

Fiction Practice Passage #2

Thomas and his grandfather are fishing off a pier for trout. They have been fishing for quite a while.

Go Fish

by Mary Stolz

1 "How long do we have to be patient?" Thomas asked.

2 "As long as it takes," said Grandfather.

3 This didn't sound good. Thomas scowled, scratched his arm, his head, his ankle. He shifted from one leg to the other.

4 "Observe, Thomas, how quietly they wait—the pelicans and our friend the heron. They don't wriggle and writhe, like some I could name."

5 "They don't have anything to do but wait."

6 "Thomas, I've said it before and I say it again, you are a restless boy."

7 "I know," Thomas said. "Grandfather?"

8 "Yes, Thomas?"

9 "When you were a boy, were you restless?"

10 Grandfather tipped his head till his beard pointed at the sky. "I'll cast my mind back."

11 Thomas waited.

12 Grandfather lowered his chin, looked into Thomas's eyes. "I was," he said.

13 "Oh, good."

14 Grandfather threw out their lines again, handed Thomas his pole. They went on being patient.

15 They'd had a few strikes, but each time the fish got the bait and Thomas and Grandfather got nothing.

16 "All part of the game," Grandfather would say, calmly rebaiting.

17 Thomas landed a blowfish. It came out of the water already starting on its defense. Breathing deeply, it began to puff up, swelling until it looked like a bubblegum bubble with spines.

18 "Thinks he looks pretty fierce, doesn't he, Grandfather?"

19 "He does look fierce, for a fellow his size." Grandfather dropped the stiff little blown-up blowfish into the water, where it slimmed down and swam off as if nothing unusual had happened.

20 They caught a flounder.

21 Flounders are bottom fish, and mostly spend their lives buried in sand. Their eyes are on top of their heads, they are flat as plates, and the one they caught was too small to keep. Carefully, Grandfather slid it back into the water. Too bad. Flounder were good eating. Especially the way Grandfather prepared them.

22 Thinking about Grandfather's cooking made Thomas's mouth water.

23 "You're a very good cook, Grandfather," he said.

24 "True."

25 "I'm getting kind of hungry."

26 "So am I," said Grandfather. He did not sound ready to quit.

27 Thomas sighed and moved his rod gently up and down.

28 They caught a ladyfish. These are not good eating.

29 Grandfather was about to toss it back when the heron darted forward and took it right from his hand, then tossed his head up and set about swallowing.

30 Thomas watched as the bony fish went down the bird's long neck.

31 "I'm glad we don't have to swallow whole fish that way," he said.

32 "So am I," said Grandfather.

33 Suddenly Thomas's rod dipped. A fish flipped out of the water a long way off.

34 "Speckled trout," said Grandfather. "A big one. Gently, now, Thomas. You don't want him to throw the hook."

35 "I'm trying," Thomas said, turning the reel as slowly as he could. He wished Grandfather would take over, but didn't ask.

36 Grandfather believed it was every man to his own fish.

37 Slowly, slowly, he reeled in his trout until it was close enough for Grandfather to scoop up with the net. He was willing to do that.

38 "By golly, Thomas!" he shouted. "Look at the size of him!"

39 Thomas, swelling like a blowfish, regarded his catch proudly. "He'll have to go in the book, won't he, Grandfather?"

40 "He certainly will. A page to himself, like the snook we caught."

41 "You caught."

42 "All right. I caught. But this is your fish, and you are the one to write him in the book."

43 "Oh, good," Thomas said happily.

44 "Now—let's go to it," said Grandfather. "This crowd of trout is here, and we have to strike before they take off..."

45 In the excitement, Thomas forgot to be tired.

46 Side by side, he and his grandfather caught fifteen trout and had to send only three of them back to sea—to grow bigger and maybe be caught another day.

47 Twelve good-sized fish. Grandfather would keep out enough for tonight and tomorrow's dinner, and freeze the rest for later eating.

48 Thomas swallowed hungrily, thinking about dinner.

49 "All right," Grandfather said at last. "Let's go home."

50 Collecting their gear, richer by twelve speckled trout, they clanked back up the beach.

1. Which line from the best text shows Grandfather's patience?

- a. *"Thomas, I've said it before and I say it again, you are a restless boy."*
- b. *Grandfather tipped his head till his beard pointed at the sky.*
- c. *"All part of the game," Grandfather would say, calmly rebaiting.*
- d. *Grandfather believed it was every man to his own fish.*

2. Based on the selection, what is the most likely reason Grandfather doesn't help Thomas reel in the fish?

- a. Grandfather doesn't know how to reel in trout.
- b. Grandfather wants Thomas to experience the challenge of reeling in a fish all by himself.
- c. Grandfather is angry with Thomas for being impatient.
- d. Grandfather is busy catching his own fish.

3. Why is Thomas "swelling like a blowfish" in paragraph 39? Use two details from the story to support your response.
