

In the selection, a boy named Journey is visiting his grandparents on their farm. While he is there, Journey looks at photographs of his sister Cat, his grandparents, and baby Emmett. Read the selection and answer the questions that follow.

from ***Journey***

by Patricia MacLachlan

- 1 Summer rains came, soft at first, with mists that lay like lace over the meadows. When the sky grew darker and the rain steady, Grandma sent us out to gather peonies.¹ Grumbling, we carried dripping pink and white armfuls into the house, filling all the pitchers we could find and a washtub in the kitchen. The smell filled the house, and so did the ants that crawled down from the blooms, crisscrossing the house like sightseers.
- 2 Grandfather, restless, lurked through the hallways, taking pictures with the new flash attachment bought in town and breaking into sudden dances of ant-stomping. Blasts of light popped everywhere until Grandma ran out of patience.
- 3 “I have spots in front of my eyes, Marcus! I can’t read! Go away. Be a farmer.”
- 4 Grandfather was insulted.
- 5 “I am a farmer who takes pictures,” he said haughtily. Then he brightened. “I am a photographer-farmer.”
- 6 Grandma, only a little amused, banished him to the barn, where I watched him take cow close-ups until the cows, bothered by the lights, showed him their backsides.
- 7 “Maybe the chickens,” he muttered.
- 8 I stood behind Grandfather, trying to see what he saw through the camera. Then I walked to the back of the barn where his pictures hung, looking again at the familiar ones of Grandma and Cat and me. There were new ones, too—Grandma smiling from the stove, and one of Cat hoeing in the garden with a fierce look, the hoe poised above the soil as if she might be killing a black snake. And then I saw it—the picture I had taken of Grandfather with Emmett on his

¹ *peonies* — garden plants with large flowers

knees, Emmett’s mouth opened, light from the window around them both. The edges were blurred and soft, as if it were a painting. Or a memory. *Trot, trot to Boston*.² For a moment I felt like I was Emmett, sitting on someone’s knees. Someone who sang to me. I stared, goose bumps coming up on my arms. I stepped back to bend down to see the picture better and bumped up against Grandfather standing behind me.

9 “You moved the camera,” he said. “That’s why the edges are fuzzy.”

10 I nodded.

11 “It’s not a good picture, I guess.”

12 “Journey,” said Grandfather, his voice soft, “it is a wonderful picture.”

13 “But I moved the camera.”

14 “You did. See how it looks like Emmett and I are the only ones there, how we look like we’re wrapped in a cocoon, away from the rest of the world? See how the edges frame us?”

15 Grandfather’s voice rose with excitement, and I smiled even though I didn’t want to.

16 “Well,” I said, embarrassed and pleased. “Well, it’s not perfect.”

17 “Perfect!” Grandfather almost spit out the word. His face softened. “What is perfect? Journey, a thing doesn’t have to be perfect to be fine. That goes for a picture. That goes for life.” He paused. “Things can be good enough.”

² *Trot, trot to Boston* — singing game played with small children