

Behind the High Board Fence

ELEMENTARY & MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENTS



GRADES 3-8

For story ideas, read carefully the chapters in *Behind the High Board Fence*. When deciding what childhood memory to share, have the person you interview consider these and other QUESTIONS related to the story:

In her 80s, after a stroke disables her right hand, with her left hand, Helen Sharp writes what she remembers of her childhood and leaves those stories for her daughter, Helen Marley. Marley weaves her mother's recollections into her book, *Behind the High Board Fence*.

Helen Sharp turns ten in 1911. She lives in a town where streetcars and railroads prove vital to transportation and fuel the city's growth. Textiles and tobacco take root. Different from today, electricity does not serve the Sharps' home, so the family must wash clothes by hand. Family members face crippling illness and injury and must adjust to new ways of earning a living. Much like today, the Sharps celebrate holidays and special occasions, negotiate with siblings and plan for the future.



SO, what are your parents' or older friends' childhood memories? What oral history do they share? Choose someone to interview and, in 500 words or fewer, write a story she or he shares. Be sure to name the person and explain your relationship to him or her. Focus on a single story, organize your writing, elaborate, choose a style and format that works for you and the story, vary sentence structure and check grammar and punctuation. Illustrations may be included.

1. Do you have memories of your first school? Did you recall walking or riding home from school? Who walked or rode with you? What did you share?
2. As a child, did you have a chore? Did you have a paying job?
3. Did you suffer from illness? Did you make a bad choice that contributed to an injury?
4. Have you ever been isolated because of an illness? Do you remember having a doctor visit your home or staying in a hospital?
5. Do you remember pleasing or displeasing a parent or someone else important to you?
6. Did someone ever take care or comfort you during a particularly difficult time?
7. Do you sing or play music? How did you learn? Who taught you?
8. Did you ever take a dare and regret doing so?
9. Did you gather and prepare food? Did you bake a pie or other favorite dish?
10. Did you ride in a train or streetcar? Did you ride in or on a horse? Wagon? Favorite car or truck?
11. Do you remember how your parents earned money?
12. Did you have a favorite pet? A scary pet? Did an animal ever frighten you?
13. Do you remember growing tobacco, working in textile mills or tobacco warehouses or factories? Have you attended a tobacco auction?
14. Did you have a favorite holiday, custom or gift?
15. Did you worry about the safety of someone you love?
16. Did a sibling or friend influence the choices you made? How and why?
17. Did you have a retreat or special place? Where do you go to think, wish and/or dream?

In 500 words or fewer, tell the story shared by a family member or friend. Submit your story to your teacher.