

- **Name:**
- **Class:**
- **Date:**

What a Farmer Raises



- 1 “On this land,” Grandfather exclaimed anxiously, his white hair fluttering in the breeze, “you can raise corn, pumpkins, and peanuts, but first you have to raise a barn!” Sophia stared at him intently. As he said those words, he was gesturing toward the small hill where he would raise that barn. “On a hill,” he rationalized, “the rain won’t bother the critters.” Sophia found her mind wandering as he went on; she was faintly aware of her grandfather pantomiming that he was driving a team of horses up to the imaginary barn. There was nothing there but a bare hill—no roads, no horses, and definitely no barn, just Grandfather and his dogged vision. Sophia appreciated the raw beauty of the countryside: the green pastures and blue skies, the wildflowers that grew undisturbed along the hillside, and the crisp smell of a country morning which gave a sense of renewal and peace.
- 2 Sophia had also enjoyed life in the Williamsburg settlement before Grandfather had decided to farm land along the Rappahannock River; life in the settlement seemed more exciting. There wasn’t more labor involved there, but Sophia felt profound value and usefulness. Why, she practically operated Grandfather’s dry-goods store. Hadn’t everyone always admired how well she managed the store? Yes, Sophia had proven to everyone who shopped in Grandfather’s dry-goods store in Williamsburg that she had a keen sense of marketing and a brilliant young mind for management.
- 3 She smiled, remembering how fulfilling it was to arrange the large bolts of cloth, stock the shelves, and keep essentials around the store organized. She knew instinctively where every kettle, grinder, jar of molasses, sack of dry beans, and needle—along with every other product—was kept in the outlet. Although Sophia was not responsible for keeping the transaction records for the business, she took the initiative to keep a mental record of every sundry item that arrived or was sold and with whom the exchanges were made. Unknown to Grandfather, she also kept her own record of the stock and reminded him to reorder whenever quantities became depleted. She realized she had been a valuable asset to Grandfather. She also knew she had enjoyed the work immensely and now missed it terribly.
- 4 Her grandfather’s voice snapped her out of her reverie. Sophia sighed as she heard Grandfather

ask Mr. Henderson, their neighbor, “Why can’t I just build it myself?”

5 “A barn is just too complex, sir. Trust me. Raising a barn isn’t like raising turnips,” he said, chuckling. “Building a barn means more than just pounding nails! It takes the work of many and the skills of a few, but your neighbors are very generous; they will be delighted to help if you ask. And make sure you get Jess Caldwell to be the joiner. He’s unsurpassed.”

6 “Yes, he is, yes,” her grandfather repeated, “Jess is a joiner, the best joiner. Of course.” Grandfather immediately began to wonder what a joiner was, although his facial expression displayed no evidence of the mystery. Or so he thought.

7 “The joiner is the person who cuts the mortise-and-tenon joints for the beams and makes them all fit together. You need someone with experience to cut the pieces for *that* puzzle. Mortise-and-tenon joints are very intricate, interlocking pieces of the framework. If they are cut precisely, they can hold the beams together without any other type of fastener; on the other hand, one wrong cut and you’ve ruined a forty-foot beam. That’s why Jess Caldwell is the man to acquire. Besides, he’s always on the lookout for the good food and music played once the work is complete and you have a barn-raising celebration,” said Mr. Henderson, chuckling again.

8 “Food and music?” her grandfather asked. Mr. Henderson said something about needing a fiddler, feeding all the people who came to help, and making sure everyone was having a good time while they built the barn. As Sophia watched the two men talk, self-pity increasingly swelled inside of her. It seemed that everyone had a significant responsibility—except her.

9 “Oh, and ask Flynn to do the cedar shakes—the shingles for the roof,” Mr. Henderson said. “He does an excellent job; he’ll make that barn of yours waterproof.”

10 At that moment Sophia noticed a familiar look on her grandfather’s face—the same bewildered countenance she had seen when he had to fill out papers in Williamsburg to operate the store in the settlement. He just kept nodding, saying, “Yes, yes, yes,” with no actual comprehension of what was being discussed. Grandfather was adept at so many undertakings, but he was obstinately impatient with details and consequently lost his focus when discussing such simple-but-vital information. Back in Williamsburg, Grandfather had procrastinated about completing the documents for weeks before Sophia had intervened.

11 Suddenly, Sophia grasped what her responsibilities during the barn raising would be. She casually strolled over to her grandfather, eased up beside him, and began listening to the conversation. Before long, she knew exactly which neighbors to invite, what their favorite foods were, and where the gala would take place after the barn was built. She ascertained who the best cooks were, who the best fiddle player was, and who would be glad to help her clean up afterwards. She began a mental list of all the necessities and was so busy configuring the details of the social aspect of the barn raising that she hardly noticed what her grandfather had noticed: she was finally smiling again.

12 Not a word had passed between Sophia and her grandfather, but he seemed to understand his job too. Patting her on the shoulder, he left her to talk with the neighbors and extract a few final details from Mr. Henderson.

13 A few weeks after she had invited all of the appropriate people to assist with the barn-raising

celebration, she noticed her grandfather showing an assemblage of people where he would raise his barn. He had just opened an imaginary gate; stepping through, he caught a glimpse of Sophia with Mr. Henderson and waved. She returned his wave without interrupting her conversation. She and Grandfather would do just fine, she thought. They would have the most organized farm in the colony and would raise various crops and animals—just as soon as they raised this barn.

Question #1

What information from the passage shows that Sophia's grandfather knows she has been unhappy?

- A) He sees her wandering away.
- B) He notices when she starts smiling.
- C) He does not see her talk to anyone.
- D) He realizes that she misses managing the store.

Question #2

Which word BEST describes Mr. Henderson's attitude toward the grandfather?

- A) annoyed
- B) bewildered
- C) helpful
- D) indifferent

Question #3

Which word BEST describes the grandfather's character?

- A) argumentative
- B) practical
- C) rebellious
- D) visionary

Question #4

Why does Sophia return her grandfather's wave "without interrupting her conversation" with Mr. Henderson?

- A) She is interested in Mr. Henderson's story.
- B) She fears disappointing Mr. Henderson.
- C) She is surprised by Mr. Henderson's advice.
- D) She is paying close attention to the details provided by Mr. Henderson.

Question #5

Read the sentence from Paragraph 13.

They would have the most organized farm in the colony and would raise various crops and animals—just as soon as they raised this barn.

Which word BEST describes Sophia's attitude in this sentence?

- A) accepting
- B) determined
- C) nonchalant
- D) resigned

Question #6

What does Sophia discover about life on a farm?

- A) Living in the city is more exciting than living on a farm.
- B) The work on a farm can be just as fulfilling as work in a settlement.
- C) Raising a barn is easily completed by one or two people.
- D) A barn is not necessary if a farmer raises crops instead of animals.