



# The New Father

**DIRECTIONS:** The opening of a novel sets the tone for the story, and gives you an idea of the characters, setting, etc. The passage below is the opening of a novel. Read the passage. Then answer the questions.

George woke that morning to find Diggs at his door.

"You're moving," Diggs said, coming into George's room half a second before George could say, "Come in".

"What do you mean moving? To a new room?"

Diggs shook his head. He had a suitcase in his hand and he slung it up onto the bed.

"Pack," he said.

"Am I moving to a new school?" George asked, struggling into his pants. He fumbled with the button at the waistline and grimaced. Once again, it seemed, he was going to need a larger size of pants.

"You're moving to a new life."

"Are you coming with me?"

"Nah."

George frowned. He didn't like Diggs, actually. But he'd gotten used to him. Diggs had been his personal chaperone since George had started at Institution 35446. He'd been seven years old. Every year since, Diggs had given something for him on his birthday. Chaperones died in their thirties and forties kind of like parents – but Diggs was pretty young and he was the only chaperone that George had ever been assigned. George pulled his shirt over his head. As he did, a cold fear suddenly struck his belly.

"Did I do something wrong?" he asked.

"Nah," Diggs said. "You're getting adopted."

"What you do mean, adopted?"

George had been pulling his things out of the drawers under his bed and throwing them into the suitcase, but now he stopped and stared at Diggs. "Adopted" was almost an archaic word. He probably only knew what it meant because of some vocabulary test he must of have taken sometime in the past few years. Kids were scarce. When parents died, the kids belonged to The State and that was that. No one got adopted anymore. Being adopted these days would be kind of like heading across the country in a covered wagon. Anachronistic. Ridiculous. Impossible.

But still. It must be true. He had never known Diggs to have a sense of humor.

The wall-sized screen in George's room had snapped on the moment he slid out of bed to answer the door, and now Diggs stood staring at it. New products now available for purchase flashed across it. Diggs' mouth was slightly open, and he licked at the edge of his lips with his tongue.

"Adopted by who?" George asked him.

“Some rich guy,” Diggs said. “Got his own plane and everything.” He sat down on George’s bed and stared at the screen while George finished packing.

It was the security guard at the airstrip who let them through the gate that supplied the name of Shank. He pressed his thumb against the small glass oval on the lock mechanism and as the gate had slid open he said, “So this is going to be Shank’s kid, huh?” Diggs only grunted. He kept one hand on George’s shoulder and ushered him in the general direction of the plane that was waiting for them. It was small and white, and had a colorful logo running from its nose to its tail. The pilot helped him up into the seat, and then he said into his mouthpiece, “Tell Harold we got him. We’ll be there in a few hours.” And that’s how George had found out the name of the man who was going to be his new father: Harold Shank.

\_\_\_\_\_

1. When do you think this story takes place, in the past, the present or the future? Use details from the text to support your answer.

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

2. Who do you think is the main character of the story, George, Diggs or Harold Shank? Why do you think that?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

3. What kind of story do you think this is? On the lines below, use details from the text to support your answer.

- A. western
- B. romance
- C. dystopian
- D. adventure
- E. mystery

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

