1. Narration
A. Who is telling the story?
- The story is told by a third-person limited omniscient narrator.
- Characters are referred to as “him”, “her”. Most insight is shared about Belisa; narrator mostly reveals her thoughts and feelings.

2. A) How is the setting connected to the conflict? To the characters?
South America-: harsh climate (desolate, desert drought) social poverty, political instability, civil wars
- pre-20th century- main mode of transport is horseback

- Belisa is determined to overcome the poverty and hardship she was born into.
- Colonel: harsh conditions have formed him into a tough human being. Belisa sees the softer side of the man.

B) Would the story change if the setting changed?
To some degree- if the harshness of the setting was removed, yes.

3. A) What are the major complications (rising action) leading up to the climax of the story?
- Belisa born into extreme poverty becomes resolved to overcome her hardships.
- Decides to sell words (learns to read, is kidnapped and provides service for colonel, giving him a powerful speech).

B) Are these events logical and believable?
No, magic realism. We suspend our belief. How could two words have such effect on a person as they do on the Colonel?

C) To what degree is the conflict resolved?
- Belisa is brought back to face the Colonel. We see that he is no longer the same man; he is much softer.
4. Why does the story end when and where it does?
- Resolution provides the message- the pen is mightier than the sword.

5. Is the dialogue convincing?
- Yes, reflects the superstitions of the era and the area of South America
- reflective of how men treated women at that time.

6. What are the major personality and physical attributes of the protagonist?

Belisa-
- she has led a difficult life (poverty, drought, death of siblings, limited opportunity)
- strong, stubborn, determined, opportunistic, courageous
- overcomes illiteracy: determined not to live the same type of life her ancestors have, does not back down even to the great Colonel.

Antagonist?
- Single-minded, goal-oriented, powerful, feared, merciless

7. How are the characters, setting, and plot related to the theme?

- Need for words even in the middle of a political campaign- the pen is mightier than the sword.

8. Does the writer’s style suit the content of the story?

“Words” is repeated several times which re-enforces the power words convey in the story. The concept that language and literacy are equated with power, particularly in an area of pronounced illiteracy, is impossible to miss.

Sentences are varied in length. Generally speaking, the narrator’s sentences are longer and more complex, while the dialogue contains shorter sentences. This emphasizes the thoughts and words of the characters and what they have to say. Little dialogue.

a) Figurative language–

Hyperbole-“born into a family so poor they did not even have names to give their children” p.237
“Men fled at the sight of him, children trembled, and women miscarried from fright” p.240

Simile- “...threw her like a sea bag across the rump...”

Alliteration- “her strength failed her and she slumped to the ground, sinking into a confused dream.”

9. Is the ending satisfying or rather open-ended?
Open-ended. It seems that the colonel has lost his political aspirations.

10. Which element, in your opinion, is strongest?
The setting. The area is known for war and a lack of opportunity for education. Education equals power and the opportunity to change. The value of words (literacy) is evident throughout the story.

How realistic is this story?

Magic realism- a kind of modern fiction in which fabulous and fantastical events are included in a narrative that otherwise maintains the “reliable” tone of an objective realistic report.
-Context may be unfamiliar to North American students living in the 21st century.