **divisions:** weight groups into which boxers are separated.
 - 3. **sparring sessions:** practice boxing matches.
 - 4. **elimination bouts:** matches to determine which boxers advance in a competition.

B COMPARE AND CONTRAST

Reread lines 10–33. Underline the similarities and circle the differences between the two boys. List the most important similarities and differences below.

SIMILARITIES

1. Both boys want to be lightweight champion of the world.

2. Both boys are positive people.

DIFFERENCES

1. They have different fighting styles.

2. Antonio is lanky and Felix is short.

PAUSE & REFLECT

Pause at line 41. What does the writer mean when he says that there is “a wall rising between” Felix and Antonio?

The writer means that the boys are becoming distant because they are going to fight each other.



barrage (bə-rāzh') *n.* a rapid, heavy attack

devastating (dēv'ə-stā'tīng) *adj.* very effective in causing pain or destruction **devastate** *v.*

How might competition between best friends be **devastating** to the friendship?

Competition can be devastating

because of the emotion involved

in competing.

Antonio glanced at Felix, who kept his eyes purposely straight ahead, pausing from time to time to do some fancy leg work while throwing one-twos followed by upper cuts to an imaginary jaw. Antonio then beat the air with a **barrage** of body blows and short **devastating** lefts with an overhand, jawbreaking right.

After a mile or so, Felix puffed and said, "Let's stop for awhile, bro. I think we both got something to say to each other."

Antonio nodded. It was not natural to be acting as though nothing unusual was happening when two ace boon buddies were going to be blasting each other within a few short days.

They rested their elbows on the railing separating them from the river. Antonio wiped his face with his short towel. The sunrise was now creating day.

Felix leaned heavily on the river's railing and stared across to the shores of Brooklyn. Finally, he broke the silence.

"Man. I don't know how to come out with it."

Antonio helped. "It's about our fight, right?"

"Yeah, right." Felix's eyes squinted at the rising orange sun.

"I've been thinking about it too, *panín*.⁵ In fact, since we found out it was going to be me and you, I've been awake at night, pulling punches⁶ on you, trying not to hurt you."

"Same here. It ain't natural not to think about the fight. I mean, we both are *cheverote*⁷ fighters, and we both want to win. But only one of us can win. There ain't no draws in the eliminations."

Felix tapped Antonio gently on the shoulder. "I don't mean to sound like I'm bragging, bro. But I wanna win, fair and square."

5. **panín** (pā-nēn') *American Spanish:* pal; buddy.

6. **pulling punches:** holding back in delivering blows.

7. **cheverote** (chě-vě-ró'tě) *American Spanish:* great or fantastic.



THEME AND SETTING

The setting of a story is the time and place in which it occurs. The setting can offer clues about a story's theme. Underline the details that provide clues to the setting. What does the setting have to do with the action of the story so far?

The boys live in a tough, urban neighborhood with lots of negatives around them; they fight hard, stay in shape, and maintain a strong friendship.

pensively (pĕn'siv-lē) adv. thoughtfully

Antonio nodded quietly. "Yeah. We both know that in the ring the better man wins. Friend or no friend, brother or no . . ."

Felix finished it for him. "Brother. Tony, let's promise something right here. Okay?"

"If it's fair, hermano,⁸ I'm for it." Antonio admired the courage of a tugboat pulling a barge five times its welterweight⁹ size.

"It's fair, Tony. When we get into the ring, it's gotta be like we never met. We gotta be like two heavy strangers that want the same thing, and only one can have it. You understand, don'tcha?"

"Sí, I know." Tony smiled. "No pulling punches. We go all the way."

"Yeah, that's right. Listen, Tony. Don't you think it's a good idea if we don't see each other until the day of the fight? I'm going to stay with my Aunt Lucy in the Bronx.¹⁰ I can use Gleason's Gym for working out. My manager says he got some sparring partners with more or less your style."

Tony scratched his nose pensively. "Yeah, it would be better for our heads." He held out his hand, palm upward. "Deal?"

"Deal." Felix lightly slapped open skin.

"Ready for some more running?" Tony asked lamely.

"Naw, bro. Let's cut it here. You go on. I kinda like to get things together in my head."

"You ain't worried, are you?" Tony asked.

"No way, man." Felix laughed out loud. "I got too much smarts for that. I just think it's cooler if we split right here. After the fight, we can get it together again like nothing ever happened."

8. hermano (ĕr-mă'nô') Spanish: brother.
9. welterweight: one of boxing's weight divisions, with a maximum weight of 147 pounds.
10. the Bronx: a borough of New York City, north of Manhattan.



110 The *amigo*¹¹ brothers were not ashamed to hug each other tightly.

“Guess you’re right. Watch yourself, Felix. I hear there’s some pretty heavy dudes up in the Bronx. *Suavecito*,¹² okay?”

“Okay. You watch yourself too, *sabe*?”¹³

Tony jogged away. Felix watched his friend disappear from view, throwing rights and lefts. Both fighters had a lot of psyching up to do before the big fight.

120 The days in training passed much too slowly. Although they kept out of each other’s way, they were aware of each other’s progress via the ghetto grapevine.¹⁴

The evening before the big fight, Tony made his way to the roof of his tenement. In the quiet early dark, he peered over the ledge. Six stories below, the lights of the city blinked, and the sounds of cars mingled with the curses and the laughter of children in the street. He tried not to think of Felix, feeling he had succeeded in psyching his mind. But only in the ring would he really know. To spare Felix hurt, he would have to knock him out, early

130 and quick. **D**

Up in the South Bronx, Felix decided to take in a movie in an effort to keep Antonio’s face away from his fists. The flick was *The Champion* with Kirk Douglas, the third time Felix was seeing it.

The champion was getting beat, his face being pounded into raw, wet hamburger. His eyes were cut, jagged, bleeding, one eye swollen, the other almost shut. He was saved only by the sound of the bell.

Felix became the champ and Tony the challenger.

140 The movie audience was going out of its head, roaring in blood lust at the butchery going on. The champ hunched

D THEME AND SETTING

An **internal conflict** is a struggle within a character’s mind. A story’s setting may play an important role in the conflict of the story. Reread lines 122–130. What internal conflict does Antonio face in these lines? How does the setting affect the internal conflict?

Antonio is worried about hurting

Felix and is planning his strategy.

He wants to get away from the

sounds of people on the street and

the lights of the city. He goes up

to the roof of his building so he

can think.

11. **amigo** (ä-mē'gô) *Spanish*: friend.

12. **Suavecito** (swä-vě-sē'tô) *American Spanish*: Take it easy.

13. **sabe** (sä'bě) *Spanish*: you know.

14. **ghetto grapevine**: the chain of gossip that spreads through the neighborhood.



his shoulders, grunting and sniffing red blood back into his broken nose. The challenger, confident that he had the championship in the bag, threw a left. The champ countered with a dynamite right that exploded into the challenger's brains.

Felix's right arm felt the shock. Antonio's face, superimposed on the screen, was shattered and split apart by the awesome force of the killer blow. Felix saw himself **150** in the ring, blasting Antonio against the ropes. The champ had to be forcibly restrained. The challenger was allowed to crumble slowly to the canvas, a broken, bloody mess.

When Felix finally left the theatre, he had figured out how to psyche himself for tomorrow's fight. It was Felix the Champion vs. Antonio the Challenger. **E**

He walked up some dark streets, deserted except for small pockets of wary-looking kids wearing gang colors. Despite the fact that he was Puerto Rican like them, they eyed him as a stranger to their turf. Felix did a last shuffle, **160** bobbing and weaving, while letting loose a **torrent** of blows that would demolish whatever got in its way. It seemed to impress the brothers, who went about their own business.

Finding no takers, Felix decided to split to his aunt's. Walking the streets had not relaxed him, neither had the fight flick. All it had done was to stir him up. He let himself quietly into his Aunt Lucy's apartment and went straight to bed, falling into a fitful sleep with sounds of the gong for Round One.

Antonio was passing some heavy time on his rooftop. **170** How would the fight tomorrow affect his relationship with Felix? After all, fighting was like any other profession. Friendship had nothing to do with it. A gnawing doubt crept in. He cut negative thinking real quick by doing some speedy fancy dance steps, bobbing and weaving

E COMPARE AND CONTRAST

Pause at line 155. One similarity between Felix and Antonio is that they are both nervous about the upcoming fight. However, they deal with their nervousness in different ways. What does Felix do on the night before the fight? What does Antonio do?

Felix watches a movie about a

fighter and imagines himself as

the champion; Antonio goes off

by himself to his roof and thinks

about his strategy.

torrent (tôr'ənt) *n.* a violent, rushing stream



Monitor Your Comprehension

perpetual (pə-rĕch'ōō-əl) *adj.*
continual; unending

F COMPARE AND CONTRAST

Pause at line 181. How do the boys hope the fight will end?

Each boy hopes to win the fight

quickly.

unbridled (ŭn-brīd'ld) *adj.*
lacking restraint or control

like mercury. The night air was blurred with **perpetual** motions of left hooks and right crosses. Felix, his *amigo* brother, was not going to be Felix at all in the ring. Just an opponent with another face. Antonio went to sleep, hearing the opening bell for the first round. Like his friend
180 in the South Bronx, he prayed for victory via a quick, clean knockout in the first round. **F**

Large posters plastered all over the walls of local shops announced the fight between Antonio Cruz and Felix Vargas as the main bout.

The fight had created great interest in the neighborhood. Antonio and Felix were well liked and respected. Each had his own loyal following. Betting fever was high and ranged from a bottle of Coke to cold, hard cash on the line.

Antonio's fans bet with **unbridled** faith in his boxing
190 skills. On the other side, Felix's admirers bet on his dynamite-packed fists.

Felix had returned to his apartment early in the morning of August 7th and stayed there, hoping to avoid seeing Antonio. He turned the radio on to salsa music sounds and then tried to read while waiting for word from his manager.

The fight was scheduled to take place in Tompkins Square Park. It had been decided that the gymnasium of the Boys Club was not large enough to hold all the people who were sure to attend. In Tompkins Square Park,
200 everyone who wanted could view the fight, whether from ringside or window fire escapes or tenement rooftops.

The morning of the fight, Tompkins Square was a beehive of activity with numerous workers setting up the ring, the seats, and the guest speakers' stand. The scheduled bouts began shortly after noon, and the park had begun filling up even earlier.



The local junior high school across from Tompkins Square Park served as the dressing room for all the fighters. Each was given a separate classroom, with desktops, covered with
210 mats, serving as resting tables. Antonio thought he caught a glimpse of Felix waving to him from a room at the far end of the corridor. He waved back just in case it had been him.

PAUSE & REFLECT

The fighters changed from their street clothes into fighting gear. Antonio wore white trunks, black socks, and black shoes. Felix wore sky blue trunks, red socks, and white boxing shoes. Each had dressing gowns to match their fighting trunks with their names neatly stitched on the back.

The loudspeakers blared into the open window of the school. There were speeches by dignitaries, community
220 leaders, and great boxers of yesteryear. Some were well prepared, some improvised on the spot. They all carried the same message of great pleasure and honor at being part of such a historic event. This great day was in the tradition of champions emerging from the streets of the lower east side.

Interwoven with the speeches were the sounds of the other boxing events. After the sixth bout, Felix was much relieved when his trainer, Charlie, said, “Time change. Quick knockout. This is it. We’re on.”

Waiting time was over. Felix was escorted from the
230 classroom by a dozen fans in white T-shirts with the word FELIX across their fronts.

Antonio was escorted down a different stairwell and guided through a roped-off path.

As the two climbed into the ring, the crowd exploded with a roar. Antonio and Felix both bowed gracefully and then raised their arms in acknowledgment.

PAUSE & REFLECT

Circle what Antonio does when he thinks he sees Felix. What can you infer about Antonio’s attitude toward Felix on the day of the fight? What theme might the writer be hinting at in this scene?

*Antonio still cares about his
friendship with Felix even though*

they are fighting each other.

*The writer might be hinting that
competition between friends need
not cause friendships to end.*



straight left. He missed a right cross as Antonio slipped the punch and countered with one-two-three lefts that snapped Felix's head back, sending a mild shock coursing through him. If Felix had any small doubt about their friendship affecting their fight, it was being neatly **dispelled**.

Antonio danced, a joy to behold. His left hand was like a piston pumping jabs one right after another with seeming ease. Felix bobbed and weaved and never stopped boring in. He knew that at long range he was at a disadvantage.

280 Antonio had too much reach on him. Only by coming in close could Felix hope to achieve the dreamed-of knockout.

Antonio knew the dynamite that was stored in his *amigo* brother's fist. He ducked a short right and missed a left hook. Felix trapped him against the ropes just long enough to pour some punishing rights and lefts to Antonio's hard midsection. Antonio slipped away from Felix, crashing two lefts to his head, which set Felix's right ear to ringing. **H**

Bong! Both *amigos* froze a punch well on its way, sending up a roar of approval for good sportsmanship.

290 Felix walked briskly back to his corner. His right ear had not stopped ringing. Antonio gracefully danced his way toward his stool none the worse, except for glowing glove burns, showing angry red against the whiteness of his midribs.

"Watch that right, Tony." His trainer talked into his ear. "Remember Felix always goes to the body. He'll want you to drop your hands for his overhand left or right. Got it?"

Antonio nodded, spraying water out between his teeth. He felt better as his sore midsection was being firmly rubbed.

300 Felix's corner was also busy.

"You gotta get in there, fella." Felix's trainer poured water over his curly Afro locks. "Get in there or he's gonna chop you up from way back."

dispel (dĭ-spĕl') v. to get rid of

H COMPARE AND CONTRAST

Reread lines 276–287. What are Felix's strengths as a fighter? Circle the details that tell you. Underline the details that describe Antonio's strengths as a fighter.

Bong! Bong! Round two. Felix was off his stool and rushed Antonio like a bull, sending a hard right to his head. Beads of water exploded from Antonio's long hair.

Antonio, hurt, sent back a blurring barrage of lefts and rights that only meant pain to Felix, who returned with a short left to the head followed by a looping right to the
 310 body. Antonio countered¹⁷ with his own flurry, forcing Felix to give ground. But not for long.

Felix bobbed and weaved, bobbed and weaved, occasionally punching his two gloves together.

Antonio waited for the rush that was sure to come. Felix closed in and feinted¹⁸ with his left shoulder and threw his right instead. Lights suddenly exploded inside Felix's head as Antonio slipped the blow and hit him with a pistonlike left, catching him flush on the point of his chin.

Bedlam broke loose as Felix's legs momentarily buckled.
 320 He fought off a series of rights and lefts and came back with a strong right that taught Antonio respect.

Antonio danced in carefully. He knew Felix had the habit of playing possum when hurt, to sucker an opponent within reach of the powerful bombs he carried in each fist.

A right to the head slowed Antonio's pretty dancing. He answered with his own left at Felix's right eye that began puffing up within three seconds.

Antonio, a bit too eager, moved in too close, and Felix had him entangled into a rip-roaring, punching toe-to-toe
 330 slugfest that brought the whole Tompkins Square Park screaming to its feet.

Rights to the body. Lefts to the head. Neither fighter was giving an inch. Suddenly a short right caught Antonio squarely on the chin. His long legs turned to jelly, and his arms **flailed** out desperately. Felix, grunting like a bull, threw wild punches from every direction. Antonio, groggy, bobbed and weaved, evading most of the blows. Suddenly

bedlam (bĕd'lam) *n.* a noisy confusion

flail (flā) *v.* to wave wildly

17. **countered**: gave a blow after receiving or blocking his opponent's blow.

18. **feinted**: made a pretend attack to draw attention from his real purpose.



his head cleared. His left flashed out hard and straight catching Felix on the bridge of his nose.

340 Felix lashed back with a haymaker,¹⁹ right off the ghetto streets. At the same instant, his eye caught another left hook from Antonio. Felix swung out, trying to clear the pain. Only the frenzied screaming of those along ringside let him know that he had dropped Antonio. Fighting off the growing haze, Antonio struggled to his feet, got up, ducked, and threw a smashing right that dropped Felix flat on his back.

Felix got up as fast as he could in his own corner, groggy but still game.²⁰ He didn't even hear the count. In a fog, he heard the roaring of the crowd, who seemed to have gone
350 insane. His head cleared to hear the bell sound at the end of the round. He was very glad. His trainer sat him down on the stool. **PAUSE & REFLECT**

In his corner, Antonio was doing what all fighters do when they are hurt. They sit and smile at everyone.

The referee signaled the ring doctor to check the fighters out. He did so and then gave his okay. The cold-water sponges brought **clarity** to both *amigo* brothers. They were rubbed until their circulation ran free.

360 *Bong!* Round three—the final round. Up to now it had been tick-tack-toe, pretty much even. But everyone knew there could be no draw and that this round would decide the winner.

This time, to Felix's surprise, it was Antonio who came out fast, charging across the ring. Felix braced himself but couldn't ward off the barrage of punches. Antonio drove Felix hard against the ropes.

The crowd ate it up. Thus far the two had fought with *mucho corazón*.²¹ Felix tapped his gloves and commenced

PAUSE & REFLECT

What do you think will happen in round three? What will the end of the fight mean to the boys' friendship?

Accept all reasonable answers.

Some students might say that the

fight might cause the friendship

to end. Others might say the

friendship might go on after the

fight ends.

clarity (klär'ĭ-tē) *n.* clearness of mind

19. **haymaker:** a powerful blow.

20. **groggy but still game:** unsteady and shaky but willing to proceed.

21. **mucho corazón** (mōō'chō kō-rä-sōn') *Spanish:* a lot of heart; great courage.

Text Analysis: Theme and Setting

Remember that authors rarely state a theme directly. Instead they provide clues to the theme through the details in the story, as they are revealed through the conflict, the characters, and the setting. Identify clues to the theme of “Amigo Brothers.” Then, state the theme of the story in a sentence or two.

Clues from Setting	Clues from Conflict	Clues from Character
<p>(1) <i>The boys are from a tough neighborhood, but work hard to stay out of trouble.</i></p> <p>(2) <i>They live in an urban area of New York City.</i></p> <p>(3) <i>Boxing is very popular in the neighborhood.</i></p>	<p>(1) <i>The boys are best friends and excellent boxers; they have an important match against each other.</i></p> <p>(2) <i>Felix runs into gang members in the Bronx but handles himself without violence.</i></p> <p>(3) <i>They don't want to hurt each other, but they want to win the fight.</i></p>	<p>(1) <i>Both boys are honest enough to admit to the other that they want to win.</i></p> <p>(2) <i>They care about each other and they care about their training.</i></p> <p>(3) <i>In the end they care more about their friendship than the result of the fight.</i></p>



Theme
<p><i>Accept all reasonable answers. Possible answer: A true friendship can withstand the strain</i></p> <hr/> <p><i>that a competition creates.</i></p> <hr/> <hr/>

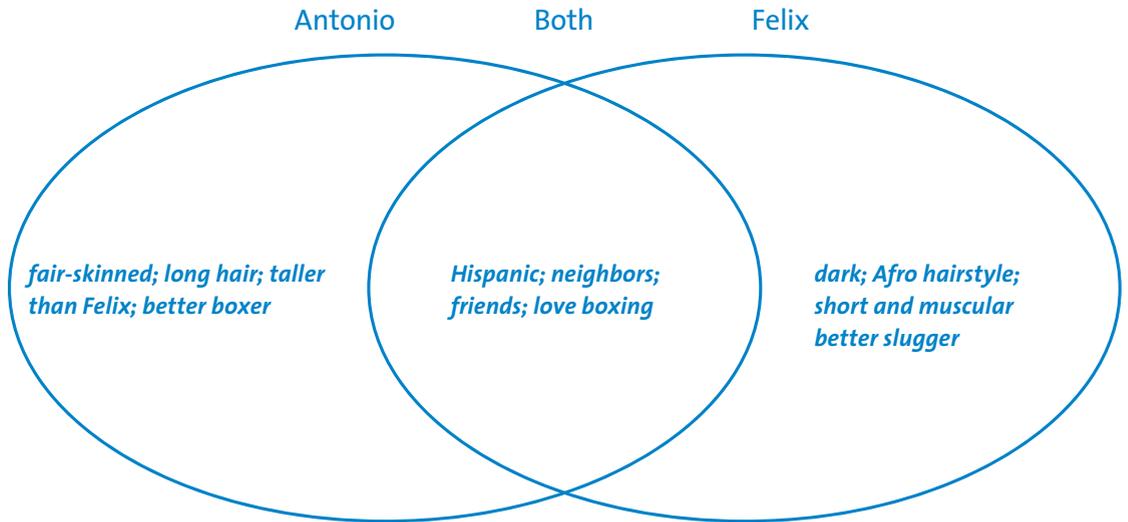
Review your notes and your completed chart. Explain how the setting of “Amigo Brothers” influences its theme. Support your response with evidence from the story.

Possible answer: The tough neighborhood that the boys grew up in brings them closer

together. As a result, their bond remains strong after the fight.

Reading Skill: Compare and Contrast

Review the story. Then, use a Venn diagram to help you identify the ways in which Felix and Antonio are alike and different. Write their likenesses in the part where the circles overlap.



What happens when friends COMPETE?

Evaluate Felix and Antonio's actions after the fight is over. Why do you think they left the ring before hearing the decision? How would you act toward a friend after a competition?

Possible response: They leave the ring because they realize that their friendship is more important than winning and losing. Most students will say that they would hope to act the same way.

Vocabulary Practice

Circle the word that correctly completes each sentence.

- The trainer listened **pensively**/perpetually as the fighter explained his plan.
- He showed **devastating**/unbridled joy when he realized he was victorious.
- The **barrage**/clarity of blows knocked him to the mat.
- Bedlam**/torrent erupted when the crowd heard the unfair decision.
- The referee tried to **dispel**/flail the possibility of rule breaking with a stern warning.

Academic Vocabulary in Writing

clause

context

cultural

symbol

theme

The winner of the fight is never revealed in the story. However, the writer calls both of the boys “champions.” In what **context** might both boys be called champions? Use at least one Academic Vocabulary word in your response. Definitions of these words are on page 133.

Accept all reasonable responses. Possible response: The boys are champions because they tried their

hardest to win but still remained friends.

Assessment Practice

DIRECTIONS Use “Amigo Brothers” to answer questions 1–4.

- Which statement reveals a difference between Felix and Antonio?
 - They were so together in friendship that they felt themselves to be brothers.*
 - Antonio’s hair was always falling over his eyes, while Felix wore his hair in a natural Afro style.*
 - Each youngster had a dream of someday becoming lightweight champion of the world.*
 - Whenever they had met in the ring for sparring sessions, it had always been hot and heavy.*
- What can you infer about Felix and Antonio from their behavior the night before the match?
 - They don’t want to be friends anymore.
 - They are nervous about fighting each other.
 - They don’t care about winning the match.
 - They like watching movies together.
- Which statement best describes the theme of the story?
 - Friendship is very fragile and can be destroyed by conflict.
 - A strong friendship can survive even the most extreme tests.
 - Competition sometimes brings out the best in friends.
 - Friends always grow apart over time.
- The setting of Tomkins Square Park influences the theme by —
 - revealing the importance of nature to the boys
 - emphasizing the excitement surrounding the fight
 - highlighting the differences between Felix and Antonio
 - providing an excellent view from the rooftops