

6. Define history. How does Soto alter the traditional meaning of history?
7. Compare the speaker in this work with the personae in other poems in this chapter.

■■ JOURNAL ENTRIES ■■

1. Respond to the grandmother's shoplifting. How does it affect your attitude toward her?
2. Create a vision of your cultural history through a portrait of a relative.

■■■ IDEAS FOR WRITING ■■■

1. Analyze Soto's definition of personal and of Mexican-American history.
2. Characterize Grandma.

horse

Gloria Anzaldúa

Gloria Evangelina Anzaldúa is a Chicana, feminist, a poet, and a fiction writer. Born and raised on the border between Mexico and Texas where her father was a sharecropper for Rio Farms Incorporated, Anzaldúa writes in Borderlands: La Frontera—The New Mestiza (1987) of the difficulties experienced by anyone caught between cultures, an alien everywhere "Because [she], a Mestiza,/continually walk[s] out of one culture/and into another,/because [she is] in all cultures at the same time. . . ." She has worked in the migrant farmers movement; and she has taught at the University of Texas at Austin, San Francisco State University, and Vermont College of Norwich University. Her first book, This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color, co-edited by Cherríe Moraga, won the 1986 Before Columbus Foundation American Book Award.

In "horse," Anzaldúa describes an unspeakable act of cruelty committed by adolescents who torture a horse in Hargill, Texas. The work reflects the tensions between the Mexicans and the gringos.

1? Which details are
 ange in stanza 2?
 ne speaker.
 e description of
 "?
 which we all begin"?
 his grandmother mean

(para la gente de Hargill, Texas)¹

Great horse running in the fields
come thundering toward
the outstretched hands
nostrils flaring at the corn
5 only it was knives in the hidden hands
can a horse smell tempered steel?

*Anoche*² some kids cut up a horse
it was night and the *pueblo*³ slept
the Mexicans mutter among themselves:
10 they hobbled the two front legs
the two hind legs, kids aged sixteen
but they're *gringos*⁴
and the sheriff won't do a thing
he'd just say boys will be boys
15 just following their instincts.

But it's the mind that kills
the animal the *mexicanos* murmur
killing it would have been a mercy
black horse running in the dark
20 came thundering toward
the outstretched hands
nostrils flaring at the smell
only it was knives in the hidden hands
did it pray all night for morning?

25 It was the owner came running
30-30 in his hand
put the *caballo*⁵ out of its pain
the Chicanos shake their heads
turn away some rich father
30 fished out his wallet
held out the folds of green
as if green could staunch red
pools dripping from the ribbons
on the horse's flanks
35 could cast up testicles

¹ For the people of Hargill, Texas.

² Last night.

³ Village.

⁴ Whites.

⁵ Horse.

grow back the ears on the horse's head
no ears of corn but sheaths
hiding blades of steel
earth drinking blood sun rusting it
40 in that small Texas town
the *mexicanos* shuffle their feet
shut their faces stare at the ground.

Dead horse neighing in the night
come thundering toward the open faces
45 hooves iron-shod hurling lightning
only it is red red in the moonlight
in their sleep the *gringos* cry out
the *mexicanos* mumble if you're Mexican
you are born old.

■ EXPLORATIONS OF THE TEXT ■

1. Examine the image of the horse in stanza 1. What is the effect of the outstretched hands? of the "knives"? What is the meaning of the
2. Does the story of the boys who cut the horse have symbolic meaning? Explain: "It's the mind that kills."
3. Why does the speaker repeat the image of the horse and the hands of the corn and the knives? Is the repetition effective?
4. Why do the Mexicans "shuffle their feet/shut their faces stare at the ground" and "mumble"?
5. Examine the **paradox** in the next-to-last stanza. How can the dead horse still thunder "toward the open faces"?
6. Why do the *gringos* "cry"?
7. Why do the last two lines convey themes of the work?
8. How do the last two lines convey themes of the work?
9. Discuss symbolism, imagery, and language in this poem. Is the Spanish words and phrases effective?
10. Compare the themes of oppression and bigotry in this poem with ideas in "Hartley" or "The Chicago Defender Sends a Man to Little

■ JOURNAL ENTRIES ■

1. Gloss and annotate the poem, and write an end comment. See 1 example in Chapter 7.
2. React to the "Horse" of the *Mexicanos* and *Chicanos*. Why are you born old?