



Grandpa and Tim

Read the following story and be prepared to discuss it in class.

Tim was having a hard time. His grandpa Joe died six months ago from a heart condition.

Joe had practically raised Tim from birth. Because Tim's mom wasn't married when she had him, she relied on her own father to be a stable influence in Tim's life. Tim's mom had a lot of problems—having more pregnancies outside marriage, not being able to keep a job, fighting with men, and drinking too much and being thrown out of bars a lot. It wasn't easy for Tim to grow up in a family like this.

His grandpa Joe wasn't perfect either; Joe had a reputation for drinking and fighting in his younger years, and he had a rocky time with his wife, who was mentally ill and violent most of their married life. But Joe sure did love Tim. He took him fishing, and even got Tim a little boat when he was old enough. And from the time Tim was little, Grandpa Joe always let Tim hang around in the garage with him and work on wood projects.

As he grew into junior high, Tim had trouble in school with learning, trouble with the police, trouble with drugs—just trouble all around. His grandpa would get mad at him then, but Tim always felt that even when he messed up real bad, his grandpa Joe was *for* him, not against him.

Besides, Grandpa Joe was *funny*. He could make anyone laugh. He had that impish gleam in his eyes, and when Tim was around Joe, he felt like he had it, too.

As the years rolled by, Grandpa Joe began to have heart trouble. Tim couldn't remember how many times Joe had been in the hospital with heart attacks—lots. One time the doctors thought they had lost Joe; his heart had stopped beating for a couple minutes, and they thought he was dead. But they had revived him by pumping on his heart.

When Grandpa Joe came home from the hospital after that last serious heart attack, he seemed quiet and thoughtful. Sometimes, when he and Tim were out fishing on the lake, Joe would even get tears in his eyes and say, "It's all so beautiful, this wonderful place God gave us."



Later, Tim found out from his grandpa that when the doctors thought he had died that time in the hospital, Joe had actually had an experience that felt like he had died. Only it wasn't scary, it was beautiful, peaceful, full of light. Joe said that after that he couldn't be afraid of death anymore and that he felt a love for God that he had never known before. He connected God with the beauty, peace, and light of that experience. Tim didn't really understand what Joe was talking about then, but he figured his grandpa must be telling the truth because he seemed so different after that heart attack. He was still lots of fun and all, but . . . different.

But now Grandpa Joe was dead. Six months ago his heart had finally worn out and stopped for good, and Tim was having an awful time going on without him. One thing made Tim feel good, though. He kept remembering what Grandpa Joe had said about not being afraid of dying, about what was on the "other side," something he never expected—a beauty, light, and peace he had never known before. So Tim figured Grandpa Joe was in that beautiful light now. And Tim felt sure that Grandpa Joe was still pulling for him, but now with all that light and peace around him. Thinking of his grandpa that way always made Tim feel a little stronger. It was as if Grandpa Joe was sending him enough peaceful light to help him get through hard times.