



House Taken Over

JULIO CORTÁZAR

Close Reading + Quizzes
with optional “Ice Age” comparison

◆ Full Product Preview ◆



PLOTTING SOMETHING

A Close Reading That Starts With the Plot

Students get enough help to follow the house and both takeovers before the lesson asks them to explain the story.

1 • ORDINARY LIFE FIRST

BEFORE THE TAKEOVER

Start With Their Ordinary Life

ROUTINE

What do they do again and again?

HOUSE

What does the house hold besides furniture?

SIBLINGS

What seems close, comfortable, or unusual about their life together?

OUTSIDE WORLD

How much do they seem to need other people, change, or anything outside this routine?

One extra question: What, if anything, already feels a little off?

HOUSE TAKEN OVER • ICE AGE

The sequence begins with routine, the siblings, the house, and the outside world. Students get oriented before the strange part begins.

2 • FOLLOW THE TAKEOVER

The First Takeover

First make sure you can explain what happened. Then worry about what it means.

1 • SOUND
Describe the first disturbance as specifically as the text allows.

2 • ACTION
What does the narrator do immediately?

3 • DECISION
What do Irene and the narrator decide to do next?

4 • IMMEDIATE CHANGE
What becomes unavailable, and how does the house's division let them respond?

WHAT SURPRISES YOU?
Which part of the sequence is most surprising: the sound, the narrator's reaction, or Irene's response? Why?

Students reconstruct what actually happens before they start explaining why it matters.

3 • THEN INTERPRET

What Do We Actually Know?

The story never tells us what took the house. That does not mean every explanation works equally well.

WE KNOW

Write 2 facts the story clearly gives us.

WE CAN INFER

Write 2 ideas supported by patterns or details.

WE CANNOT PROVE

Name 3 questions the story refuses to settle.

DETAILS THAT MAY MATTER
Circle two you keep coming back to.

☐ repeat ☐ routine ☐ lack of investigation
☐ inherited house ☐ objects left behind ☐ shrinking space

WHAT CAN YOU ARGUE?
Use one of these if it helps, or write your own.

1. Cortázar makes the takeover unsettling less through _____ than through _____.

2. The shrinking house matters because it changes / mirrors _____.

3. The ending matters because the yarn / key shows _____.

Evidence 1 _____

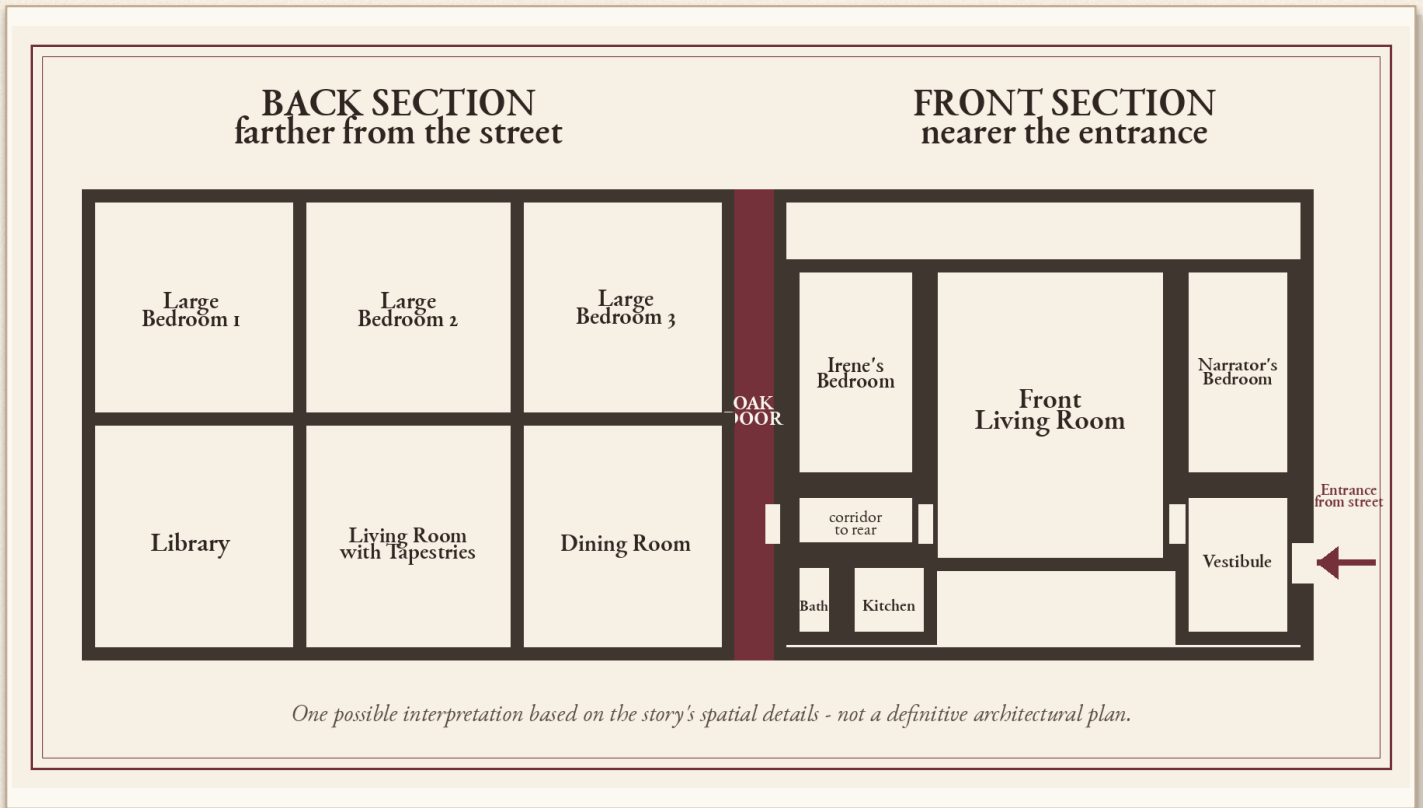
Evidence 2 _____

Why these details support your idea _____

Once the plot is secure, they sort what the story tells us, what we can infer, and what remains unresolved.

The House, Made Concrete

The revised map makes the front section, back section, and oak door visible without pretending Cortázar gives us a blueprint.



ONE POSSIBLE INTERPRETATION — NOT A DEFINITIVE FLOOR PLAN

STUDENTS USE THE MAP TO

- see what the oak door separates
- shade the back section after the first takeover
- shade the front section at the end
- track access rather than memorize architecture

WHY IT HELPS

The story becomes easier to follow once students can picture where the siblings retreat and how dramatically their usable world shrinks.

The bedrooms are placed on either side of the front living room, following the story's description. The exact architecture remains interpretive.

Student Work, Not Just Slides

The packet carries the close reading. Students record what changes, what can be proved, and how the two works treat the impossible.

They Adjust Strangely Well

After the first takeover, they lose a lot—but some parts of life actually get easier.

Look for both:

WHAT THEY LOSE

Rooms / space

Objects / possessions

Choices / access

What fades from attention?

WHAT GETS EASIER

Housework / cleaning

Time / routine

What continues normally?

One unexpected benefit

THINK ABOUT IT

Why are they able to settle into a smaller life so quickly? What does routine have to do with it?

Plotting Something

What Do We Actually Know?

The story never tells us what took the house. That does not mean every explanation works equally well.

WE KNOW

Write 2 facts the story clearly gives us.

WE CAN INFER

Write 2 ideas supported by patterns or details.

WE CANNOT PROVE

Name 1 question the story refuses to settle.

DETAILS THAT MAY MATTER

Circle two you keep coming back to.

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☐ inherited house ☐ objects left behind ☐ shrinking space

WHAT CAN YOU ARGUE?

Use one of these if it helps, or write your own.

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Evidence 1 _____

Evidence 2 _____

Why these details support your idea _____

Plotting Something

Two Impossible Homes

Compare how people react before you start talking about genre.

QUESTION	HOUSE TAKEN OVER	ICE AGE
Where does the impossible enter?		
What do the people do first?		
What becomes normal again?		
How much do they try to investigate or explain what is happening?		
How does their response affect the audience?		

PUT IT TOGETHER

The two works are similar because _____, but they feel different because _____.

Plotting Something

WHAT CHANGES AFTER THE FIRST LOSS?

Students notice the strange mix of loss and convenience: less space, fewer belongings — and less cleaning.

WHAT DO WE ACTUALLY KNOW?

A know / infer / cannot prove structure keeps the mystery open while still requiring evidence.

TWO IMPOSSIBLE HOMES

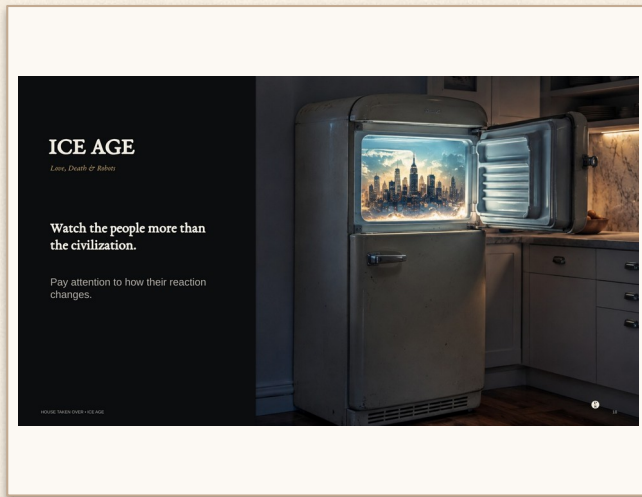
The comparison asks how people react, how much they investigate, and what happens when the impossible becomes ordinary.

Working pages are built to photocopy cleanly, with generous writing space and a small, unobtrusive maker's mark.

“Ice Age” Comes After the Cortázar Work

The episode is used as a comparison, not a substitute for close reading. Students watch the people more than the civilization.

WATCH THE REACTION CHANGE



Students track disbelief, curiosity, fascination, and ordinary behavior returning. The point is to notice how their response changes.

THE COMPARISON

Ice Age

Watch the people more than the civilization.



WHILE YOU WATCH

Pay attention to how their reaction changes.

Short notes are enough. Just keep track of the changes.

DISBELIEF What is their first reaction?

CURIOSITY What keeps them watching?

FASCINATION Does this become entertainment? If so, when?

ORDINARY LIFE What familiar behavior eventually returns?

Plotting Something

1

The packet asks students to compare how people react, how much they try to explain what is happening, and how that behavior shapes the audience’s response.

The “Ice Age” episode is not included. It contains strong language and should be previewed according to your school’s media policies.

Ready to Run in a Real Class Period

The teacher guide gives pacing, reading landmarks, likely sticking points, suggested responses, and a supported five-day route.

House Taken Over + “Ice Age”

Teacher Guide • Julio Cortázar

Plotting Something

BEST USE

4-day lesson sequence; optional fifth day for genre and/or Poe.

TIME

Designed for approximately 40-minute class periods, with about 35 minutes of active instructional time.

MATERIALS

Lesson slides • 11-page student packet • licensed copy of “House Taken Over” • school-approved access to “Ice Age” • quiz A/B.

ASSESSMENT

10-point comprehension quiz + packet work. The packet works best as guided notes and discussion, not as a high-stakes worksheet.

COPYRIGHT / ACCESS

Story text and episode are not included. Use your licensed text and school-approved media access. “Ice Age” includes strong language; so preview it before classroom use and follow your school’s media-viewing policies.

START HERE

Do not ask students to solve the takeover at the beginning. Make sure they understand the siblings’ ordinary life and the basic layout of the house first. Then pay attention to how readily the siblings give up space and settle into a smaller life. Interpretation can come after students have the story straight.

FOUR-DAY PLAN

- Day 1: get the siblings’ ordinary life and the house straight; read through the first takeover.
 - Day 2: notice what they lose and what oddy gets easier; finish the story through the yarn and key.
 - Day 3: give the quiz, separate what the story tells us from what we infer, and write a supported claim.
 - Day 4: watch “Ice Age” and compare how people react when the impossible enters an ordinary home.
 - Optional Day 5: spend more time on genre terms and/or bring in “The Fall of the House of Usher” if it genuinely helps the comparison.
- ### GOOD PLACES TO STOP
- Stop 1: just before the narrator hears the first disturbance. Students should already understand the house, the siblings’ routines, Irene’s knitting, and the narrator’s trips downtown.
 - Stop 2: just after the narrator closes and bolts the oak door, tells Irene the back section has been taken over, and the siblings agree to live on the remaining side.
 - Stop 3: after the adjustment section, before the second disturbance. Students should be able to name both what the siblings lose and what becomes easier.
 - Stop 4: finish the story through the second disturbance, the quick escape, Irene’s trailing yarn, and the discarded key.

COMPREHENSION QUIZ — FORM A

COMPREHENSION QUIZ — VERSION A

Name _____ Class / Period _____

Circle the best answer. Each question is worth 1 point.

1. Who lives together in the family house?
 - A. The narrator and his sister Irene.
 - B. The narrator and his cousin Irene.
 - C. The narrator and his sister Irene.
 - D. The narrator and his sister Irene.
2. What does Irene spend much of her time doing after the takeover is finished?
 - A. Writing letters.
 - B. Gardening.
 - C. Reading.
 - D. Planning.
3. Why does the narrator regularly go downtown?
 - A. To buy and stock up for household needs.
 - B. To get fresh air from the house.
 - C. To meet friends at a cafe.
 - D. To work at an office.
4. What happens the back section of the house from the first takeover?
 - A. It is taken over.
 - B. It is destroyed.
 - C. It is burned down.
 - D. It is left empty.
5. What does the narrator do after hearing the first disturbance?
 - A. He searches the house alone.
 - B. He shows Irene and tells her to stay.
 - C. He calls the neighbors.
 - D. He calls the police.
6. What unexpected advantage do the siblings notice after taking part of the house?
 - A. There is less cleaning to do.
 - B. They can finally get out of bed.
 - C. They begin receiving more letters.
 - D. The house becomes warmer at night.
7. Which perspective does the narrator especially miss from the siblings’ life?
 - A. His work.
 - B. His school.
 - C. His family collection.
 - D. His French books.
8. What causes the siblings to flee the house completely?
 - A. They are scared coming from the back rooms.
 - B. The front door suddenly opens to heat.
 - C. They hear the mysterious sounds in the section where they live.
 - D. The narrator has changed his mind.
9. What happens to Irene’s knitting as they escape?
 - A. The narrator cuts the yarn with a scissor.
 - B. It catches fire in the hallway.
 - C. She leaves it on the floor.
 - D. She leaves it on the floor.
10. What does the narrator do with the key after they escape?
 - A. He gives it to Irene.
 - B. He throws it into the street.
 - C. He leaves it on the floor.
 - D. He takes it to his pocket.

Plotting Something

COMPREHENSION QUIZ — FORM B

COMPREHENSION QUIZ — VERSION B

Name _____ Class / Period _____

Circle the best answer. Each question is worth 1 point.

1. What happens the back section of the house from the first takeover?
 - A. It is taken over.
 - B. It is destroyed.
 - C. It is burned down.
 - D. It is left empty.
2. Why does the narrator go downtown?
 - A. To buy and stock up for household needs.
 - B. To get fresh air from the house.
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Plotting Something

PACING THAT HAS AN ESCAPE ROUTE

Use the four-day core sequence, or slow the reading down with the supported five-day option.

QUICK ACCOUNTABILITY

Two straightforward quiz forms check whether students actually followed the story before discussion moves deeper.

EDITABLE FILES INCLUDED

PowerPoint and Word versions let you adjust pacing, wording, or formatting for your own classes.

Everything Included

A complete classroom package with editable versions — plus clear notes about what is and is not included.

LESSON PRESENTATION

23 slides

PDF + editable PowerPoint

STUDENT PACKET

11 pages

PDF + editable PowerPoint

TEACHER GUIDE

8 pages

PDF + editable Word

COMPREHENSION QUIZZES

A/B forms

PDF + editable PowerPoint

GOOGLE FORMS BANK

10 questions

CSV question bank

START HERE

1 page

Quick file guide

UPDATED SEPTEMBER 2026

New text-grounded house map • clearer pacing • more natural classroom language
revised comparison questions • corrected quiz forms

Good to know: “House Taken Over,” “The Fall of the House of Usher,” and the “Ice Age” episode are not included.