

Directions

Read this story. Then answer questions 48 and 49.

Fifteen-year-old María, who was born in Puerto Rico, has moved to New York City with her father.

Excerpt from “Who Are You Today, María?” from *Call Me María*

by Judith Ortiz Cofer

Abuela¹ knocks on my bedroom door. She has come to my room this morning to watch me choose my outfit for Who You Are Day at school. This is a day when we are allowed to dress in clothes that we think tell the world who we really are. (Within reason, our principal warned—no extremes will be tolerated. I hope that her definition of the
5 word *extreme* is the same as my friend Whoopee’s. Nothing that she will put on this morning has ever been seen on this planet, much less at school.)

Abuela makes herself comfortable on my bed as I put on my costume of myself made up of pieces of my life. I thought about my Who You Are Day outfit a lot. Mr. Golden told us in English class to think about our choices: are you going to walk around as a joke or as
10 a poem? I have a suspicion that our teachers have allowed us this chance to dress up as ourselves for a reason. Our school is already a united nations, a carnival, and a parade all at once. There are students from dozens of different countries, and we do not always get along. Most of us are too shy to talk to others outside our little circles, and so misunderstandings come up. The principal has tried almost everything. The Who You Are
15 Day is another of her crazy ideas to get us to communicate. In each of my classes, the teacher said, let us know something about what has made you who you are by what you wear to school tomorrow. It all sounds like a conspiracy to me. But I like dressing up so I do not complain like the boys have been doing. Most of them hate the idea!

Abuela looks at my choices hanging on the door and shakes her head, smiling, like she
20 did when we went to see *Cats*. It is a smile that says, I do not understand, but if it is important to María, I will bear it the best I can. She is elegant even at 7:00 A.M. in her embroidered silk robe and red velvet slippers. She has wrapped a shawl over her shoulders because she is always cold in our *cueva*, as she calls the apartment. The shawl was
25 handmade by her mother and it is Abuela’s most prized possession. As a little girl, I liked to put it over my head because the pattern of sequins made a night sky full of stars and because it smelled like Abuela.

¹**abuela:** the Spanish word for grandmother

Abuela sips from her cup of café con leche as she watches me.

I feel a little strange about being in my underwear in front of her and go in my closet with my choices, which are:

30 My mother’s red skirt that she wore when she had a part in a musical play on the Island. I have played dress-up with it since I was five years old, but it finally fits me perfectly. It is the kind of skirt that opens like an umbrella when you turn in circles.

A top I sewed together from an old sari² Uma’s³ mother was going to throw away. It is turquoise blue with silver edges.

35 And finally, over my sari, I will wear my father’s sharkskin suit jacket—it’s big on me but I can roll up the sleeves. It is what he likes to wear when he sings at rent parties.⁴ Under the light, it changes colors and seems to come alive as the design shifts and moves. Papi says it is great for dancing; you don’t even need a partner.

40 And finally, tall platform shoes we found buried deep in Whoopee’s closet, circa 1974, she told me. Whoopee collects antique shoes to go with her science fiction outfits. It is a fashion statement; she will tell anyone who asks. No one knows what the statement means, and that is just fine with Whoopee.

45 When I part the clothes in my closet and come out like an actor in a play, Abuela’s eyes open wide. Before she can say anything, I point to each piece of my outfit and say a name: Mami, Papi, Uma, and Whoopee.

Abuela’s face changes as she begins to understand the meaning of my fashion statement.

“Ahora sé quién eres, María, y quién puedes ser, si quieres. Ven acá, mi amor.”

50 Abuela says that she knows who I am and who I may be if I choose. I have heard those words before but I don’t remember when or where. Abuela embraces me and kisses my face several times. This is a Puerto Rican thing. It goes on for a while. I close my eyes to wait it out and I suddenly inhale a familiar scent. When I open my eyes, I see a starry sky. Abuela has put her shawl over my head.

55 *“Algo mío para tu día de ser quien eres, mi hija,”* she tells me. *Something of mine for your day of being who you are.* She is letting me borrow her mother’s beautiful shawl!

All day at school, I feel elegant. Whenever anyone tries to make fun of my costume, I think of the words my grandmother quoted to me: *I know who you are and who you may be if you choose.* And when I go into Mr. Golden’s class and his eyes ask me, *Who are you today, María?* I will say by the way I walk in, head held high, that today I am a poem.

²**sari:** a long piece of cloth that is wrapped around the body and head or shoulder and worn by women in southern Asia

³**Uma:** one of María’s school friends

⁴**rent party:** a party given to raise money for the host’s rent

Directions
Read this story. Then answer questions 50 and 51.

Excerpt from *The Watcher*

by James Howe

Evan hated Holden Caulfield. Really hated him. Maybe he was only a character in a book but to Evan he felt real, like one of those people you get stuck sitting next to on an airplane and they won't shut up about their totally uninteresting lives. Evan could in no way understand why his father had been shoving this book at him for the entire past year, insisting he read it, telling him it was one of the most important books of the twentieth century. His father got like that sometimes.

He decided to read it anyway. He'd seen it on his freshman reading list so he figured why not get it over with and get his father off his back at the same time. Two birds, one stone. In a weak moment, he'd admitted to his father that he hated Holden with a passion, and his father had given him this solemn look and said, "My guess is that this book is touching something deep inside you, Evan." To which he'd said, "Yeah, right, Dad." But sometimes in the middle of the night when he couldn't sleep, Evan wondered if maybe what his father said was true.

He was down at the beach reading the book one Friday afternoon when someone came up and said *hey* and asked if he wanted to hang out. It was Shane, one of what Evan referred to as the "boys in black." Evan often labeled people. He liked to think this was the product of a creative mind, but his best friend last year in eighth grade, right before he stopped being his best friend, had told Evan he thought he was basically a snob. Which Evan knew for a certifiable fact wasn't true, although no matter how many times he replayed the conversation in his head he couldn't come up with what he *was*, if he wasn't a snob.

The boys in black had caught Evan's attention the first week he and his family were out at the beach house. It was five o'clock, and like every other day at five o'clock, after the lifeguards blew their whistles and waved their arms to let everybody know they were going off duty, little kids in bunches, Callie¹ included, ran to the abandoned lifeguard stand to clamber to the top, hurl themselves off onto the huge pile of sand at the base, then repeat the process over and over until they were called away for dinner.

"Watch me, Evan!" Callie shouted. Evan watched, at the same time keeping an eye on the retreating figure of the lifeguard named Chris who secretly Evan thought was the coolest guy on the beach. Who secretly Evan wished he could be. Evan admired Chris's mirrored sunglasses and had decided he was going over to Fair Harbor one of these days to get a pair just like them. The only question was whether he'd have the nerve to wear them to the beach, although he wasn't sure why this was even a question.

¹Callie: Evan's younger sister

GO ON

35 Evan was imagining himself sitting up on top of the lifeguard stand in his mirrored sunglasses, twirling a whistle cord around his index finger and looking seriously cool, when five boys in black wet suits, shiny and snug as coats of fresh paint, raced past and plunged into the water. Once in, they pulled themselves onto their surfboards and paddled furiously over and through the rolling waves, calling to each other all the while like crows cawing. Everything about them worked together as one: their bodies, their suits, their
40 boards, the water, their coded calls. Evan wished he could be out there with them, envying not their surfboards but their ease with themselves and one another.

He saw them other times after that, other places. Sometimes there'd be just one of them, eating an ice cream out in front of the all-purpose store in town, or two of them, with fishing poles in hand, headed for the bay. But most times he saw all five, moving
45 shoulder-to-shoulder along the boardwalks, a basketball in constant play, looking, in their high-style shorts and ankle bracelets and backward baseball caps, like a pack of Gap-ad Huckleberry Finns.

At the beginning of their vacation his mother had been bugging him. "Why don't you make some friends, Evan? Those boys, you know the ones I mean, they look nice, don't
50 you think?" He had come up with reasons, then excuses, and finally had just ignored his mother until she backed off.

Then there he was, hearing somebody say *hey*, and looking up at this tall, tightly muscled kid with shoulder-length dirty-blond hair whom he recognized immediately as the one he'd heard the others call Shane.

55 "I see you sittin' here," Shane said, squinting down at Evan. "How come you're always sittin' here reading?"

"I'm not always reading."

"I never see you in the water."

"I go in the water. Maybe not when you're looking."

60 Evan's cheeks were hot. He prayed that his mother, stretched out on a towel several feet behind him, was plugged into her music or one of those meditation tapes she was always listening to these days and wasn't paying attention to this conversation.

"So what's your name?" he heard Shane ask.

"Evan. What's yours?"

65 "Shane," Shane said in a bored voice. "So you want to hang out? I mean, you know, you want to hang out?"

"I guess," Evan said. His eyes were level with Shane's knees. He noticed now many pink scars and scabs dotted the landscape of the other boy's sun-brown legs. He imagined all the falls and mishaps it must have taken to create so many scars and felt a deep sense
70 of shame that at fourteen his own body revealed so little history.

