Gregory Greene Wants a Blue Guitar



By Joe Rhatigan
Illustrated by Berat Pekmezci

TCM Teacher Created Materials

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CHAPTER ONE



A Birthday Breakfast

One chilly Saturday morning, Gregory Greene woke up to the smell of pancakes, bacon, and toast. He heard his mom's and dad's voices in the kitchen. And, yes, his grandfather's too. Grandpa had moved in with them just last summer. He slept in Gregory's old bedroom, and Gregory had moved into

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his younger brother's room. That was bad. But it also meant that Gregory got to spend more time with his grandfather. That was good. Grandpa told the most wonderful stories. His laughter made Gregory feel special and loved.

"Happy birthday!" everyone yelled as Gregory walked out of the bedroom. He had almost forgotten that it was his birthday.

Gregory wanted a blue guitar more than anything in the world. But with grandpa living with them, there was less money for gifts. Gregory's cheeks burned red with shame and guilt for feeling disappointed by the handmade hat his mother gave him. His other gift was a secondhand book from his dad. But the love in the room felt like a hug that made Gregory smile.

After breakfast, Gregory went outside to feed the chickens, daydreaming of playing a blue guitar in front of a huge crowd.

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"I could tell you were disappointed," a voice behind him said.

"Oh, hi, Grandpa. I…I…"

"There's no need to apologize," his grandfather said. "I remember being young and wanting things too. Your mother says you dream of owning a blue guitar, and one day you may. But right now, I want you to remember something before I give you my gift."

"Okay," said Gregory.

"Remember that Japanese folktale I told you a few weeks ago about the poor farmer who hated his bad luck and wanted to be rich?" asked his grandfather.

"Yes," said Gregory. "'The Straw Millionaire.' The man in the story traded a bunch of little things until he got rich."

"Yes, my boy. And here's my gift to you."

Gregory's grandfather handed him a rock. Not a special rock. Just a plain old, gray rock.

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Before Gregory could respond, the old man walked quickly back into the house. Gregory loved his grandfather, but he was a little kooky sometimes.

Gregory was about to throw the rock into the woods by the side of the house, when he thought about "The Straw Millionaire" again. Gregory told the chickens what he could remember of it.

"So, there was a poor farmer who wanted to be rich, and when he prayed to a goddess, she told him to grab the first thing he found on the ground. The man tripped, and his hand landed on a piece of hay…straw. The farmer caught a fly and tied it to the straw, which entertained a crying baby. He gave it to the crying baby's mother, who in return, gave him three oranges."

The chickens pecked the ground and didn't respond.

"Then, he saw a woman on the road dying of thirst. He gave her the oranges, and she gave him an expensive piece of cloth in return. The farmer

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traded the cloth for a horse. A rich man, impressed by the horse, invited the poor farmer into his mansion. The woman whom the farmer had earlier saved from dying was the millionaire's daughter. They fell in love and got married, and the poor farmer got to live in the big house. The end."



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Book Club Questions

1. What kind of person do you think Gregory is? Does your opinion change as the story continues?
2. How does the setting (time/place) help make the story better?
3. If you could hear this story from another character's point of view, whom would you choose? Why?
4. Why do you think the story "The Straw Millionaire" was included?
5. How do you go about getting something that you can't afford?
6. Do you think Gregory will get his guitar someday? Why or why not?

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