

Character Study: Jorge Mendoza (a.k.a. George)

Engineer, sailor, problem-solver—and a young man learning to embrace his full identity.

Overview

We first meet **George** at the start of the story, but we later learn his given name is **Jorge Mendoza**. Jorge began using the English version of his name to better “fit in” with his peers.

Jorge is the engineer of the group—he loves to build, fix, and figure things out. He’s also a sailor who takes on a daring solo journey to the mysterious island of Anu-hé. When shipwrecked, Jorge must rely on his knowledge of STEM, engineering, and survival to stay alive.

After being rescued, he must face his parents—especially his father, who shares his story of immigrating to the United States. Inspired by his father, Jorge decides to reclaim his identity and go by his real name, embracing his Mexican heritage.



Reflection & Analysis

1. List details that you learn from the description of Jorge’s garage, family, life, and Mikaela’s observations.
2. What do those things tell you about Jorge?
3. What knowledge and skills does Jorge contribute to solving the mystery in the attic?
4. Jorge’s use of STEM and engineering is key to his survival and the group’s success. What are some ways his skill can be used in real-life situations?
5. Imagine yourself in a challenging situation, or choose a real world challenge that STEM skills might help to solve. Describe the challenge and a STEM based solution.
6. Jorge’s father, Cesar, shares his own immigration story. Discuss the balance between his desire for a new life and his parent’s wishes, between risk and opportunity, and why it was important for Cesar to make amends.

Identity, Peer Pressure & Belonging

7. Jorge was born with the name Jorge but chose to go by George to fit in.
 - A) Discuss how peer pressure affect the way someone sees themselves or behaves.
 - B) Have you ever felt pressure to change something about yourself?
8. Do you think Jorge expected judgment that wasn’t really there?
 - A) How might that have stopped him from giving others - or himself - a chance?
 - B) Discuss how sometimes our fears about fitting in can hold us back from expressing ourselves.
9. Peer Pressure isn’t always negative. How can it be helpful?

When is it important to stand by your own values or identity, even if others disagree? Where do you draw the line?

Migration, Heritage & Culture

10. Human history is full of people leaving one place to seek opportunity in another.

- A) What cultures are represented in your own family, neighborhood, or city?
- B) What do you enjoy about learning from cultures outside your own (like food, music, celebrations, or language)?

11. Imagine people on the move, such as when Europeans were immigrating to the Americas.

Write two short diary entries—one from each perspective:

- A) **An immigrant:** someone leaving Europe to begin a new life in the colonies or the United States.
- B) **A person already living in the land** (such as the descendent of an earlier immigrant or someone from an indigenous Native American culture).

In each diary entry, reflect on;

- What is changing in their world?
- What are their hopes or fears?
- How does this movement affect their identity or future?

Exploration & Navigation

12. Jorge navigates using tools like a compass and nautical chart.

👉 Explore the history of navigation: How did early explorers and mapmakers help create the tools Jorge uses?

Choose one or more of the following figures to research:

- Gerardus Mercator*
- Prince Henry the Navigator*
- James Cook*

- A) What did this person contribute to navigation or mapping?
- B) How might their work have influenced the charts, maps, or compasses Jorge uses in the story?