

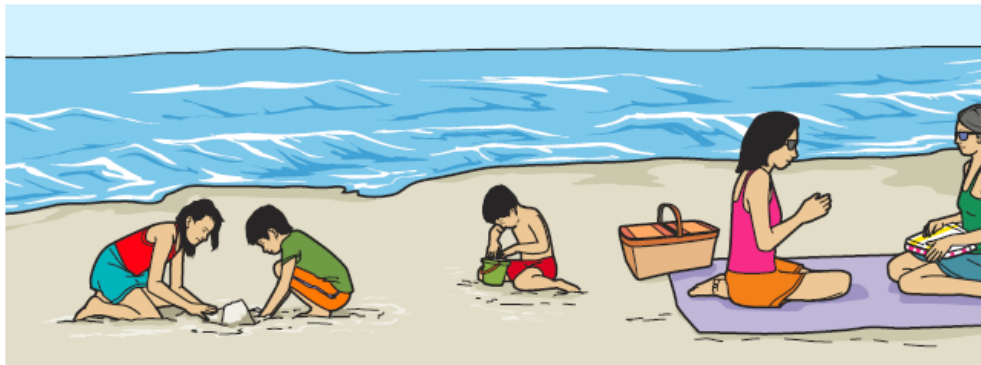
7.S1.BI-C.1 Use the problem-solving process to refine

understanding by:

- a. Analyzing problem and solutions within various texts and situations

At the Beach Abuelito's Story

by
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- 1 I remember those evenings well when I was a young boy in Cuba, those balmy island nights before a trip to Guanabo Beach. The spicy aroma of *tortilla española*¹ that Mami had left to cool would waft through the house as I lay in my bed. But I was always too excited to sleep. All I could think about was the soft white sand, the warm foamy water, and Mami's delicious *tortilla*. Ahhh. A day at the beach. It was full of possibilities.
- 2 One Saturday in May, I was awakened at the crack of dawn by sounds of laughter. My aunts, Rosa and Olga, had arrived with hammocks, blankets, and an iron kettle filled with Aunt Rosa's steaming *congrí*². And best of all, they had arrived with my cousins: Luisa, Mari, and little Javi. Uncle Toni had come, too.

- 3 While the grown-ups unloaded the car, we eagerly jumped out and ran toward the sea, peeling off our clothes along the way.
- 4 When we reached the edge of the ocean, the water felt cold. I waded farther in and went under to warm up quickly. When I emerged I saw Luisa, Mari, and little Javi, all standing still in the clear water. They were watching the schools of tiny gold-and-black striped fish rush between their legs. Then they swam over to join me and together we rode the big waves.
- 5 I was getting very hungry, and for a moment I thought of returning with him³ to sneak a bite of Mami's *tortilla*. But then I had a better idea.
- 6 "Let's explore the reef!" I said.

¹ *tortilla española*—a Spanish omelet eaten at breakfast or as a light dinner, and often served at picnics

² *congrí*—a Cuban dish of red beans and rice

³ *him*—The narrator, Fernando, was walking with Uncle Toni as he approached the other children.

- 7 "¡Sí!" everyone agreed. "Let's go!"
- 8 When we got to the marbled rocks, Luisa looked concerned. "Our moms told us not to come this far," she said.
- 9 "I know the way well," I replied. "Besides, nobody will notice. They're too busy talking."
- 10 I looked in the distance and saw Mami and my two aunts in the shady spot they had picked. They had set up a nice camp. The hammocks were tied to the pine trees, the blankets were spread over the fine sand. No one would miss us for a long time.
- 11 "Watch out for sea urchins!" I warned as I led the group on our climb. The spiny black sea urchins hid inside the crevices and crannies of the rough boulders. It was very painful if you stepped on one. Luisa and Mari followed behind me. They were careful to only step on the rocks I stepped on. Little Javi came last. He stopped constantly to look at the *cobitos*, the tiny hermit crabs that scurried around on the rocks, and at the iridescent tropical fish that were concealed in the deepest tide pools. I had to keep checking behind me to make sure he didn't stray from our path.
- 12 Just then, I turned around to watch helplessly as Javi slipped on an algae-covered rock. "¡Cuidado!" I warned. But it was too late.
- 13 "¡Ay!" he shrieked, and then began to cry uncontrollably.
- 14 Cautiously, we all hurried back to help Javi. Luisa and Mari crouched down to examine his foot.
- 15 "He stepped on a sea urchin!" Mari cried. "Now what are we going to do?"
- 16 "We should have never followed you," Luisa lamented. "We'll all be punished."
- 17 At that moment I did not want to think of what the punishment would be. What if we couldn't have any of Mami's *tortilla*? All I knew was that we had to help Javi right away. I looked around and found a piece of driftwood.
- 18 "Luisa," I ordered. "Hold his leg still while I remove the urchin from his foot."

- 19 Luisa held Javi's leg still as Mari held his hand and tried to comfort him. But Javi's desperate cries were now drowning out the sound of the sea.
- 20 I pulled and tugged, but the urchin wouldn't budge. It was stuck to Javi's foot by the tips of its spines. Javi was scared and in pain. And we were too far from our parents to ask for help. What if we couldn't get Javi back? I struggled relentlessly until I was finally able to remove the spiny creature from his foot.
- 21 Gently, Luisa poured some sea water over Javi's foot. That was when she noticed there was still a piece of the sea urchin's spine lodged in it. Javi wasn't going to be able to walk back and he was much too heavy for us to carry. We had to remove that piece of spine so that he could walk on his own.
- 22 "I have an idea," said Luisa suddenly. She removed her hair barrettes and held them like tweezers. Then, with the smallest movement, she pulled the broken spine out. With that solved, we started back.
- 23 I helped Javi walk on his sore foot. He wept and limped with every step. Our walk back seemed endless. As we got closer I realized that we would have to explain how it was that we went to the reef in the first place. I would surely end up with no *tortilla* if we told the truth.
- 24 "What will we do now?" Mari asked.
- 25 "We'll have to tell our parents what happened," said Luisa matter-of-factly.
- 26 "No!" I said emphatically. "We'll be punished for sure."
- 27 We walked the rest of the way in silence. The sound of crashing waves, children playing, and seagulls' calls became a background drone to Javi's cries.
- 28 When we finally reached our parents, Javi was crying louder than ever. Aunt Olga took one look at him and gasped. "¡Niños! Children! What's happened to Javi?"
- 29 Mari looked at Luisa. Luisa looked at me. Javi cried even louder.
- 30 "Well . . .," I hesitated. By now everyone was staring at me. "We were walking along the beach looking for cockles and urchin shells," I began, "when I found a live sea urchin attached to a piece of driftwood. So I called the others. Javi came running so fast that he stepped on it by accident."
- 31 Luisa and Mari stared at me in disbelief. I didn't think they liked my story.
- 32 "Let me see your foot, Javi," Aunt Olga said, kneeling next to her son.
- 33 Mami and Aunt Rosa looked on as Aunt Olga examined Javi's foot closely. Then she gave him a big hug and a kiss. "He's fine," she said at last. "It looks like the children were able to pull it out."
- 34 And at this good news, Javi's tears disappeared and were replaced by a big broad smile. "I'm hungry," he said.
- 35 "Then let's have lunch," Aunt Olga suggested.
- 36 I was dumbfounded. Not only had they believed me, but we were also going to eat Mami's *tortilla*!

37 Mami handed me a plate filled with my favorite foods. The *tortilla* smelled delicious. But I was unable to eat. I looked up at Luisa and Mari who were quietly picking at their food. I watched Mami as she served herself and sat next to my aunts. I looked at my plate again. How could I enjoy my food when I knew I had done something I wasn't supposed to do? There was only one thing I could do now. I stood up, picked up my plate, and went right over to Mami.

38 "What's wrong, Fernando?" Mami asked.

39 I looked back at Luisa and Mari and swallowed hard. Then, I handed Mami my untouched plate.

40 "You wouldn't have given me this if I had told you the truth," I said.

41 Mami looked puzzled. The whole group grew silent and watched me struggle. I was very embarrassed.

42 "It was my fault," Luisa said. "I should have stopped them."

43 "And I went along," said Mari.

44 "No, no, it was my idea to go to the reef," I said. Then I told everyone about our adventure at the reef. When I was finished, Mami looked at me with tear-filled eyes.

45 "You are right, Fernando," she said. "I should punish you for doing something you knew not to do. Somebody could have been seriously hurt."

46 "I know," I whispered, "and I'm sorry." But then the glimmer of a smile softened Mami's expression. She slid her arm over my shoulders as she said, "You know, Fernando, anyone can make mistakes. But not everyone has the courage to admit it. *Gracias*. Thank you for telling the truth."

47 That afternoon, under the shade of the pine trees, the nine of us sat down on the old blankets for lunch. We had *congrí*, bread, and Mami's famous *tortilla española*. And do you know something? That day it tasted better than it ever had before.

1.

Explain how Luisa helps solve Javi's problem with the sea urchin. Give one detail from the story to support your answer.
