**It Used to be Green Once**

**Plot**

**What happens in the story is called the plot. Sometimes the plot is called the ‘story line’.**

Here is a summary of what happens in the story. Put a word in each blank so that the summary makes sense:

*The children felt ashamed of their mother because she made them use things that other people didn’t want. She made them wear \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ that didn’t fit and they had to take \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ fruit for lunch. They always felt embarrassed in front of other people.*

*Uncle Raz gave them an old \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ he didn’t want. It could no longer be used in \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. It had only patches of \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ paint left on it, no\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ and no top. The kids called it a \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.*

*They used the car to take the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ to the farm gate and Mum used it to go to \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. Every Wednesday she put on her best clothes and head off to do the shopping. She \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ to let everyone know she was coming. People had to run alongside and shout their orders because she couldn’t \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.*

*Mum crammed the car with shopping and \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ it out to people on her way back. Sometimes she met the school bus on the bridge and it had to give way to her. Once she gave the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ a ride. The children felt full of \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.*

*One day \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ changed. Dad won $50 000 in the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. Dad got a new \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, the children got \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. They went to the pictures every \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. Mum got a new \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. It was a \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ and it was \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. She treated it just like the old one though. She still loaded it up with people and \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. She even tied things on the roof. Eventually it looked like the old car. Most of the paint was worn off but in places you could still see that it used to be \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ once.*

**Characters**

Most of the characters in *It Used to be Green Once* belong to one family. Someone in this family is telling a story about her childhood. Patricia Grace starts the story with:

*‘We were all ashamed of our mother.’*

1. When the writer says ‘we’, who is she writing about?

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Most stories have two types of characters. There are **main** characters and **minor** characters.

The main characters are the most important people in the story. They are also the people we learn most about.

Minor characters are the other people in the story. They add to what happens, but the story doesn’t depend on them.

In *It Used to be Green Once*, Dad is a minor character.

Patricia Grace gives us some information about Dad, but does not go into a lot of detail. Dad is in the story, but the story isn’t about him.

The main character in *It Used to be Green Once* is Mum. As the story goes on, we learn a lot about her – what she does, what she says, how she acts and even what she wears. All this adds upto letting us know what sort of person she is.

**Setting**

Setting means both **when** and **where**.

**When**

You already know that the writer of the story is telling a story from her childhood. Patricia Grace mentions several things that tell us that the story is set in the past. Some of the words are different or name objects that don’t get used these days.

1. Make a list of as many words like this that you can find. Write a definition for each or say what has replaced it.

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1. List ten items that the family did not buy when they won the lottery because they had not yet been invented.

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**Where**

There are several clues that tell us that the story is set in New Zealand.

1. Find some evidence that this is a New Zealand story.

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1. There are some definite landmarks in the story. List some of the places that are mentioned in the story.

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**Theme**

There is more to the story *It Used to be Green Once* than the characters and the setting. The writer is doing more than just telling a story about her childhood.

1. Write a few lines about the messages this story had for you.

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*It Used to be Green Once* begins ‘We were all ashamed of our mother’. The idea of being shamed comes up several times in the story.

1. List four things Mum did that shamed the kids.

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Times change, and as we get older our feelings change too. Patricia Grace seems to be laughing at herself and the things that worried her when she was young.

When she was a child, she felt her mother was shaming her on purposes.

1. How do you think the writer, now she is an adult, feels about her mother?

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Mum lived on a farm with her husband and fourteen children. She probably didn’t have time to worry about what other people thought of her and the way she acted. She was who she was, and got on with her busy life.

The writer thought taking holey fruit to school was embarrassing especially when Reweti said “Hey you fullas. Who shot your pears?”

1. Write what Mum might have said back to Reweti.

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Life changed overnight for the children when Dad won the lottery. ‘But Mum and Dad didn’t change. They were the same as always.’

1. What message do you think Patricia Grace is giving us here?

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The first car had once been red, but by the time Mum was driving it to the shop, it only had patches of red paint left. Having a big shiny green Chevrolet didn’t change Mum at all.

Read the last paragraph again:

*‘There were always ropes everywhere over Mum’s new car holding bags and things and shovel handles to the roof and sides. The boot was always hanging open because it was too full to close – things used to drop out on to the road all the time. And the new car – it used to be green once, because if you look closely you can still see some patches of green paint here and there.’*

The title of the story comes from this paragraph.

1. What does the title of the story mean to you?

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Patricia Grace uses Mum’s actions to put across the themes of the story. The kids are shamed by their mother’s behaviour.

1. What do you think she would have said to them when they:

* Complained about holey fruit \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
* Complained about their togs \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
* Complained about her filling up the car with other people’s shopping \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
* Complained about her tying stuff all over the new car \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Values are things that you consider to be really important in how you behave.

1. What values did Mum have that didn’t change when they won the lottery.?

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Most readers enjoy this story because it is humorous and it makes us think of times when our own parents have embarrassed us.

1. Briefly write about a time when someone in your family made you feel whakama.

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Most readers also feel that this story has a strong message about what is really important in life – what our values are.

1. Briefly write what this story help you to understand about people.

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http://lynleystace.wordpress.com/2010/02/04/it-used-to-be-green-once-by-patricia-grace/

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