

Carmen Chico, Ch 4
Chicago Latina Trailblazer

The Accidental Public Servant: A Voice from Chicago's Southeast Side
Carmen Chico, 1929–Present

Summary Section:

The document is a first-person memoir by Carmen Chico, born Carmela Chavez in 1929, detailing her life and unexpected political journey on Chicago's Southeast Side from the 1950s through the 1970s. Despite describing herself as a naturally shy "wallflower," her innate passion for social justice entangled her life with Chicago's turbulent political history.

Continued speaking about discrimination, bilingual education, and the need for community advocacy. Maintained that people have a responsibility to improve conditions in their own neighborhoods and help those who feel excluded or unheard.

Carmen Chico's chapter traces her life from a shy child on Chicago's Southeast Side to an educator, activist, and political organizer.

Research Project Section; Notes for Carmen Chico; P. 21

Research Project Section includes:

- Instructions
- Graphic organizer
- Historical Note
- Checklist
- Rubric

Carmen Chico
Chicago Latina Trailblazer, Ch 4
Timeline

1950s Early Career

- **1955-56** Secretary of the League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC) council 313, working w/ David Cerda.
- **1957-64** Appointed Executive Secretary, Cardinal's Committee for the Spanish speaking in Chicago.
- **1958** Appointed Secretary, Illinois Federation of Mexican Americans (IFOMA) by Arturo Velasquez.
- **1959** Appointed Director, Social Center for Pan American Games Athletes at DeSales House, U of Chicago.

1960s–1970s

- **1964-71** District Director for AFSCME, AFL-CIO, district Council #19.
Conducted contract negotiations and budget presentations for nine (9) local unions including:
University of Chicago Hospitals & Clinics, and the Cook County School of Nursing
- **1968** Entered Northeastern Illinois University's BA program in education.
- **1972** Became politically active.
- **1974-79** Appointed Administrator, Department of Family Practice at Cook County Hospital by Dr. Jorge Prieto. Organized outpatient facilities at four medical locations.
- **1979-91** Executive director, CEO, Claretian Medical Center of South Chicago, Inc.

1980s–1990s

- **1970s-80s** Worked in Chicago Public Schools for seventeen years.
- **1981-91** Appointed to the Chicago Board of Health by four (4) Mayoral Administrations.
- **1985** Retires from teaching.
- **1993-96** Served as Consultant for Alivio Medical Center

Awards & Recognitions

- **1991** Healing Hands Award from Claretian Medical Center for years of dedication and commitment to the goal of delivering quality Health Care services to those in greatest need.
- **1999** Reconocimiento Ohtli Award from the Mexican Government.
- **2000** Invited to the inauguration of President Vicente Fox of Mexico.

Carmen Chico, Ch 4, CLT

Vocabulary & Definitions

Vocabulary: Aspirations, Delegation, discriminatory, Happenstance, Intertwined, Resilience, Temperament, Wallflower.

1. **Aspirations** – Strong hopes or goals for the future.
2. **Delegation** – A group of people chosen to represent others.
3. **Discriminatory** – Treating people unfairly based on differences such as race, gender, or background.
4. **Happenstance** – Something that happens by chance or accident.
5. **Intertwined** – Closely connected or linked together.
6. **Resilience** – The ability to recover from difficulties or keep going during hard times.
7. **Temperament** – A person's usual mood, behavior, or emotional nature.
8. **Wallflower** – A shy or quiet person who stays apart from social activity.



Carmen Chico, CLT, Ch 4

Potential Teaching Suggestions for Vocabulary

1. Personal Connection Warm-Up

Ask students to connect the vocabulary words to their own experiences. Students can write or discuss aspirations, resilience, or temperament using examples from their lives.

2. Character Trait Sorting

Students sort the vocabulary into categories such as personality traits, social situations, or goals. This helps students recognize relationships among the terms.

3. Context Clue Practice

Provide short passages where students infer meanings using surrounding details and context clues from the sentence.

4. Acting and Roleplay

Students act out words such as wallflower, delegation, resilience, or discriminatory while classmates identify the vocabulary term.

5. Vocabulary and Literature Connections

Students connect vocabulary words to characters, historical figures, films, or literature that demonstrate the meanings of the words.

6. Word Roots and Morphology

Teach students to identify roots, prefixes, and suffixes. For example, intertwined contains inter- meaning between, while discriminatory contains the root discriminate and the suffix -ory.

7. Four Corners Discussion

Place vocabulary words around the room and ask students to move to the word they believe best answers a discussion question.

8. Visual Vocabulary Cards

Students create vocabulary cards containing the word, definition, illustration, synonym, and a sentence using the word correctly.

9. Compare and Contrast

Students compare similar words such as resilience and aspirations or temperament and personality to understand subtle differences in meaning.

10. Quick Writes

Students complete short journal responses using the vocabulary in context. Prompts encourage personal reflection and application.

11. Discussion Circles

Students discuss questions such as how communities become intertwined or why discriminatory behavior is harmful.

12. Vocabulary Review Games

Use Bingo, matching games, Kahoot, relay races, or charades to reinforce vocabulary knowledge and increase engagement.

Carmen Chico, CLT, Ch 4
Vocabulary Definitions

Name: _____ Date: _____ Class: _____

Write a brief definition for each vocabulary word.

1. **Aspirations** _____

2. **Delegation** _____

3. **Discriminatory** _____

4. **Happenstance** _____

5. **Intertwined** _____

6. **Resilience** _____

7. **Temperament** _____

8. **Wallflower** _____



Carmen Chico, CLT, Ch 4

Vocabulary Quiz

Name: _____ Date: _____ Class: _____

Part I – Multiple Choice

Circle the best answer.

1. Which word means **strong hopes or goals for the future**?
 - A. Delegation
 - B. Aspirations
 - C. Temperament
 - D. Happenstance

 2. If two events are **intertwined**, they are:
 - A. separated
 - B. forgotten
 - C. closely connected
 - D. accidental

 3. A **wallflower** is someone who:
 - A. enjoys being the center of attention
 - B. stays quiet and apart from social activities
 - C. leads every discussion
 - D. represents a group

 4. Which word describes **unfair treatment based on race, gender, or other differences**?
 - A. Resilience
 - B. Happenstance
 - C. Discriminatory
 - D. Temperament
-

Part II – Matching

Match each word with its correct definition.

- | | |
|-------|---|
| _____ | 5. Delegation |
| _____ | 6. Happenstance |
| _____ | 7. Resilience |
| _____ | 8. Temperament |
| | A. A person's usual mood or behavior |
| | B. The ability to recover from difficulties |
| | C. Something that happens by chance |
| | D. A group chosen to represent others |
-

Part III – True or False

9. _____ Resilience means giving up when life becomes difficult.

 10. _____ A delegation is selected to represent other people.
-

Part IV – Short Answer

11. Write a sentence using the word **aspirations**.

12. Describe a situation that shows **discriminatory** behavior.



Carmen Chico, CLT, Ch 4
Vocabulary Quiz
Answer Key

Multiple Choice

1. B
2. C
3. B
4. C

Matching

5. D
6. C
7. B
8. A

True or False

9. False
10. True

Short Answer

11. Answers will vary.
Sentence should correctly use *aspirations* to mean strong hopes or goals.
12. Answers will vary.
Response should describe unfair treatment based on differences such as race, gender, or background.

Carment Chico, Ch 4; CLT Worksheet

Name _____ Date _____ Class/Hour _____

Part I: Multiple Choice

1. The context around the word Carmelo helps the reader understand that it is:
 - A. A steel tool
 - B. A type of caramel candy
 - C. A church festival
 - D. A union leader
2. Which event in the chapter is presented in a lighthearted way?
 - A. Carmen's university lobbying
 - B. A political election
 - C. Cleaning cactus in a washing machine to sell it
 - D. A factory closing
3. What can the reader infer about Carmen's stepfather?
 - A. He treated all the children equally
 - B. He knew Carmen was not his biological child
 - C. He encouraged Carmen to enter politics
 - D. He worked as a teacher
4. Which statement best expresses a central idea of the text?
 - A. Leadership belongs only to politicians
 - B. Quiet people can grow into leaders through activism
 - C. Social change is impossible
 - D. Families should avoid public issues

Part II: True or False

5. _____ The text explains that raspas are snow cones with sweet juice.
6. _____ Carmen's husband fully supported all of her political ambitions.

Part III: Matching

7. _____ Foreshadowing	A. "Lawyer" used to describe Paul's union role
8. _____ Metaphor	B. bilingual / bilingüe
9. _____ Cognate	C. St. Jude and future labor struggles

Part IV: Short Answer

10. Why is Carmen described as changing from a “wallflower” into a leader?

11. Explain one example of conflict between Carmen and her husband Paul.



Carmen Chico, Ch 4; CLT Worksheet, Answer Key

Answer Key

Part I: Multiple Choice

1. B. A type of caramel candy
2. C. Cleaning cactus in a washing machine to sell it
3. B. He knew Carmen was not his biological child
4. B. Quiet people can grow into leaders through activism

Part II: True or False

5. True
6. False

Part III: Matching

7. **C — Foreshadowing:** St. Jude and future labor struggles
8. **A — Metaphor:** “Lawyer” used to describe Paul’s union role
9. **B — Cognate:** bilingual / bilingüe

Part IV: Short Answer

10. **Why is Carmen described as changing from a “wallflower” into a leader?**

Sample answer: Carmen began as a quiet, reserved person who did not see herself as a leader. Through community involvement, education, and activism, she became more confident and willing to speak up and take leadership roles.

11. **Explain one example of conflict between Carmen and her husband Paul.**

Sample answer: Carmen and Paul sometimes disagreed about her growing involvement in politics and public life. Paul did not always support her political ambitions, creating tension between Carmen's public work and their marriage.



Carment Chico, Ch 4; CLT Quiz

Name _____ Date _____ Class/Hour _____

Multiple Choice

1. What does the context around the word Carmelo help the reader understand?
 - A. A union position
 - B. A type of caramel candy
 - C. A school event
 - D. A factory machine
2. Which event is presented in a humorous or lighthearted way?
 - A. A factory strike
 - B. A political speech
 - C. Cleaning cactus in a washing machine to sell it
 - D. A hospital visit
3. What can the reader infer about Carmen's stepfather?
 - A. He encouraged her political career
 - B. He knew she was not his biological child
 - C. He worked in education
 - D. He treated all children the same
4. Which statement best expresses a central idea of the chapter?
 - A. Families should avoid politics
 - B. Leadership only belongs to elected officials
 - C. Quiet people can grow into leaders through activism
 - D. Social change never succeeds

True or False

5. True or False: The text explains that raspas are snow cones with sweet juice.
6. True or False: Carmen's husband supported every one of her political ambitions.

Matching

7. Match each literary term with the correct example:

_____ Foreshadowing

_____ Metaphor

_____ Cognate

- A. bilingual / bilingüe
- B. "Lawyer" used to describe Paul's union role
- C. St. Jude and future labor struggles

Short answer

8. Why is Carmen described as changing from a “wallflower” into a leader?

9. Explain one example of conflict between Carmen and her husband Paul.

10. What word, phrase, sentence, or person stands out the most to you? Why?

Carmen Chico, Ch 4; CLT
Quiz, Answer Key

Carmen Chico, Chapter 4 — Quiz Answer Key

Multiple Choice

1. B. A type of caramel candy
2. C. Cleaning cactus in a washing machine to sell it
3. B. He knew she was not his biological child
4. C. Quiet people can grow into leaders through activism

True/False

5. True
6. False

7. Matching

- Foreshadowing — **C. St. Jude and future labor struggles**
- Metaphor — **B. “Lawyer” used to describe Paul’s union role**
- Cognate — **A. bilingual / bilingüe**

Short Answer

8. **Sample answer:** Carmen changes from a “wallflower” because she develops from a quiet, reserved person into someone actively involved in education, community issues, and politics. Her experiences give her the confidence to speak up and lead.
9. **Sample answer:** Carmen and Paul experienced conflict over her political involvement. Paul did not always support Carmen's political ambitions, which caused tension in their relationship.
10. **Answers will vary.** Students should identify a specific word, phrase, sentence, or person from the chapter and clearly explain why it stands out to them.

Carment Chico, Ch 4; CLT

Worksheet B

Name _____ Date _____ Class/Hour _____

Part I: Multiple Choice

1. Carmen compares herself to a “wallflower” in order to show that she:
 - A. enjoyed public attention
 - B. was naturally shy and quiet
 - C. wanted to become famous
 - D. disliked politics
2. Which statement best explains how Carmen changes over time?
 - A. She avoids public work completely
 - B. She becomes less interested in helping others
 - C. She grows from being reserved into a leader
 - D. She leaves Chicago to avoid discrimination
3. According to the text, what issue most directly motivated Carmen to advocate for bilingual education?
 - A. Factory strikes
 - B. Language barriers and discrimination in schools
 - C. National elections
 - D. Farmworker wages
4. Which description best matches the tone of the memoir?
 - A. Angry and sarcastic
 - B. Reflective and humble
 - C. Detached and scientific
 - D. Humorous and carefree

Part II: True or False

5. _____ Carmen describes herself as an “accidental” public servant.
6. _____ John Chico became president of one of the country’s largest unions.

Part III: Matching

7. _____ Wallflower
8. _____ Daley machine
9. _____ John Chico
 - A. Powerful political organization in Chicago
 - B. Symbol of Carmen’s quiet personality
 - C. Mexican American union leader in Local 65

Part IV: Short Answer

10. Explain one example of discrimination or inequality described in the text.

Part V: Short Answer

11. Did Carmen appear to have a personal philosophy about helping others or creating change?
Explain your answer using details from the text.

Part VI: Multiple Choice

12. Which event would make a strong small-group discussion topic?
- A. Whether Carmen should have moved away from Chicago
 - B. Whether trapping the principal at Sullivan School was justified
 - C. Whether steel mills should close permanently
 - D. Whether Carmen disliked public speaking
13. Which example from the text is a cognate?
- A. machine / wallflower
 - B. accidental / factory
 - C. actividad / activity
 - D. principal / union
14. What historical period forms the backdrop of much of Carmen's story?
- A. The American Revolution
 - B. The Civil War
 - C. The Great Depression through the 1970s
 - D. The 1990s technology boom

Carmen Chico, Ch 4; CLT

Worksheet B, Answer Key

Answer Key

Part I: Multiple Choice

1. **B** — was naturally shy and quiet
 2. **C** — She grows from being reserved into a leader.
 3. **B** — Language barriers and discrimination in schools
 4. **B** — Reflective and humble
-

Part II: True or False

5. **True**
 6. **True**
-

Part III: Matching

7. **B** — Symbol of Carmen's quiet personality
 8. **A** — Powerful political organization in Chicago
 9. **C** — Mexican American union leader in Local 65
-

Part IV: Short Answer

10. **Sample Answer:**

Carmen describes discrimination against Mexican Americans in housing, education, and politics. She also explains that many schools lacked bilingual teachers and materials, making it harder for Spanish-speaking students to succeed.

Part V: Short Answer

11. **Sample Answer:**

Yes. Carmen believed people should work to improve their communities and help those whose voices were ignored. Her work in education, community organizations, and politics reflected her belief that lasting change begins by serving others.

Part VI: Multiple Choice

12. **B** — Whether trapping the principal at Sullivan School was justified
13. **C** — *actividad* / *activity*
14. **C** — The Great Depression through the 1970s

Carmen Chico, Ch 4; CLT

Quiz B

Name _____ Date _____ Class/Hour _____

Part I: Multiple Choice

1. Which historical period serves as the backdrop for much of Carmen's story?
 - A. The Civil War
 - B. The Great Depression through the 1970s
 - C. The American Revolution
 - D. The 1990s technology boom

2. Carmen's use of the word "wallflower" mainly suggests that she:
 - A. enjoyed leading large crowds
 - B. wanted attention from others
 - C. was naturally quiet and reserved
 - D. disliked working with people

3. Which issue most influenced Carmen to fight for bilingual education?
 - A. Factory wages
 - B. National elections
 - C. Language barriers and discrimination in schools
 - D. Transportation problems

4. Which topic would best support a small-group discussion?
 - A. Whether trapping the principal at Sullivan School was justified
 - B. Whether Carmen enjoyed public speaking
 - C. Whether factories should move out of Chicago
 - D. Whether Carmen liked union meetings

Part II: Matching

5. _____ Daley machine
6. _____ John Chico
7. _____ Wallflower
 - A. Symbol of Carmen's shy personality
 - B. Powerful Chicago political organization
 - C. Mexican American union leader in Local 65

Part III: True or False

8. _____ Carmen refers to herself as an "accidental" public servant.
9. _____ John Chico became president of one of the country's largest unions.

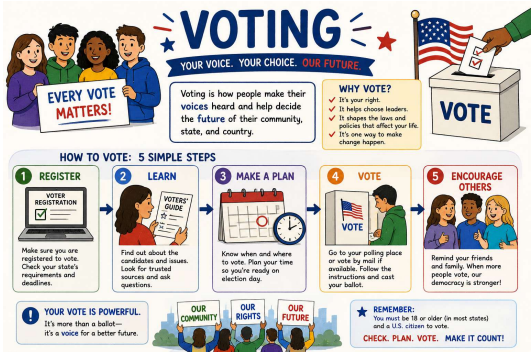
Part IV: Short Answer

10. Explain how Carmen changed from being a “wallflower” into a political leader.
- A. Symbol of Carmen’s shy personality
 - B. Powerful Chicago political organization
 - C. Mexican American union leader in Local 65

Part IV: Short Answer

10. Explain how Carmen changed from being a “wallflower” into a political leader.

11. Describe one example of discrimination or inequality discussed in the text.



Carmen Chico, Ch 4; CLT
Quiz B, Answer Key

Answer Key, Quiz B

Part I: Multiple Choice

1. **B** — The Great Depression through the 1970s
 2. **C** — Was naturally quiet and reserved
 3. **C** — Language barriers and discrimination in schools
 4. **A** — Whether trapping the principal at Sullivan School was justified
-

Part II: Matching

5. **B** — Powerful Chicago political organization
 6. **C** — Mexican American union leader in Local 65
 7. **A** — Symbol of Carmen's shy personality
-

Part III: True or False

8. **True**
 9. **True**
-

Part IV: Short Answer

- 10.** Explain how Carmen changed from being a “wallflower” into a political leader.

Sample Answer:

Carmen gained confidence through her involvement in the PTA, community organizations, and higher education. She became active in LULAC, participated in political reform efforts, and eventually ran for public office. Her experiences taught her to speak out for bilingual education and the Mexican American community.

- 11.** Describe one example of discrimination or inequality discussed in the text.

Sample Answer:

The memoir describes discrimination against Mexican Americans in schools, where many Spanish-speaking students lacked bilingual teachers and appropriate educational support. Carmen also discusses unequal political representation and the limited opportunities available to Latinos and women.

Research Project Section

Carmen Chico, Ch 4; CLT

Create a Notes section for Carmen Chico

Carmen Chico has no “Notes” in her chapter.

She worked to address immediate problems affecting her family and community, but many of these same issues were being addressed elsewhere in the United States and the world.

Research a national or international event, movement, organization, or leader from the same period that connects and/or is similar to Carmen's work.

Explain: **What was happening?**

Where did it occur?

Who was involved?

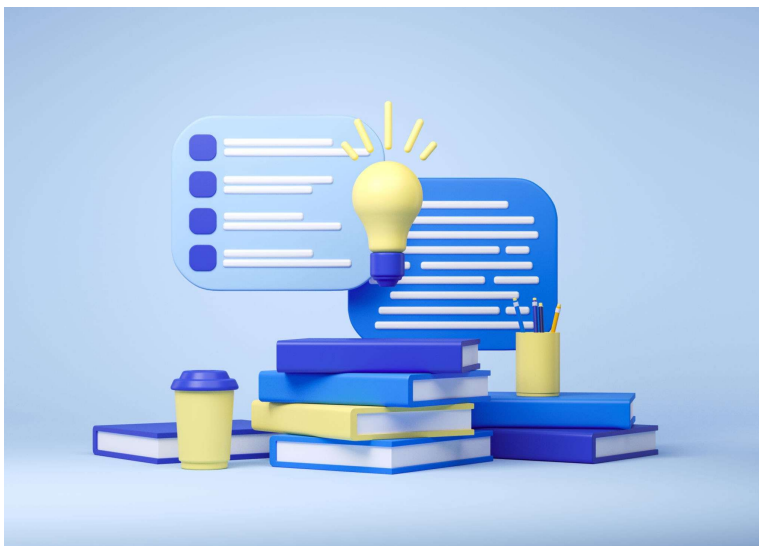
Is the subject interesting? Why or why not? and

How and why does it connect to Carmen Chico?

Then create a historical note that could have been included in Chapter 4.

W.9-10.4; W.9-10.7; W.9-10.8; RI.9-10.1; RI.9-10.3; RI.9-10.6; L.9-10.3; L.9-10.6

Higher-order skills: Research, synthesis, contextualization, comparison, analysis, making connections.



Carmen Chico, Chapter 4 — Creating the Missing Notes

Research • Connect • Synthesize

Name _____ Date _____ Group _____ Hour _____

Goal: Carmen Chico and other women in her community were addressing immediate needs. Zoom out. What similar issues were being addressed nationally or internationally at the same time? Create a historical note that connects the larger event to Carmen's work.

1. Start with Carmen Chico

Event or issue in Carmen's chapter

What was Carmen trying to accomplish?

Approximate year/time period

Who in her community was involved or affected?

2. Zoom Out — Research the Larger Context

What similar event, movement, issue, organization, or leader did you find?

Where and when was it happening?

Who or what was leading the effort?

What were they trying to change or accomplish?

Reliable source(s): title / organization / URL

Key fact or evidence from your research

3. Make the Connection — Synthesize

CARMEN

What was she doing locally?

CONNECTION

What do the two have in common?

LARGER CONTEXT

What was happening elsewhere?

Why does this connection matter? Why is it interesting?

Student Name _____

Student-Created Historical Note(s)

Use your research to write a note that could have appeared in Carmen Chico's chapter. Clearly identify the larger event, explain how it connects to Carmen, and show why the connection is significant.

Optional sentence frame: While Carmen Chico was _____ in Chicago, _____ was happening in _____. The two connect because _____.

Our Historical Note

Synthesis Check

- ☐ We clearly identified what Carmen Chico was doing.
- ☐ We identified a similar national or international event, movement, organization, or leader.
- ☐ We included where and when it happened.
- ☐ We explained who or what was leading the effort.
- ☐ We explained how and why it connects to Carmen's work.
- ☐ We explained why the connection is significant or interesting.
- ☐ We used and cited reliable sources.

Standards: L.9-10.3; L.9-10.6; W.9-10.4; W.9-10.7; W.9-10.8; RI.9-10.6

Higher-order skills: Research, synthesis, contextualization, comparison, analysis, making connections.

Carmen Chico, CLT Ch 4

Historical Note Research Checklist

Name: _____ Date: _____ Class/Hour: _____

Topic: _____

Use this checklist before submitting your historical note.

✓	Requirement	Points
☐	Historical Topic & Context — I clearly explain what was happening, where it occurred, when it occurred, and who was involved.	4
☐	Research & Sources — I use credible sources, check that my information is accurate, and properly cite my sources.	4
☐	Connection to Carmen Chico — I clearly explain how and why my topic connects to Carmen Chico's work, experiences, or community.	4
☐	Interest & Analysis — I explain whether the topic is interesting to me and why or why not , giving specific reasons.	2
☐	Historical Note — I create a concise, accurate historical note that could have been included in Ch. 4 and adds useful information to Carmen Chico's story.	4
☐	Writing & Language — My writing is clear, organized, concise, and uses appropriate vocabulary. I proofread for spelling, grammar, and punctuation.	2

Final Check

- ☐ I answered **all five research questions**.
- ☐ I made a clear connection between my research and **Carmen Chico**.
- ☐ I used information from **credible sources**.
- ☐ I cited my sources and did not copy another writer's words without giving credit.
- ☐ My historical note sounds like something that could reasonably appear in **Chapter 4**.
- ☐ I proofread my final work.

Total: _____ / 20

Standards: W.9-10.4; W.9-10.7; W.9-10.8; RI.9-10.1; RI.9-10.3; RI.9-10.6; L.9-10.3; L.9-10.6

Higher-order skills: Research, synthesis, contextualization, comparison, analysis, making connections.

Carmen Chico, Ch 4, CLT — Historical Note Research Rubric

Name: _____ Date: _____ Class/Hour: _____

Topic: _____

Criteria	4 – Excellent	3 – Proficient	2 – Developing	1 – Beginning	Points
Historical Topic & Context	Clearly explains what happened, where, when, and who was involved with strong historical context.	Explains the major historical information with adequate context.	Some important historical information is missing or unclear.	Information is limited, unclear, or inaccurate.	/4
Research & Sources	Uses credible sources effectively. Information is accurate, relevant, and properly cited.	Uses credible sources with appropriate citations.	Research is limited or citations are incomplete.	Little evidence of research or sources are not cited.	/4
Connection to Carmen Chico	Clearly and thoughtfully explains how and why the topic connects to Carmen Chico's work and community.	Makes a clear connection and explains its importance.	Identifies a connection but provides limited explanation.	Connection is unclear, inaccurate, or missing.	/4
Analysis & Personal Interest	Thoughtfully explains why the subject is or is not interesting , using specific reasons rather than simple opinion.	Explains personal interest with reasonable support.	Gives an opinion with little explanation.	Opinion is missing or unsupported.	/2
Historical Note	Creates a concise, accurate historical note that could naturally appear in Chapter 4 and adds meaningful context.	Creates an accurate note that clearly relates to the chapter.	Note is relevant but needs greater clarity, focus, or connection.	Note is incomplete, inaccurate, or does not fit the chapter.	/4
Writing & Language	Writing is clear, organized, concise, and uses appropriate academic vocabulary.	Writing is generally clear with minor errors.	Errors or organization sometimes interfere with meaning.	Writing is difficult to follow or contains frequent errors.	/2

Score: _____ / 20

Carmen Chico, Ch 4

Chicago Latina Trailblazer

Questions Section:

1. An example where context acts as a clue to determine word meaning can be found when describing her father's candy business. The text mentions he sold a "satiny-smooth-delight" called *Carmelo*. The surrounding context of "sweet juice," "candy," "sweets," and "soft and chewy" provides direct clues that a *Carmelo* is a type of caramel candy. **L.9-10.4.a**
2. A lighthearted element is found in how Carmen's family managed financially during a nine-month steelworker strike. They harvested free wild cactus in Indiana and repurposed a household appliance to process it, utilizing an old-fashioned clothes washing machine's agitator to scrub the cactus clean before dicing and selling it on street corners. **RL.9-10.6, RI.9-10.4**
3. An example of inference occurs when Carmen describes her childhood relationship with her stepfather. She notes that she "always knew he treated me differently" and was burdened with heavy responsibilities for her siblings at an early age. The reader can infer that the stepfather's harsher treatment and emotional distance stemmed from the unstated reality that he knew she was not his biological child, a fact Carmen did not explicitly discover until she was twelve years old. **RL.9-10.1**
4. The central theme developing over the text is that ordinary, quiet individuals can find a powerful collective voice and build inner resilience through a lifelong dedication to community advocacy and social justice. Carmen starts as a self-described "wallflower" who supports male-led unions by cooking. Over time, her experiences in the PTA, university curriculum lobbying, and national politics transform her into a proactive leader who realizes that true change comes from standing up and educating the next generation. **RL.9-10.2**
5. An example of verifying word meaning in context is the word *raspas*. The text explicitly defines it in the exact same sentence as "snow cones" with a sweet juice, allowing the reader to confirm the precise definition of the term via immediate appositive context. **L.9-10.4.d**
6. Early in the text, Carmen notes that her family's church, Our Lady of Guadalupe, housed the national shrine to St. Jude, "the patron saint of hopeless causes," which was established because so many parishioners were laborers facing massive steel mill cutbacks in the late 1920s. This serves as foreshadowing for the intense economic hardships, systemic discrimination, and grueling nine-month labor strikes her own family would later endure in those exact same South Chicago steel mills. **RL.9.6**
7. An example of someone giving a strong opinion occurs when Carmen details the pushback she received from her husband's family when she ran for ward committeeman. Her in-laws expressed the rigid, traditional opinion that "a woman's place is in the home," openly displaying their unhappiness with her stepping into the public political sphere. **RL.9.3**
8. Complex interactions are prominently displayed between Carmen and her husband, Paul. Paul is an extroverted union advocate who protects his fellow workers, yet he holds traditional expectations at home where Carmen is expected to be an "obedient wife". Their dynamic becomes deeply strained as Carmen enters politics; Paul takes care of the kids during her summer internship but is later deeply unhappy with her running for office as an Independent because he is a staunch Democrat, forcing Carmen to ultimately abandon her political aspirations to preserve their marriage. **RL-9-10.3**

9. Nuance and unique word relationships are shown when Carmen describes her husband's role as a union steward. The text notes that fellow workers would call him their "lawyer". This is not literal language—Paul did not have a law degree—but a nuanced metaphor highlighting his exceptional talking skills, amiability, and structural role in defending workers before management to save their jobs. **RL-9-10.3; L.9-10.5**
10. A unique phrase used in the text is the nickname given to Carmen's biological father: "Penny A Piece". Rather than being referred to by his actual name, his identity in the neighborhood was entirely constructed around the price of the candies he manufactured and sold. Regarding language connections, the text features clear cognates between English and Spanish, such as *bilingual* / *bilingüe* and *delegation* / *delegación*. **RL-9-10.4; L.9-10.5**
11. Carmen uses a poignant metaphor to analyze her personality when she repeatedly refers to herself as a "wallflower". By comparing herself to a quiet, unnoticed flower growing against a wall, she emphasizes her natural shyness, restraint, and preference to blend into the background. The nuance of this figurative language evolves later in the text when she states "the wallflower had gone away for the most part," showing her internal growth and political maturation, even though a small part of that quiet identity always remained. **L.9-10.5a**
12. The first-person point of view and Mexican-American immigrant culture heavily shape the narrative, filtering historical events through the lens of a marginalized community in South Chicago. Because of her cultural background, the systemic neglect of schools, language barriers, and factory labor struggles are not abstract historical facts; they are deeply personal, felt experiences of discrimination that directly drive her to seek out representation and advocate for bilingual education. **RL-9-10.6**
13. Several complex elements lend themselves well to a small group discussion, particularly the ethical and tactical debate surrounding Carmen's arrest at Sullivan Elementary School. Students can discuss whether the mothers' reactionary method of physically trapping the principal was a justified response to being ignored, or if Carmen's later perspective is correct—that working within the system through proactive meetings and political negotiation is a more effective way to achieve systemic reform. **SL-9-10.1a-d**
14. Yes, other relatives were heavily involved in political and community activism. Carmen's parents participated in early union organizing. More notably, her brother-in-law, John Chico, was a highly active member of Local 65, serving as the union's secretary for twenty-five years and eventually becoming its president. John was the first Mexican American to hold such a high-ranking position in one of the largest unions in the country. **RI.9-10.1**
15. The tone of the memoir is reflective, humble, and earnestly passionate. Writing from the perspective of being over ninety years old, Carmen looks back on her life with a sense of quiet amazement—referring to herself as an "accidental" public servant and a "wallflower"—while maintaining an enduring, resolute style when detailing her lifelong passion for social justice and helping the voiceless. **RI.9-10.4, RI.9-10.6**
16. The main social and political backdrop spans from the late 1920s through the 1970s, defined heavily by the economic desperation of the Great Depression, the growth of heavy manufacturing at the South Chicago steel mills, and widespread discrimination against Mexican Americans. Politically, the era is dominated by the powerful, exclusionary Democratic "Daley machine" in Chicago, set against the backdrop of national 1970s political upheavals, civil rights mobilization, and the rise of the Farmworkers' Movement. **RL.9-10.6**

17. A cognate is a word that is similar to one in another language. Give an example from the text.

An example of a cognate is “political” and the Spanish *político/política*. Another is “community” and *comunidad*. These words share similar spelling and meaning in both languages. **RI.9-10.4, L.9-10.4.a**

18. What elements of the story lend themselves to a small group discussion?

Topics for discussion include labor unions, bilingual education, women in politics, discrimination against Mexican Americans, reform movements in Chicago politics, and whether change is more effective inside or outside established systems. Students could also discuss Carmen’s arrest during the Sullivan School protest and her later reflections on compromise and activism. **SL.9-10.1a-d**

19. Did she have a personal philosophy?

Yes. Carmen believed people had a responsibility to improve their communities and help those who were overlooked or ignored. Her work in education, politics, and community organizing reflects that belief throughout the chapter. **RL.9-10.1, RI.9-10.1, W.9-10.1, W.9-10.9**

20. Did her career follow a logical path?

Yes. Her work developed from family and community experiences into broader public service. She moved from PTA involvement and childcare work to teaching, community organizing, politics, and bilingual education. Each step connected to her interest in helping working-class and Mexican American communities. **RI.9-10.3, W.9-10.1, W.9-10.9**