

Island Roots

Have you ever traced your family tree?

1 Calvin walked into the dining room carrying his backpack and several books. "This table is a disaster area," he told Will, pushing some papers and books aside to clear a small space.

2 "Be careful," Will cautioned his little brother. "Everything is in chronological order, and I don't want to have to reorganize it."

3 Calvin raised his eyebrows. As far as he could tell, there was no order at all to the papers on the table, but he decided not to mention it to his brother. "I'm going to ride my bike to the library," said Calvin. "I was going to ask you if you wanted to come along, but it looks like you have your hands full right now."

4 Will nodded. "I have a genealogy project due next week. I think I have most of the information I need, but I have to pull it all into some kind of cohesive story."

5 "What's genealogy?" asked Calvin, sliding his backpack onto his shoulders.

6 "It's the study of your family's history and roots," explained Will. "Haven't you noticed how busy I've been for the last couple of weeks? I've been researching this project for days. The Internet has been pretty helpful in finding names, birth records, and obituaries. I've also interviewed a lot of our older relatives over the phone. There are things that they remember that I wouldn't have been able to find anywhere else. That's part of the reason this project is so important," he said. "I don't want our family's history to get lost. If I record it, it will exist for our great-great-grandkids."

7 Calvin peered over his brother's shoulder and pointed to the family tree that Will had sketched on an oversized piece of paper. "Is this mom's side of the family?" he asked.

8 Will nodded. "I don't have as much information about her side as I do about Dad's. The interesting thing is that I can't read some of the letters I found."

9 Calvin looked confused. "Is the handwriting really bad, or are they written in another language?"

10 "Mom and I looked at them together, and as far as we can tell, they are written in Gullah. Mom's family was originally from Africa, but for the last 200 years, they have lived on the islands off the coast of South Carolina. Some people there still speak Gullah, which is a mix of English and different African languages. Mom even thinks that a couple of our distant relations might still live there."

11 "Wow," said Calvin, pulling up a chair next to his brother. "How are you going to find out what the letters say?"

12 "I don't think I'll have time to do it before this project is due," said Will, "but I've found a few online Gullah dictionaries that will help me translate them. Mom also said we might be able to take a family trip to South Carolina this summer."

13 "Genealogy is a lot more interesting than it sounds," said Calvin. "Can I help you with this?"

14 Will laughed. "I thought you'd never ask!"



Vocabulary Skills

Write the words from the story that have the meanings below.

1. warned

_____ Par. 2

2. the order in time in which something occurred

_____ Par. 2

3. notices appearing in newspapers that announce a person's death

_____ Par. 6

4. relatives

_____ Par. 10

Write the idiom from paragraph 3 on the line next to its meaning.

5. to be busy _____

Find the metaphor in paragraph 1, and write it on the line.

6. _____

Circle the homophone that correctly completes each sentence below.

7. For hours after Rosa heard the good news, she was in a _____. (days, daze)
8. Lex _____ when he read the headline on the newspaper's front page. (sighed, side)

Reading Skills

1. Where did Will get the information for his research?

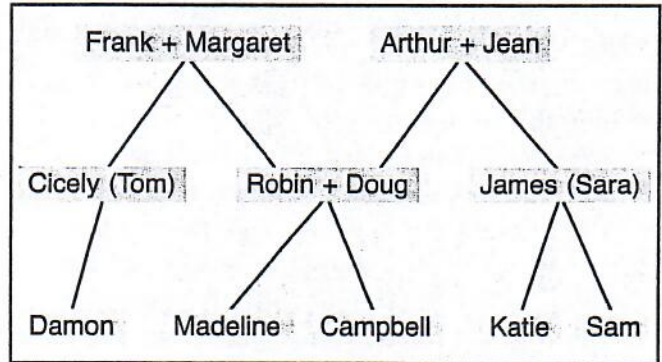
2. Why does Will feel that researching his family's history is important?

3. How long has the boys' extended family lived on the South Carolina Sea Islands?

4. Do you think that Will and Calvin will continue to be interested in their family's history even after Will's project is complete? Explain.

Study Skills

Use the family tree below to answer the questions that follow.



1. What are the names of Katie and Sam's parents?

2. What is Robin's sister's name?

3. What is Damon's grandfather's name?
