

LEVELED BOOK • U

# THE OUTBURST



Written by Alyse Sweeney  
Illustrated by Linda Pierce

[www.readinga-z.com](http://www.readinga-z.com)



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## Focus Question

How does Samantha's character change throughout the story?



Words to Know	
accent	outlook
anxiety	passionate
coped	proverb
courage	qualities
horrid	relationships
irritation	wisdom

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 Level U Leveled Book  
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Correlation	
LEVEL U	
Fountas & Pinnell	Q
Reading Recovery	40
DRA	40





Grandma and I are similar in so many ways, it's no wonder we are so close, like two peas in a pod. We are crazy about karaoke, concerned about the environment, serious chess players, and **passionate** writers.

Grandma writes a famous mystery series starring her five grandchildren—I'm the lead detective—while I prefer to write poetry. Like all passionate writers, we share a love of words that led us to the habit of taping words to our bathroom mirrors—famous quotes for Grandma and favorite words for me.



That's why I never felt as **horrid** as the day I thought I ruined everything, like a wave crashing a breathtaking sand castle.

It was moving day, and Mom, Dad, and Grandma eagerly directed movers inside our antebellum North Carolina home. But my stomach was in a knot, and I needed air.

*Boing . . . boing . . . boing . . . .* It felt good to whack the basketball against the garage door—at least that hadn't changed from Pennsylvania to North Carolina. I tried to whack away the cloud of **anxiety** that had been hovering over me since I learned of the move last month—on the last day of school, actually. That's when Dad giddily broke the news about his fabulous new job about a million miles from friends and relatives. Life as I knew it was over, wrecked, finished, ruined.

"Please stop, *niña*," Mom called from the kitchen window. "You'll leave marks on the garage."

*Boing . . . boing . . . boing . . . .* I knew Dad despised his old job, but was it really that terrible, and was it necessary to leave the state to find a better one?! Did he even try to look for new employment in Pennsylvania?





“Hey, Sammy, your mother asked you to stop the banging, *por favor*,” Dad called, trying his best to mimic Mom’s Spanish **accent**.



*Boing . . . boing . . . boing . . .* But throughout the past month, I had never seen Dad so deliriously happy—humming, talking a mile a minute, and tickling Mom. His bliss means my misery, and that is so unfair I could scream!

*Boing . . . boing . . .* "Hey, watch it!" bellowed a mover, rubbing his head where the ball struck.

Grandma must have sensed my **irritation**, so she invited me to explore the trail behind our house, rescuing me from angry glares. "So how's it going, Sam?"

"It's going horribly, hideously, and horrifyingly awful! Look at my hair—I'm a complete frizz ball—and this place is like a giant steam room!"

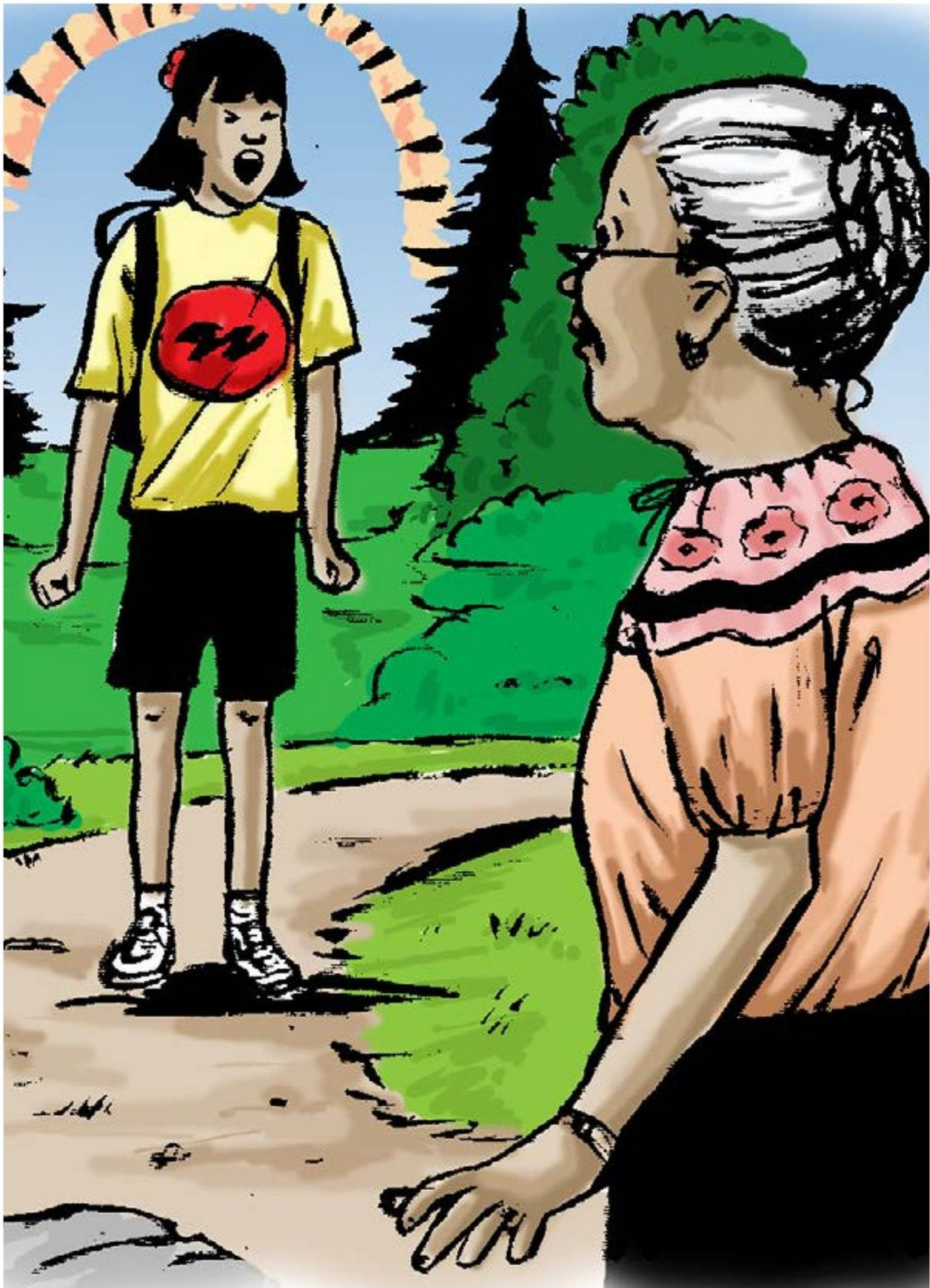
"We'll get used to it," said Grandma. "I do love how green and lush it is, though. Aristotle hit the nail on the head when he said, 'In all things of nature there is something of the marvelous.'"

"Well, there's nothing marvelous about moving here. Do you realize I should be swimming with Kate and Jordan right now! I wonder how long it will take before they forget all about me."

"I know it's difficult, Sammy, but you'll make new friends."



“How?” I screamed as my blood boiled.  
“Everyone here already has their friends. They don’t need an outsider nosing in and screwing up their **relationships**.” Angry tears blurred my vision, and my heart pounded like hail on a roof.







“Benjamin Franklin said, ‘Do not anticipate trouble, or worry about what may never happen. Keep in the sunlight.’”

That’s when I exploded like a firecracker.

“*¡Cállate!* Shut up!” I wailed. “Your stupid quotes aren’t helping!”

The ugly words hung in the steamy air for several long moments. I dreaded looking Grandma in the eye, and when I did, her eyes, appearing both concerned and stern, spoke volumes without her having to utter the words they intended to convey: Don’t ever speak to me that way again.



Then her mouth opened. “Samantha,” she spoke slowly and softly, “when Grandpa died, I was full of rage, and you know how I **coped**? I furiously wrote in my journal. Perhaps you can write poems about your feelings, and maybe that will keep your family from becoming human punching bags.”

I watched her walk down the trail, feeling more miserable and ashamed than I ever thought possible.

*What was the matter with me?* Grandma’s positive **outlook** and love of quotes are two of her most incredible **qualities**—they make her uniquely Grandma.

Back at the house, I unpacked my bedroom as quick as lightning. Luckily, everyone in the house was busy all day unpacking and arranging his or her own living space, leaving me uninterrupted time to think—and to write.

I scrawled in my journal all the crummy aspects of the move. I made lists of all the people, places, and things I’d miss—my Cuban cousins, my favorite soul food restaurant, and the secret hideaway in my old backyard where I could write in my journal undisturbed.



I wrote a poem about my fright over not being good at making new friends. Once again, Grandma showed me her **wisdom**, and the anger and anxiety were safe inside my journal and almost entirely out of my head. All I wanted to do next was make up with Grandma for my horrible behavior.

After serious brainstorming, I decided my apology would be a celebration of her, as well as her love of quotes.

I went online using my newly hooked-up computer and a search engine to find quotes featuring grandmothers, and then I made a collage using different-colored paper, paints, stickers, and glitter.

Before she looked at my handmade card, Grandma whirled around her room, showing me her furniture arrangement and the bird's nest outside her window in the longleaf pine. Then she plopped on the bed and beamed as she read aloud, "'Grandmas are moms with lots of frosting,' author unknown; 'A Grandmother is a little bit parent, a little bit teacher, and a little bit best friend,' by G. W. Curtis; and 'If nothing is going well, call your grandmother,' an Italian **proverb**."





She hugged me tightly, told me “Apology accepted,” and then said she loved me more than caramel-covered flan. Then she whispered in my ear, “John Wayne said, ‘**Courage** is being scared to death—but saddling up anyway.’ So saddle up, Sammy!”

And I did. She helped me find the strength to be brave.



## Glossary

<b>accent</b> ( <i>n.</i> )	a particular pronunciation or way of speaking a language that is associated with a group of people or a region (p. 5)
<b>anxiety</b> ( <i>n.</i> )	a feeling of worry or nervousness, usually in relation to something unknown or upcoming (p. 4)
<b>coped</b> ( <i>v.</i> )	successfully handled or overcame a difficulty or problem (p. 9)
<b>courage</b> ( <i>n.</i> )	strength in the face of difficulty, danger, fear, or pain (p. 11)
<b>horrid</b> ( <i>adj.</i> )	very unpleasant, frightful, or shocking; causing horror (p. 4)
<b>irritation</b> ( <i>n.</i> )	the state of being annoyed, angry, or impatient (p. 6)
<b>outlook</b> ( <i>n.</i> )	a person's way of thinking or attitude about life (p. 9)
<b>passionate</b> ( <i>adj.</i> )	having intense feelings or beliefs about something or someone (p. 3)
<b>proverb</b> ( <i>n.</i> )	an old and familiar saying that expresses a basic truth or belief (p. 10)
<b>qualities</b> ( <i>n.</i> )	features or characteristics of someone or something (p. 9)
<b>relationships</b> ( <i>n.</i> )	the ways in which two or more living things or groups interact or deal with each other (p. 7)
<b>wisdom</b> ( <i>n.</i> )	great knowledge, sense, or insight (p. 10)



# The Outburst

*A Reading A-Z Level U Leveled Book*  
*Word Count: 1,065*

## Connections

### Writing

Samantha is a passionate writer who loves words. Write a letter to a friend describing a passion of yours.

### Social Studies

Create a welcome kit for a student who is new to your school. What would you include, and why?



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