



Colorful Characters

Chapter 6 - by Kay Hively

George rubbed his eyes again, but the image did not change. It was true. The man getting off the boat was his old art teacher, Chester Harding.

Racing down the wooden plank to the river's edge, George stumbled and crashed into Mr. Harding. At first startled by this unexpected collision, the artist cracked a smile when he recognized George, who was now a young man. Mr. Harding dropped his well-worn canvas bag and embraced his old student with a big bear hug.

George was thrilled to see his teacher once again. Quickly they made their way up the riverbank and found a place to sit. Mr. Harding asked George how he had been and what he was doing. He also asked if George had continued to draw and paint.

Like the Missouri River in a flood, a torrent of words gushed out of the happy boy.

Rarely stopping to take a breath, he told his teacher all that had happened since their meeting in 1820. He talked about his father's death and about the family's move across the river. He said he was now apprenticed to Rev. Williams to make money and learn a trade.

When George finally ran out of words, Mr. Harding asked about his art.

Lowering his eyes to the ground, George admitted that he had not worked as hard as he should. But, he said, he was drawing some and had many

sheets of newsprint filled with his artwork.

Scratching his chin, Mr. Harding became silent for a moment. Then he told George to go back to Mr. Williams and ask for a three-day holiday. He told George to gather up all his art and get a change of clothes.



Rising from their seats on the riverbank, the man and the boy walked up the street to a local inn where Mr. Harding reserved a room for three days.

George left the inn and ran most of the way back to the cabinet maker's shop where he asked for free time. Rev. Williams granted George three days of freedom. Within an hour, George was back at the inn with all his artwork and extra sheets of paper.

Once again, the man and the boy sat together at a table in the dining room of an inn. Carefully, the older man looked at each drawing the boy had brought to the inn. George was nervous as he watched

his teacher study each piece of work.

Finally, Mr. Harding finished looking at the drawings that George had done on newspaper print. Slowly, he turned in his chair and asked George if he really was serious about being a painter. George swallowed hard and said that he did want to be a painter, but he wasn't sure he was good enough to make money.

Mr. Harding laid George's work aside and lifted his canvas bag to the table. Reaching inside his bag, he took out drawing pencils and gave one to George.

Art lessons were about to begin.

Next Chapter: Learning What to Draw

Things to Think About and Do

1. George asked his boss for three days off from work. Do you think Mr. Williams did a good thing to let George take time off? Should George be paid by Mr. Williams for the three days he did not work?
2. Do you know an older person who could teach you something you would like to know? Do you have a skill or talent you could teach to someone? Would you like to take swimming, karate or art lessons? Look in your local newspaper and find classes being taught outside the regular school.
3. Like George early in his life, often people learn a trade to earn money to support their hobbies or other interests. Using the Classified ads in your newspaper, find three jobs that interest you and might help you or leave you time to pursue other interests. Explain how these jobs would complement your hobby or interests. Examples: Someone who loves sports might work in an athletic store. A racing enthusiast might learn auto maintenance.

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