

Wednesday 13th May 2020

Today you will be historians.

What have you learned about what life is like in Ember, and how is it different to the present time? For example, children go to school until the age of 12 in Ember while most children complete their education when they are 18 here in Bristol.

Create two columns in your book. Copy the titles then list the similarities and differences between Ember and Present day. Consider descriptions of the places, foods eaten, jobs, days, lifestyles, etc.

City of Bristol (here and now)	City of Ember (future)

Now let's read the next chapter of City of Ember.

CHAPTER 10

Blue Sky and Goodbye

Lina slept restlessly that night. She had frightening dreams in which something dangerous was lurking in the darkness. When the lights went on in the morning and she opened her eyes, her first thought was of the door in the Pipeworks—and then right away she felt a thud of disappointment, because the door was locked and someone else, not her, knew what was behind it.

She went in to wake Granny. "Time to get up," she said, but Granny didn't answer. She was lying with her mouth half open and breathing in a strange hoarse way. "Don't feel too good," she finally said in a weak voice.

Lina felt Granny's forehead. It was hot. Her hands were very cold. She ran for Mrs. Murdo and after that to Cloving Square to tell Captain Fleery she would not be coming

to work today. Then she ran to Oliver Street, to the office of Dr. Tower, where she banged on the door until the doctor opened it.

Dr. Tower was a thin woman with uncombed hair and shadows under her eyes. When she saw Lina, she seemed to grow even more tired.

“Dr. Tower,” Lina said, “my grandmother is sick. Will you come?”

“I will,” she said. “But I can’t promise to help her. I’m low on medicine.”

“But come and look. Maybe she doesn’t need medicine.”

Lina led the doctor the few blocks to her house. When she saw Granny, the doctor sighed. “How are you, Granny Mayfleet?” she asked.

Granny looked at the doctor blearily. “I think ill,” she said.

Dr. Tower laid a hand across her forehead. She asked her to stick out her tongue, and she listened to her heart and her breathing.

“She has a fever,” the doctor told Lina. “You’ll need to stay home with her today. Make her some soup. Give her water to drink. Put rags in cool water and lay them across her forehead.” She picked up Granny’s bony hand in her rough, reddish one. “What’s best for you is to sleep today,” she said. “Your good granddaughter will take care of you.”

And all day, that’s what Lina did. She made a thin soup of spinach and onions and fed it to Granny a spoonful at a time. She stroked Granny’s forehead, held her hand, and talked to her about cheerful things. She kept Poppy as quiet as she could. But as she did all this, in the back of her mind was the memory of the days of her father’s illness, when he seemed to grow dim like a lamp losing power, and the sound of his breathing was like water gurgling through a clogged pipe. Though she didn’t want to, she also remembered the evening when her father let out one last short breath and didn’t take another, and the morning a few months later when Dr. Tower emerged from her mother’s bedroom with a crying baby and a face that was heavy with bad news.

In the late afternoon, Granny got restless. She lifted herself up on one elbow. “Did we find it?” she asked Lina.

“Did we ever find it?”

“Find what, Granny?”

“The thing that was lost,” Granny said.

“The old thing that my grandfather lost . . .”

“Yes,” said Lina. “Don’t worry, Granny, we found it, it’s safe now.”

“Oh, good.” Granny sank back onto her pillows and smiled at the ceiling. “What a relief,” she said. She coughed a couple of times, closed her eyes, and fell asleep.

Lina stayed home from work the next day as well. It was a long day. Granny dozed most of the time. Poppy, delighted to have Lina at home to play with, kept toddling over with things she found—dust rags, kitchen spoons, stray shoes—and whacking them against Lina’s knees, saying, “Play wif dis! Play wif dis!” Lina was glad to play with her, but after a while she’d had enough of spoon-banging and rag-tugging and shoe-rolling. “Let’s do something else,” she said to Poppy. “Shall we draw?”

Granny had drunk a full cup of soup for dinner and was falling asleep again, so Lina got out her coloured pencils and two of the can labels she’d been saving—they were white on the back and made good enough drawing paper, if you flattened them out. With their sharpest kitchen knife, she whittled the pencils into points. She gave the green pencil and one can label to Poppy, and she herself took the blue pencil and smoothed out the other can label on the table.

What would she draw? Taking hold of a pencil was like opening a tap inside her mind through which her imagination flowed. She could feel the pictures ready to come out. It was a sort of pressure, like water in a pipe. She always thought she would draw something wonderful, but what she actually drew never quite matched the feeling. It was like when she tried to tell a dream—the words never really captured how it felt.

Poppy was grasping the pencil in her fist and making a wild scribble. “Lookit!” she cried.

“Lovely,” said Lina. Then, without even a clear idea of what it was to be, she began her own picture. She started on the left side of the can label. First she drew a tall, narrow box—a building. Then more boxes next to it—a cluster of buildings. Next she drew a few tiny people walking on the street below the buildings. It was what she nearly always drew—the other city—and every time she drew it, she had the same frustrating feeling: there was more to be drawn. There were other things in this city, there were marvels there—but she couldn’t imagine what they were. All she knew was that this city was bright in a different way from Ember. Where the brightness came from she didn’t know.

She drew more buildings and filled in the windows and doors; she put in streetlamps; she added a greenhouse. All the way across the paper, she drew buildings of different sizes. All the buildings were white, because that was the colour of the paper.

She set her pencil down for a moment and studied what she’d done. It was time to fill in the sky. In the pictures she’d done with regular pencils, the sky was its true colour, black. But this time she made it blue, since she was using her blue pencil. Methodically,

as Poppy scratched and scribbled beside her, Lina coloured in the space above the buildings, her pencil moving back and forth in short lines, until the entire sky was blue.

She sat back and looked at her picture. Wouldn't it be strange, she thought, to have a blue sky? But she liked the way it looked. It would be beautiful—a blue sky.

Poppy had started using her pencil to poke holes in her paper. Lina folded up her own picture and took Poppy's away from her. "Time for dinner," she said.

Sometime deep in the night, Lina woke suddenly, thinking she'd heard something. Had she been dreaming? She lay still, her eyes open in the darkness. The sound came again, a weak, trembling call: "Lina . . ."

She got up and started for Granny's room. Though she had lived in the same house all her life, she still had trouble finding her way at night, when the darkness was complete. It was as if walls had shifted slightly, and furniture moved to new places. Lina stayed close to the walls, feeling her way along. Here was her bedroom door. Here was the kitchen and the table—she winced as she stubbed her toe on one of its legs. A little farther and she'd come to the far wall and the door to Granny's room. Granny's voice was like a thin line in the dark air. "Lina . . . Come and help . . . I need . . ."

"I'm coming, Granny," she called.

She stumbled over something—a shoe, maybe—and fell against the bed. "Here I am, Granny!" she said. She felt for Granny's hand—it was very cold.

"I feel so strange," said Granny. Her voice was a whisper. "I dreamed . . . I dreamed about my baby . . . or someone's baby . . ."

Lina sat down on the bed. Carefully she moved her hands over the narrow ridge of her grandmother's body until she came to her shoulders. There her fingers tangled in the long wisps of Granny's hair. She pressed a finger against the side of Granny's throat to feel for her pulse, as the doctor had shown her. It was fluttery, like a moth that has hurt itself and is flapping in crooked circles.

"Can I get you some water, Granny?" Lina asked. She couldn't think what else to do.

"No water," Granny said. "Just stay for a while."

Lina tucked one foot underneath her and pulled part of the blanket over her lap. She took hold of Granny's hand again and stroked it gently with one finger.

For a long time neither of them said anything. Lina sat listening to her grandmother's breathing. She would take a deep, shuddering breath and let it out in a sigh. Then there would be a long silence before the next breath began. Lina closed her eyes. No use keeping them open—there was nothing to see but the dark. She was aware only of her

grandmother's cold, thin hand and the sound of her breathing. Every now and then Granny would mumble a few words Lina couldn't make out, and then Lina would stroke her forehead and say, "Don't worry, it's all right. It's almost morning," though she didn't know if it was or not.

After a long time, Granny stirred slightly and seemed to come awake. "You go to bed, dear," she said. "I'm all right now." Her voice was clear but very faint. "You go back to sleep."

Lina bent forward until her head rested against Granny's shoulder. Granny's soft hair tickled her face. "All right, then," she whispered. "Good night, Granny." She squeezed her grandmother's shoulders gently, and as she stood up a wave of terrible loneliness swept over her. She wanted to see Granny's face. But the darkness hid everything. It might still be a long time until morning—she didn't know. She groped her way back to her own bed and fell into a deep sleep, and when, hours later, the clock tower struck six and the lights came on, Lina went fearfully into her grandmother's room. She found her very pale and very still, all the life gone out of her.