

Name: _____ Class: _____

Fifth Grade Autobiography

By Rita Dove
From Grace Notes • 1989

Rita Frances Dove is a contemporary American writer. She is the second African American poet to receive the Pulitzer Prize for Poetry. As you read, consider what the poet remembers about his or her childhood. What details stick out in his or her memory, and why are these details significant?

- [1] I was four in this photograph fishing
with my grandparents at a lake in Michigan.
My brother squats in poison ivy.
His Davy Crockett cap
[5] sits squared on his head so the raccoon tail
flounces down the back of his sailor suit.

- My grandfather sits to the far right
in a folding chair,
and I know his left hand is on
[10] the tobacco in his pants pocket
because I used to wrap it for him
every Christmas. Grandmother's hips
bulge from the brush, she's leaning
into the ice chest, sun through the trees
[15] printing her dress with soft
luminous paws.

- I am staring jealously at my brother;
the day before he rode his first horse, alone.
I was strapped in a basket
[20] behind my grandfather.
He smelled of lemons. He's died—

but I remember his hands.



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Text-Dependent Questions

Directions: For the following questions, choose the best answer or respond in complete sentences.

1. PART A: Which of the following statements best describes the speaker's point of view? [RL.6]
 - A. The speaker is fifth grade child, reflecting on a photograph captured when he or she was four years old.
 - B. The speaker is a four-year-old child imagining what it would be like to be older.
 - C. The speaker is an adult trying to cope with the death of a loved one.
 - D. The speaker is a child addressing his or her mother.

2. PART B: Which details from the poem best supports your answer to Part A? [RL.1]
 - A. "He smelled of lemons. He's died--"
 - B. "My grandfather sits to the far right"
 - C. "I was four in this photograph"
 - D. "I am staring jealously at my brother"

3. PART A: Which of the following words best describes the tone of this poem? [RL.4]
 - A. Depressed
 - B. Jealous
 - C. Hopeful
 - D. Thoughtful

4. PART B: Copy a detail from the poem that supports your answer to Part A. [RL.1]

5. Which of the following statements best describes the speaker's feelings about the death of his grandfather? [RL.6]
 - A. The speaker is distraught over the death of his grandfather.
 - B. The speaker doesn't have a clear memory of his grandfather, and doesn't fully comprehend his death.
 - C. The speaker is somewhat saddened by the death of his grandfather, but not as sad as his older brother.
 - D. The last time the speaker saw his grandfather was when he went fishing.

6. What is the speaker's relationship to his older brother? Cite evidence in your answer. [RL.3]

7. Re-read the description of the speaker's grandmother in lines 12-13. Which of the following best describes the function of this description as it relates to the overall structure of the poem? [RL.5]

- A. The description of the speaker's grandmother symbolizes the role she played in the speaker's childhood – a warm, motherly presence.
- B. The description of the speaker's grandmother contrasts the description of the speaker's brother, who was mean and competitive.
- C. The description of the speaker's grandmother emphasizes how little the speaker remembers of his grandparents.
- D. The description of the speaker's grandmother helps the reader understand how the grandmother felt about the speaker.

