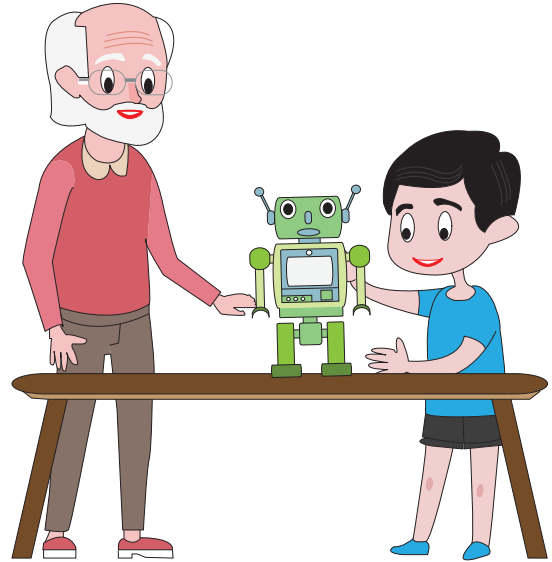


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Building A Class Project

by Katie Clark

Grayson sat alone on the bus ride home from school. He didn't want to talk to his friends or anybody else. They were all discussing their class projects for the weekend. They were excited, and they didn't understand why Grayson wasn't excited. He wasn't going to explain it, either.



Grayson's cheeks grew warm with embarrassment when he thought about his lack of excitement. How could they understand his feelings when their parents would help them? Grayson didn't have anyone to help. His mom worked all the time, and his dad never wanted to do anything with him.

When the bus stopped at his street, he hopped out and raced home before anyone could stop him. He burst through the door of his apartment, dropped his backpack on the floor, and stomped to his room.

"Grayson?" Grandpa's voice called out. "Was that you?"

Grayson stopped before he closed his bedroom door. He didn't want to hurt Grandpa's feelings so he had better answer. "Yes, Grandpa, it's me."

Grandpa Higgins came from the kitchen carrying a sandwich. "How was school today?" he asked as he took a bite.

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Grayson shrugged. "It was okay, I guess."

"You don't sound too convincing."

Should Grayson tell Grandpa the truth? What could it hurt? He quickly explained how they had been assigned a class project for the weekend. Each student needed to ask a grown up for help, and together they would build something. The students needed to make a report to explain how their projects had gone.

Grandpa listened quietly. "That sounds nice," he said when Grayson finished. "Why does it have you so discouraged?"

Grayson felt his sadness and anger rising inside him. "Because I don't have anyone to help me." He sounded so pathetic.

Grandpa raised his eyebrows in surprise. "What am I?" he asked. "Chopped liver?"

Grayson froze in surprise. Would Grandpa help him? "You'd build a project with me, Grandpa?"

"Sure, I would," Grandpa said. He turned back toward the kitchen. "Just let me finish this sandwich and get some milk."

Grayson's heart seemed so light he thought it would float away. Maybe this project wasn't so bad, after all.

He raced to his backpack and unzipped it, then he retrieved his assignment paper. When Grandpa finished eating, they sat at the table and made a list of ideas. They settled on building a cardboard robot from old cereal and pasta boxes from the

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kitchen. They used glue, staples, and tape. Grandpa even found a box of eyeball stickers.

When they finished, the kitchen table was a mess. Debris littered the entire surface, but Grayson couldn't stop smiling.

"What do you think?" Grandpa asked.

Grayson looked at their misshapen robot. "I think it's the best robot I ever built. Now I have to write my report."

He grabbed the robot and turned toward his room, but he paused. He ran to Grandpa's side and hugged him. "Thank you for helping me, Grandpa. I had a lot of fun."

Grandpa squeezed his shoulders. "Me, too. Now, go write your report. Maybe next time we can build something that explodes, like a volcano."

Grayson smiled again. He could hardly wait.

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Building A Class Project

1) Why wasn't Grayson excited about the school project?

2) Grayson was upset but he stopped to answer Grandpa. What does this tell you about Grayson?

3) 'What am I, Chopped liver?' is a metaphor used by Grandpa. What does it mean? Why does Grandpa use this metaphor?

4) What does the line - 'Grayson's heart seemed so light he thought it would float away!' mean?

5) How do you think Grayson will do at school in the coming days?
