

Grandma's Birthday

It was a beautiful spring day outside. ~~Lauren could see the sunshine out the window as she sat at the piano in the living room practicing her scales.~~ In the kitchen, her mother was starting to make a cake. The next day would be Lauren's grandmother's 60th birthday, and the family was having a big party. Relatives were coming to visit from all over the state. Some were driving several hours. More than one relative would stay overnight in town.

Lauren quit playing and turned around on the piano bench. "Mom?" she called out.

Her mother called back, "Come in the kitchen if you want to talk."

Lauren left the piano and walked to the kitchen. "Are you sure you don't need help making food for tomorrow?" she asked.

Her mother said, "Thank you again for offering, but you have your own work to do. I think it's more important that you practice your piano and then do your homework."

Lauren went back to the piano. She loved to play piano and often would practice for hours. She would lose track of the time when she played. First, she practiced a song by Beethoven. It was a difficult piece, but Lauren enjoyed it. It was very dramatic music.

Then she started practicing a different type of music. She played a song called "The Maple Leaf Rag." This song was happy and a little tricky because it was so fast. Everything called a "rag" was fast. Lauren liked to play "The Maple Leaf Rag" because it reminded her of the way maple leaves could blow around in the wind. It made her think the leaves were enjoying themselves, having a party of their own.

When it started to get late, Lauren closed the lid of the piano. Her mother was still in the kitchen. Lauren said, "Can I help with anything else? Maybe I should change the sheets on the guest bed."

Her mother said, "I took care of that while you were at school today. Maybe you can help tomorrow, but work on your homework for now."

Lauren went down the hall to her room and got out her math homework. As she studied, she could hear her mother running a vacuum cleaner over the floors outside her door.

The next day, Lauren went to school. She kept thinking about the party and about how hard her mother was working to get ready for it. She had asked her mother to save a chore or two for her to do after school because she wanted to help, but Lauren knew her mother wouldn't save a chore. Her mother would have to get everything done before she could relax.

When Lauren got home, the house looked beautiful. There were flowers in the vases and a banner saying "Happy Birthday" was strung across the living room. Aunt Cassie and Uncle Max had brought Grandmother to town. They had driven six hours.

Lauren gave her aunt, uncle, and grandmother each a hug. Then she said, "The house looks wonderful, Mom. But I wish I could have been more help." Her mother gave her a big squeeze around the shoulders and said, "Your job is to play the piano for us! We need a little party music."

Lauren sat at the piano and played "The Maple Leaf Rag." She played other songs too, but she played "The Maple Leaf Rag" more than once. The guests arrived and Lauren played the piano as she watched them out the window, getting out of their cars and then coming to the front door. She thought how like leaves her relatives were, blowing in with the wind on a beautiful day and dancing at their own happy party.

Grandma's Birthday *(cont.)*

After reading the story, answer the questions. Circle the letter before each correct answer.

1. What does Lauren's mother mean when she says, "Your job is to play the piano for us."
 - a. She thinks playing the piano is a chore.
 - b. Lauren's mother wants Lauren to entertain their guests.
 - c. She thinks the maple leaves should be cleaned up.
 - d. Lauren's mother thinks their guests will leave if there's no music.
2. In the story, the Beethoven piece that Lauren plays is described as "difficult." What does "difficult" mean in this sentence?
 - a. hard to manage
 - b. hard to do
 - c. controversial
 - d. puzzling
3. Why did Lauren lose track of time when she practiced the piano?
 - a. Lauren daydreamed about the music while she practiced.
 - b. Lauren became bored by practicing so much.
 - c. Lauren was more interested in her helping her mother.
 - d. Lauren was thinking about the party.
4. Which of these explains why Lauren's mom said to her, "Maybe you can help tomorrow"?
 - a. She didn't like the way Lauren did the chores.
 - b. She did not want Lauren to be in her way.
 - c. She had planned to have Lauren play at the party.
 - d. There were some chores that needed to wait until the next day.
5. According to your answer for Number 4, Lauren's mom might have described Lauren as
 - a. helpful and talented
 - b. eager and athletic
 - c. distracted and forgetful
 - d. careless and selfish
6. A main point of this story is how thoughtful Lauren is. Choose the best example of this thoughtfulness.
 - a. Lauren practiced a song called "The Maple Leaf Rag."
 - b. Lauren thought her relatives were like leaves, dancing at the party.
 - c. Lauren did her math homework while her mother vacuumed.
 - d. Lauren offered to help her mom make the food for the party.