

"Oranges" by Gary Soto

The first time I walked	5
With a girl, I was twelve,	11
Cold, and weighted down	15
With two oranges in my jacket.	21
December. Frost cracking	24
Beneath my steps, my breath	29
Before me, then gone,	33
As I walked toward	37
Her house, the one whose	42
Porch light burned yellow	46
Night and day, in any weather	52
A dog barked at me, until	58
She came out pulling	62
At her gloves, face bright	67
With rouge, I smiled,	71
Touched her shoulder, and led	76
Her down the street, across	81
A used car lot and a line	88
Of newly planted trees,	92
Until we were breathing	96
Before a drugstore. We	100
Entered, the tiny bell	104
Bringing a saleslady	107
Down a narrow aisle of goods.	113
I turned to the candies	118
Tiered like bleachers,	121
And asked what she wanted-	126
Light in her eyes, a smile	132
Starting at the corners	136
Of her mouth. I fingered	141
A nickel in my pocket,	146

And when she lifted a chocolate	152
That cost a dime,	156
I didn't say anything.	160
I took the nickel from	165
My pocket, then an orange,	170
And set them quietly on	175
The counter. When I looked up,	181
The lady's eyes met mine,	186
And held them, knowing	190
Very well what it was all	196
About.	197

Words to Know:

frost: small ice crystals formed on surfaces when the temperature is below freezing

bleachers: stacked bench seating at a sports arena

Words to Practice Using:

- rouge
- tiered

Let's Check for Understanding!

1. What "first" is the narrator remembering?
2. What conflict does the narrator experience at the drugstore?
3. What can you infer the woman behind the counter understands?
4. What do the saleslady's actions reveal about her character?