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# Grandpa's Plane

Grandpa showed the newspaper picture to Ursula. "This plane is on tour, and it's coming to town this weekend. Would you like to go with me on Saturday to see it?" he asked. Ursula looked at the picture of the B-17 bomber that he had shown her. She looked back up at her grandfather. She didn't see him get this excited very often.

"Okay, Grandpa, I'll go," she said, with a smile.

On their way out to see the plane that Saturday, Grandpa told Ursula all about his experiences during the war. He told her about how he had been stationed in England during the early years of World War II. He had piloted one of those B-17s and had flown missions 200 miles into Germany. He told her that the planes back then weren't pressurized or heated. There were big openings on the sides for the gun operators, so it was very cold when they were in the air. The crew had to wear heavy flight suits that were lined with sheepskin. These missions were also very dangerous because German anti-aircraft guns on the ground would do everything they could to knock the American planes out of the air. The anti-aircraft fire would often pound the air around the planes for the entire time they were over Germany. It would not stop until they were over the North Sea again and on their way home.

When Ursula and her grandpa got out of the car, they saw the plane immediately. The bright sun reflected off the round body of the B-17 and the broad surfaces of its wings. Glass covered the nose, and long gun barrels pointed out at sharp angles from holes in the body.

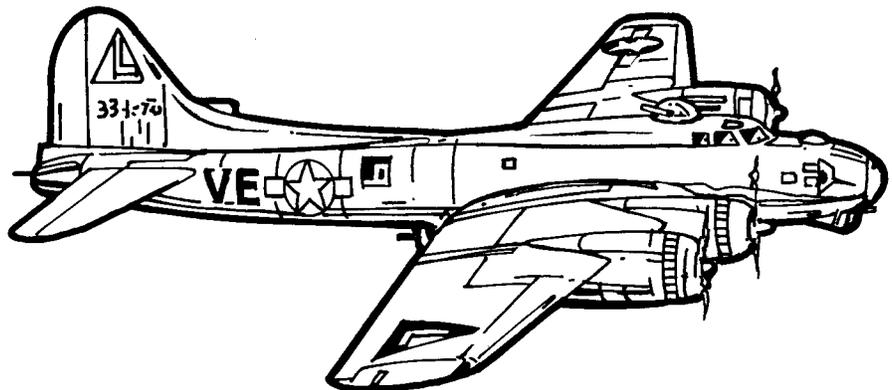
The plane was impressive, Ursula thought, but it was not very large. She had seen jumbo jets and big cargo planes at airports in the past. She couldn't imagine how this craft, one-third the size of a 747, could have carried all those bombs and flown so far. It looked dangerous just to get inside it.

After walking around the plane once, Ursula walked over to a short ladder that led into the belly of the craft. Once inside, she had to stoop over so she wouldn't hit her head. After Grandpa had pulled himself into the plane behind her, the two of them climbed up into the pilot's and co-pilot's seats. Grandpa showed Ursula the instruments, one at a time. She saw the airspeed indicator, the vertical speed indicator, and the artificial horizon. Grandpa explained that there had to be two gauges, one on each side of the cockpit, so that both the pilot and co-pilot could fly the plane if necessary.

"The planes were pretty simple compared to today's planes," Grandpa explained. "There were no computers or radar. They were amazingly tough, though. Even though my plane often got beat up by the anti-aircraft fire, it brought me home every time."

When they got back to the car, Ursula gave her grandpa a big hug. He looked at her and asked, "What was that for?"

"For showing me part of your life, Grandpa. Your stories make more sense to me now. I understand a little more what it was like for you in the war so long ago."



# Grandpa' Plane *(cont.)*

After reading the story, answer the questions. Circle the correct answer.

1. Why did Ursula and her grandpa go to see the B-17 bomber?
  - a. Ursula's grandpa had always wanted to see one.
  - b. Ursula was learning about the war in school.
  - c. Ursula was very interested in old warplanes.
  - d. Ursula's grandpa flew a B-17 in World War II.
2. When did the B-17 crew wear heavy flight suits?
  - a. Whenever they flew the B-17's
  - b. When they were told to dress in uniform
  - c. During the wintertime
  - d. When they needed protection from crashing
3. The reason planes were simple in the 1940s is that—
  - a. much of the equipment on planes today is due to advances in technology since the 1940s
  - b. pilots did not have time to be trained on special equipment
  - c. planes made for wartime were always basic and simple because so many needed to be built
  - d. they needed to stay as light as possible so they had no special equipment
4. The reader can tell from the story that Ursula's grandpa—
  - a. wished he hadn't taken Ursula to see the B-17
  - b. was happy to see the B-17
  - c. was sad to see the B-17
  - d. did not care about seeing the B-17
5. Which of the following is an opinion in this story?
  - a. "These missions were also very dangerous."
  - b. "There had to be two gauges, one on each side of the cockpit."
  - c. "It looked dangerous just to get inside it."
  - d. "She had to stoop over so she wouldn't hit her head."
6. Information in the story suggests that—
  - a. Ursula will become a pilot like her grandfather when she grows up
  - b. Ursula's interest in B-17 bombers started before Grandpa took her on a tour
  - c. Grandpa's war stories were confusing to Ursula before touring the B-17 bomber
  - d. Grandpa will take Ursula's younger brother to see a B-17 bomber soon