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Instructor's Name

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Date

### Daingerfield

It is the middle of October, the perfect time of year. The sun is shining, but there is a nice breeze to cool me down and make my hair lightly blow behind me. The leaves are turning and falling to the ground. This time of the year makes me think of my papaw, my great-grandfather. He was a short man covered in wrinkles, with the most humorous personality I have ever known. Papaw was always doing things for others, never for himself, and he made sure the house was stocked with Sam's Coke and frosted donuts before I got there. When I was younger, he and my mamaw would take me to Daingerfield, Texas. We would go just about this time of year and stay in an old, rustic log cabin for a few days at a time. The cabin was beautiful in its own ways with tall trees standing in the yard, surrounding the place for miles and miles, shading the perfectly sized yard. We would walk through them, hand in hand, with me in the middle, as we listened to the blue jays chirp and the leaves rustle in the breeze. I can still smell the pine trees putting off the breathtaking scent of nature. It is as if I were there just yesterday.

We always stayed in the same cabin. It was our own special place to get away from the world for a few days. When I would open the wooden door, we would walk into a two-bedroom, two-bathroom log cabin dream. Included were a medium-sized kitchen, undersized living room, and one washer and dryer. I will never forget the first time we ever walked through that front door. My papaw and mamaw were unloading the car as I ran inside, took one look around, and ran straight to the first bedroom in sight. It was smaller than my own room at home but with a

queen-sized bed. I knew immediately that this room was meant for me. Emptying my suitcase filled with Barbies, Beanie Babies, teddy bear, and more, I lined them up against the wall. One by one they sat there on the wooden floors against the wooden walls. I had claimed my territory. My papaw just laughed, and my mamaw tells that story to this day.

Since I was always going to Daingerfield at a young age, I was restless. Sitting around the cabin all day was just not acceptable for me or my grandparents. My papaw and mamaw loved the beautiful trees and calming lake close to the cabin. The best way to get the feel of both was to take the walking trail. This walking trail was four miles long, winding its way through the scenery surrounding us. That trail gave me a feeling of amazement and satisfaction because it was so hard at that time to wrap my head around the fact that the world was so much bigger than I was. At seven years old, I can remember just wanting to stay on the trail, even if we just sat there, because I could not get that feeling anywhere else. I was amazed that there was such a magical place and satisfied that my grandparents chose to share it with me. I actually never walked the trail because my papaw always brought my little pink bike with matching training wheels in the truck of their car. I would whiz right past them down the rough trail, but only a few feet, and then turn around and follow behind them while they walked hand in hand through the pine trees. To this day I believe that place made them fall even more in love, making their love seem as big as the beautiful pine trees surrounding them.

The most amazing aspect of Daingerfield was the pine trees. They were tall and round, with a width larger than our car, spread only a couple of feet apart, towering over what seemed like the world. They spread pine needles over the earth, giving it a certain characteristic and letting us get the feel of the miracle of nature. Outside of our cabin at the fire pit was the first time I ever had s'mores. It was a beautiful starry night with the crackling campfire, chirping

crickets, and delicious marshmallows covered in chocolate and surrounded by graham crackers.

And as my papaw crisped the marshmallows, I saw there in my mamaw's lap, gazing through the huge pine trees at the stars. They gave off the most perfect light as the trees danced in the breeze; it was perfect, an image I always produce when remembering my papaw.

My mamaw and I have been back to Daingerfield only a few times since my papaw passed. When we are there, it is as if he is still there with us. I can feel him all around me, and I know he watches over us. In that place I see him everywhere: in the cabin helping with the dishes, carrying my tiny pink bike to the walking trail, and even gazing out at the pine trees. This time and that place hold the memories of my papaw, always reminding me to treasure those special moments.