

## A SPECIAL GIFT

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[Assignment: Using Thomas' essay "Memories of Christmas" as a model, write your own childhood recollection. Aim for vibrant description, but don't neglect a statement of purpose that you will have determined before beginning to write.]

(1) There is a shaft of light touching on my face. As I turn to locate the source, my eyes come to rest upon the antique jewelry box that is sitting on my dresser. The sun is striking the gold tones on the box in such a way as to spread the reflected streams of light across the room.

(2) The jewelry box is centered on the dresser underneath an oval white doily, just as my grandmother had placed it upon her dresser. The box is rectangular in shape and is made of cedar wood. Over fifty years it has held up as a strong and solid piece of craftsmanship.

(3) The jewelry box is supported on four legs, each approximately one half inch in height. The legs are shaped as spheres at the bottom and then narrow as they extend upward, until they fan out into a shell-like design. The clasp, as well as two hinges along the back side of the box, had to be replaced because of an accumulation of rust. Today, the clasp is surrounded by a filigree pattern, which although modern, does not appear out of place. At the top of the jewelry box there is a one-inch border of wood--level around all four sides of the surface. The wood inside the border is elevated one quarter of an inch higher than that along the outside. Separating the two levels of wood are beautifully hand-carved, elongated roses. The raised portion of wood has a lacquered picture upon the surface, but today is indecipherable.

(4) Along the back side and nearer to the bottom of the box there is a key. It has also rusted some over the years and appears fragile to the touch. I turn the key slowly, gingerly, until the tension eases and I can wind it completely. As I lift the lid, an old familiar tune begins to play. Although the melody has slowed some and the tone is much deeper than I recall, the song is one that I will not forget. Whenever my grandmother was lighthearted, she could be heard humming this song to herself.

(5) Enveloped by nostalgia, I smell the strong, sweet smell of honeysuckle drifting throughout the open fields. Next I sense a soft breeze that brings the fragrance of freshly mown lawns mixed with rose and flower gardens. Familiar scents within the old farmhouse return. The wonderful aromas emitted from my grandmother's kitchen mingle with the sweet pipe tobacco that is lingering throughout the rooms made of pine. The unique combinations are unforgettable. Simply opening the

jewelry box seems to release all of these scents.

(6) A beautifully etched mirror occupies the entire inside surface of the lid. Below the mirror is a tray; it is covered in a soft, red material and divided into sixteen separate compartments, eight large and eight small. My grandmother used this tray for her smaller trinkets, especially the earrings which she favored. I lift the lid to expose the lower level. It is one compartment, undivided, covered in the same material as the upper level. My grandmother bestowed many pieces of jewelry on me in the past, and today the same pieces are still safe within the box. As I gaze into my keepsake, I return to a time when the world was seen through a child's eyes, when the jewelry box contained magic and the trinkets and baubles inside were the treasures of the world.

(7) One memory that I hold especially dear is playing dress-up as a young girl in my grandmother's clothing and jewelry. She extended all her personal belongings to me; she withheld nothing, regardless of value. Beyond that my grandmother would give me all of her time and attention whenever I asked. I especially enjoyed listening to her as she related stories about our heritage; according to her, my ancestors were admirable because they were honest, hard-working people.

(8) Grandmother herself was a wonderful example of this heritage. She was a proud and caring person; she was quick to help a neighbor, and she embraced everyone as special. Many times, I have walked trays overflowing with food to Grandmother's neighbors; she always knew when someone was ill or sick in bed. An invitation to dinner at my grandmother's house was rarely turned down. Her friends knew that they could expect a feast, ending with their favorite dessert. My grandmother could never turn her back on anyone; and for me she was always there when I needed her.

(9) When I felt alone and overlooked, my grandmother would place trinkets for me in her jewelry box and make me feel special. When I felt insecure, my grandmother related stories of our ancestors and family background to me. She wanted me to be proud and to proceed in life with dignity. Later in my life, when I experienced situations that seemed impossible or hard to accept, my grandmother would assure me that there was a reason for everything I experienced in the world. I believed her, and I learned to search through the difficult periods in life to find some purpose or meaning.

(10) The music is fading, yet the memories linger. The sun has permeated the entire room, filling it with warmth. As I begin to hum the remaining notes sent forth from within the music box, I hear my grandmother's voice blending with mine.