



School Dance Disaster

from *Stef Soto, Taco Queen*

by Jennifer Torres

Stef Soto loves her father, but she doesn't love being seen in Tía Perla, his beloved taco truck. Stef is tired of being known as the "taco queen." In fact, she is so tired that she plans not to attend the dance she and her classmate Julia have organized to raise money for Mr. Salazar's art class.

- 1 We ride to school in Tía Perla, me squished between Papi and Julia on the bench seat. When we get there, Papi tells Julia he'll be back in a couple of hours.
- 2 "Stef, seriously, just come with me?" I slide out the door and tell Papi I'll be right back.
- 3 Outside the gym, students are shuffling around looking bored and disappointed. I spot [my friend] Arthur, and he walks right over. "I thought you weren't coming."
- 4 "I'm not. What's going on?"
- 5 "Power went out in the gym. Mr. Salazar is trying to get it fixed, but the ice cream already melted and the sodas are all warm. No lights, no speakers, no music."
- 6 That means no dance. The teachers have started refunding everyone's admission. And that means no art supplies. I close my eyes and think. Hard. From the gut. And then I have it.

Stop & Discuss

Why is Stef upset?

Underline details in the story that support your answer. Discuss with your partner.



- 7 Papi is humming to himself with one arm draped out the window when I get to the truck. Panting, I try to explain the dance **debacle** as quickly as I can. “Can we fire up Tía Perla, like, right here?”
- 8 He starts nodding, slowly at first and then eagerly.
- 9 Arthur and [our friend] Amanda come rushing to the parking lot as Papi hooks up Tía Perla’s **generator** and I lift open her canopy.
- 10 Amanda finds a take-out bag in the kitchen, writes DONATIONS on one side in black marker, and sets it on the card table. I scramble back into the cab, crank down the windows, and turn up Papi’s radio.
- 11 The joyful, driving rhythm of Papi’s music begins to break up the clumps of middle schoolers standing around Tía Perla. A flourish of horns set Julia and Amanda swaying, shoulder to shoulder, *oompah-pah, oompah-pah*. Jangling guitar chords relax the worried lines on Mr. Salazar’s forehead. Students tap their feet as they wait in line for the nachos, quesadillas, and tortas that I slide through the window as fast as we can. 🖐️.....➡️

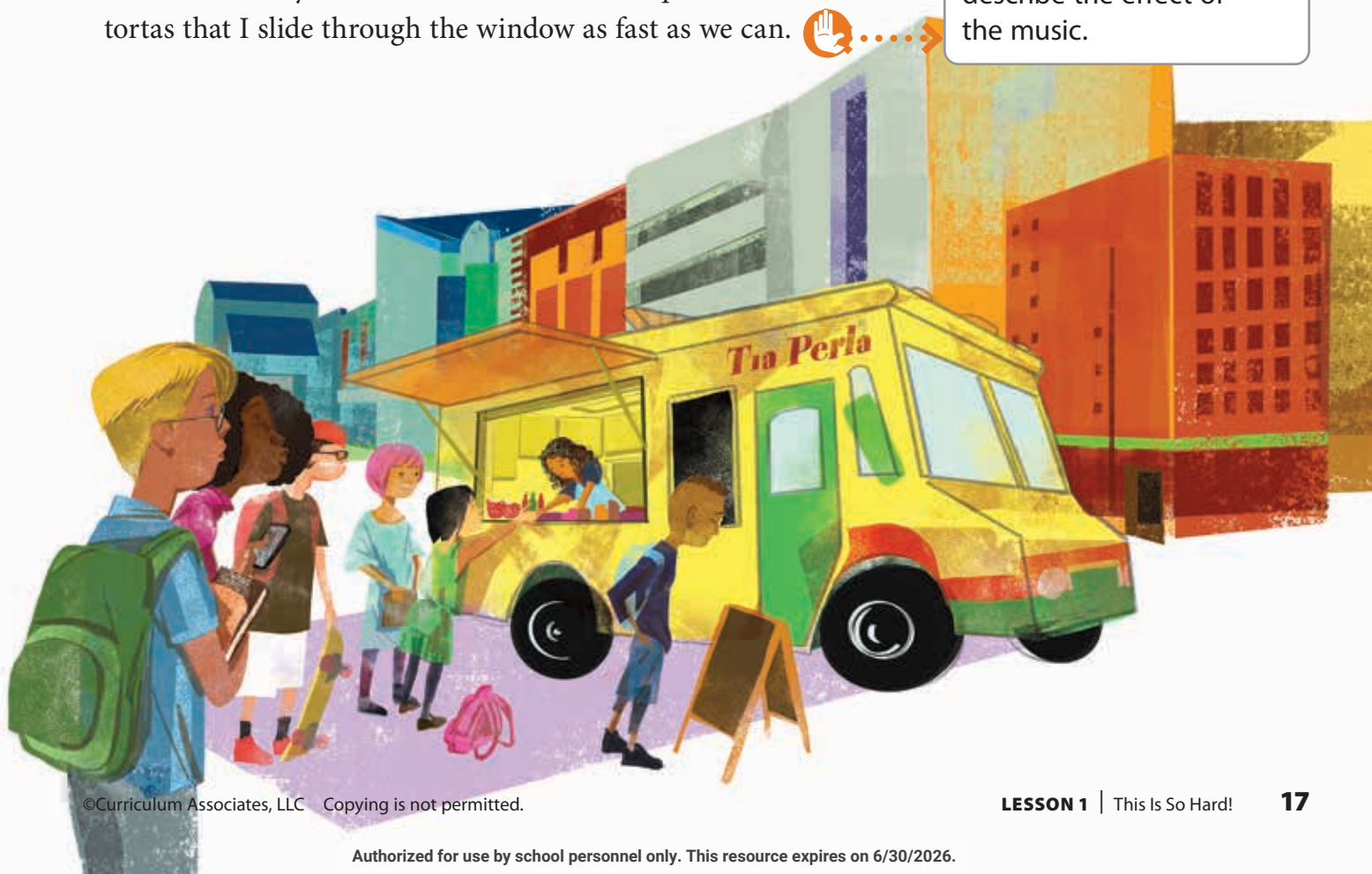
debacle = an event that is a complete failure

generator = a machine that makes electricity

Stop & Discuss

What happens when Stef turns on the radio, and why is this important?

Underline details that describe the effect of the music.





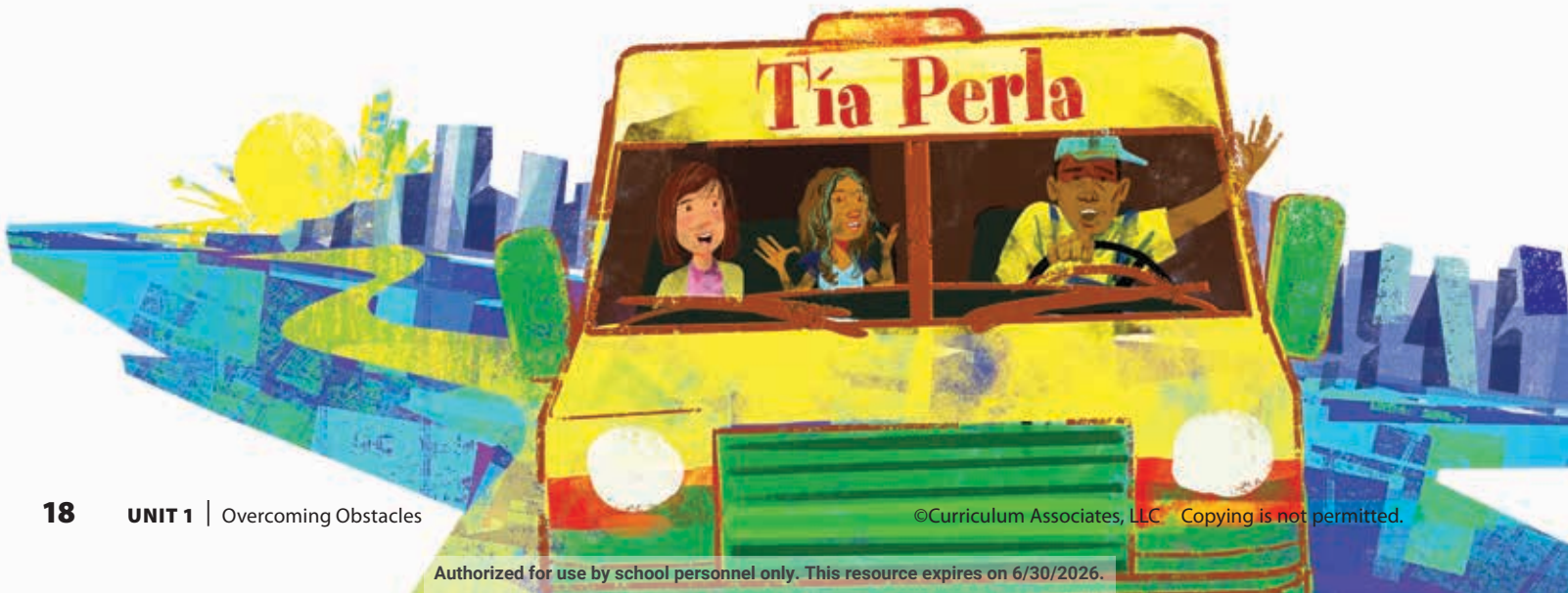
m'ija = a Spanish contraction meaning "my daughter"

- 12** I'm dusting cilantro over the top of two street tacos when Papi stops me. "I can handle this, **m'ija**. You should be out there."
- 13** "Really," he urges. "Go." Then he hands me a tortilla, fresh off the grill and smeared with butter. I take a big bite while I look for Arthur and Amanda in the crowd.
- 14** I take both their hands and pull them closer to Tía Perla, where the music is loudest. I twirl Arthur under one of my arms and Amanda under the other. Then they close the circle, and we spin until we fall over laughing.
- 15** It seems like only minutes before the first parents start arriving for pickup. Tía Perla's kitchen is nearly empty, but the donation bag is full—so full that a few crumpled-up bills have fallen to the ground. Julia and I pick them up and stuff them inside the bag before presenting it to Mr. Salazar.
- 16** He tries to give some of the money back to Papi. But Papi just folds his arms over his chest, shakes his head, and smiles. "Do you think it's enough?" I ask.
- 17** Mr. Salazar looks like he can't quite believe it. "I'd say so." He nods. "More than enough."
- 18** When everything is cleaned up, Papi hands Julia and me a strawberry soda each. "Saved these for you." We climb back into the cab, crank the radio up as loud as it will go, and sing all the way back home. I don't even care who sees us. 

Stop & Discuss

How does Stef feel about her father's taco truck by the end of the story?

Discuss details that show how Stef's feelings have changed.





Summarize a Story

- A summary includes key events and details from the story.
- A summary usually explains the problem the main character faces and the solution to that problem.

Reread/Think

Reread "School Dance Disaster." Use the story map to organize your ideas about the most important events. Include details about the problem in the "Beginning" box, and include details about the solution in the "Middle" and "End" boxes.

Setting

Characters

Beginning

Middle

End



Talk

In the beginning _____. Then _____.
In the end, _____.

Stef's problem is _____. She solves her problem by _____.

Write

Write a short summary of “School Dance Disaster” that includes Stef’s problem and the solution.

[illegible]

WRITING CHECKLIST

- ☐ I included the main characters and setting.
- ☐ I included the most important events in the beginning, middle, and end.
- ☐ I used transition words to connect ideas.
- ☐ I used correct spelling, punctuation, and capitalization.