

25 He turned to the parcels, and at once saw his grandfather's handwriting on a small flat one. Then he knew for certain that something was wrong. They would hardly send him an ordinary birthday present as well as one so special as a dog. There was only one explanation: they were sending him an ordinary present instead of the dog.

30 'Open it, Ben,' said his mother; and his father reminded him, 'Use your new knife on the string, boy.' Ben never noticed the sharpness of the Sheffield steel as he cut the string round the parcel and then unfolded the wrapping paper.

They had sent him a picture instead of a dog.



35 And then he realised that they had sent him a dog, after all. He almost hated them for it. His dog was worked in woollen cross-stitch, and framed, and glazed as a little picture. There was a letter which explained: 'Dear Ben, Your

45 grandpa and I send you hearty good wishes for your birthday. We know you would like a dog, so here is one ...'

There was more in the letter, but, with a sweep of his hand, Ben pushed aside letter, packing-paper, string, and picture. They fell to the floor, the picture with a sharp sound of breakage. His mother picked it up. 'You've cracked the glass, Ben, and it's a nice little picture - a little old picture that I remember well.'

50 'I think it's a funny birthday present for Ben, don't you, Paul?' said Frankie; and Paul agreed. May and Dilys both thought it was rather pretty. Mr Blewitt glanced at it and then back to the newspaper he had opened.

55 Ben said nothing, because he could not. His mother looked at him, and he knew that she knew that, if he hadn't been so old, and a boy, he would be crying. 'Your granny treasured this because it was a present from your Uncle Willy,' said Mrs Blewitt. 'He brought it home as a curio, from his last voyage - the last

60 voyage before he was drowned. So you see, Granny's given you something that was precious to her.'

65 But what was dead Uncle Willy or a woolwork dog to Ben? He still could not trust himself to speak; and now they were all looking at him, wondering at the silence. Even his father had put the paper down.

'Did you expect a real dog?' Frankie asked suddenly. Everyone else answered for Ben, anyway.

70 His mother said, 'Of course not. Ben knows perfectly well that Granny and Grandpa could never afford to buy him a real dog.'

His father said, 'And, anyway, you can't expect to keep a dog in London nowadays - the traffic's too dangerous.' Ben remembered the cat scuttering from under the wheels of the car that morning, and he hated his father for being in the right. 'It isn't as if we had any garden to let a dog loose in,' went on Mr Blewitt; 'and we're not even near an open space where you could exercise it properly.'

### Questions



- 1 What had Ben expected the postman to bring him on his birthday? (1 mark)
- 2 Re-read lines 19 to 23.
  - a) Why was Ben sure he was going to receive this present? (1 mark)
  - b) Give two reasons which suggest he should have been a little less sure. (2 marks)
- 3 Why do you think the writer uses the phrase 'there was nothing' twice? (1 mark)
- 4 What was it that finally convinced him that he was not going to receive the dog for his birthday? (2 marks)
- 5 a) How did Ben react when he saw what his grandparents' gift was? (1 mark)
- b) Give the reaction of any other family member. (1 mark)