

April 27 - May 1, 2020

**Seventh Grade Reading Students.**

You are receiving the fourth digital weekly assignment from me. Your assignments will come to you in this form the remainder of the year. Your assignments are on my Teacher Page under lohn isd.net. Complete your work and email it to me. Your work is coming in very slowly. Please remember you are required to complete all your work to get credit for the year. Please do not fall further behind.

Your assignment for this week is to read "The Scholarship Jacket" by Marta Salinas. There are two worksheets attached to this story for you to complete. This is a wonderful story with a few "life lessons". Enjoy reading. It is a great story. Have a wonderful week. Watch for my emails or phone calls.

Stay well and safe  
I miss you,  
Mrs. Martin



# THE SCHOLARSHIP JACKET

**Marta Salinas**

**T**he small Texas school that I attended carried out a tradition every year during the eighth grade graduation; a beautiful gold and green jacket, the school colors, was awarded to the class valedictorian, the student who had maintained the highest grades for eight years. The scholarship jacket had a big gold S on the left front side and the winner's name was written in gold letters on the pocket.

My oldest sister Rosie had won the jacket a few years back and I fully expected to win also. I was fourteen and in the eighth grade. I had been a straight A student since the first grade, and the last year I had looked forward to owning that jacket. My father was a farm laborer who couldn't earn enough money to feed eight children, so when I was six I was given to my grandparents to raise. We couldn't participate in sports at school because there were registration fees, uniform costs, and trips out of town; so even though we were quite agile and athletic, there would never be a sports school jacket for us. This one, the scholarship jacket, was our only chance.

In May, close to graduation, spring fever struck, and no one paid any attention in class; instead we stared out the windows and at each other, wanting to speed up the last few weeks of school. I despaired every time I looked in the mirror. Pencil thin, not a curve anywhere, I was called "Beanpole" and "String Bean" and I knew that's what I looked like.

A flat chest, no hips, and a brain, that's what I had. That really isn't much for a fourteen-year-old to work with, I thought, as I absentmindedly wandered from my history class to the gym. Another hour of sweating in basketball and displaying my toothpick legs was coming up. Then I remembered my P.E. shorts were still in a bag under my desk where I'd forgotten them. I had to walk all the way back and get them. Coach Thompson was a real bear if anyone wasn't dressed for P.E. She had said I was a good forward and once she even tried to talk Grandma into letting me join the team. Grandma, of course, said no.

I was almost back at my classroom's door when I heard angry voices and arguing. I stopped. I didn't mean to eavesdrop; I just hesitated, not knowing what to do. I needed those shorts and I was going to be late, but I didn't want to interrupt an argument between my teachers. I recognized the voices: Mr. Schmidt, my history teacher, and Mr. Boone, my math teacher. They seemed to be arguing about me. I couldn't believe it. I still remember the shock that rooted me flat against the wall as if I were trying to blend in with the graffiti written there.

"I refuse to do it! I don't care who her father is, her grades don't even begin to compare to Martha's. I won't lie or falsify records. Martha<sup>1</sup> has a straight A plus average and you know it." That was Mr. Schmidt and he sounded very angry. Mr. Boone's voice sounded calm and quiet.

"Look, Joann's father is not only on the Board, he owns the only store in town; we could say it was a close tie and—"

The pounding in my ears drowned out the rest of the words, only a word here and there filtered through. ". . . Martha is Mexican. . . . resign. . . . won't do it. . . ." Mr. Schmidt came rushing out, and luckily for me went down the opposite way toward the auditorium, so he didn't see me. Shaking, I waited a few minutes and then went in and grabbed my bag and fled from the room.

<sup>1</sup> The main character is called "Martha" at school and "Marta" at home. Martha is an English version of the main character's Spanish name.

#### Vocabulary

**eavesdrop** (ēvz' drop') v. to listen secretly to a private conversation

**Make Predictions About Plot** How does the conversation Marta overhears and her internal response to it affect your prediction about whether she will receive the jacket?

Mr. Boone looked up when I came in but didn't say anything. To this day I don't remember if I got in trouble in P.E. for being late or how I made it through the rest of the afternoon. I went home very sad and cried into my pillow that night so grandmother wouldn't hear me. It seemed a cruel coincidence that I had overheard that conversation.

The next day when the principal called me into his office, I knew what it would be about. He looked uncomfortable and unhappy. I decided I wasn't going to make it any easier for him so I looked him straight in the eye. He looked away and fidgeted with the papers on his desk.

"Martha," he said, "there's been a change in policy this year regarding the scholarship jacket. As you know, it has always been free." He cleared his throat and continued.

"This year the Board decided to charge fifteen dollars—which still won't cover the complete cost of the jacket."

I stared at him in shock and a small sound of dismay<sup>2</sup> escaped my throat. I hadn't expected this. He still avoided looking in my eyes.

"So if you are unable to pay the fifteen dollars for the jacket, it will be given to the next one in line."

Standing with all the dignity I could muster,<sup>3</sup> I said, "I'll speak to my grandfather about it, sir, and let you know tomorrow." I cried on the walk home from the bus stop. The dirt road was a quarter of a mile from the highway, so by the time I got home, my eyes were red and puffy.

"Where's Grandpa?" I asked Grandma, looking down at the floor so she wouldn't ask me why I'd been crying. She was sewing on a quilt and didn't look up.

"I think he's out back working in the bean field."

I went outside and looked out at the fields. There he was. I could see him walking between the rows, his body bent over the little plants, hoe in hand. I walked slowly out to him,

<sup>2</sup> *Dismay* is a feeling of alarm or uneasiness.

<sup>3</sup> To *muster* dignity is to gather or collect it.

### Vocabulary

**coincidence** (kō in' si dāns) *n.* a situation in which two or more events that seem related accidentally occur at the same time

**policy** (pol' ə sē) *n.* a guideline for actions or decisions

### Conflict and Resolution

What conflict does Marta face? Is it an internal or external conflict? How do you know?

trying to think how I could best ask him for the money. There was a cool breeze blowing and a sweet smell of mesquite in the air, but I didn't appreciate it. I kicked at a dirt clod. I wanted that jacket so much. It was more than just being a valedictorian and giving a little thank you speech for the jacket on graduation night. It represented eight years of hard work and expectation. I knew I had to be honest with Grandpa; it was my only chance. He saw me and looked up.

He waited for me to speak. I cleared my throat nervously and clasped my hands behind my back so he wouldn't see them shaking. "Grandpa, I have a big favor to ask you," I said in Spanish, the only language he knew. He still waited silently. I tried again. "Grandpa, this year the principal said the scholarship jacket is not going to be free. It's going to cost fifteen dollars and I have to take the money in tomorrow, otherwise it'll be given to someone else." The last words came out in an eager rush. Grandpa straightened up tiredly and leaned his chin on the hoe handle. He looked out over the field that was filled with the tiny green bean plants. I waited, desperately hoping he'd say I could have the money.

He turned to me and asked quietly, "What does a scholarship jacket mean?"

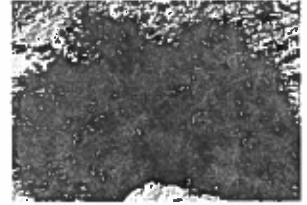
I answered quickly; maybe there was a chance. "It means you've earned it by having the highest grades for eight years and that's why they're giving it to you." Too late I realized the significance of my words. Grandpa knew that I understood it was not a matter of money. It wasn't that. He went back to hoeing the weeds that sprang up between the delicate little bean plants. It was a time consuming job; sometimes the small shoots were right next to each other. Finally he spoke again.

"Then if you pay for it, Marta, it's not a scholarship jacket, is it? Tell your principal I will not pay the fifteen dollars."

I walked back to the house and locked myself in the bathroom for a long time. I was angry with grandfather even though I knew he was right, and I was angry with the Board, whoever they were. Why did they have to change the rules just when it was my turn to win the jacket?

#### Visual Vocabulary

**Mesquite** (mes kēt') is a small thorny tree. Its pleasant-smelling wood is a favored barbecue fuel in the Southwest.



**Make Predictions About Plot** How do you think Grandpa's response will affect the rest of the events in the story?



*New Mexico Peon*, 1942. Ernest L. Blumenschein. Oil on canvas, 40 x 25 in. Gerald Peters Gallery, Sante Fe, NM.

*View the Art* Does the person in the painting remind you of anyone in the story? Explain.

It was a very sad and withdrawn girl who dragged into the principal's office the next day. This time he did look me in the eyes.

"What did your grandfather say?"

I sat very straight in my chair. "He said to tell you he won't pay the fifteen dollars."

The principal muttered something I couldn't understand under his breath, and walked over to the window. He stood looking out at something outside. He looked bigger than usual when he stood up; he was a tall gaunt<sup>4</sup> man with gray hair, and I watched the back of his head while I waited for him to speak.

"Why?" he finally asked. "Your grandfather has the money. Doesn't he own a small bean farm?"

I looked at him, forcing my eyes to stay dry. "He said if I had to pay for it, then it wouldn't be a scholarship jacket," I said and stood up to leave. "I guess you'll just have to give it to Joann." I hadn't meant to say that; it had just slipped out. I was almost to the door when he stopped me.

"Martha—wait."

I turned and looked at him, waiting. What did he want now? I could feel my heart pounding. Something bitter

<sup>4</sup> A *gaunt* person is thin and bony.

#### Vocabulary

*withdrawn* (with drôn') *adj.* shy, quiet, or unsociable

#### Grammar Tip

The past perfect verb tense names an action that took place before some other event in the past. Notice how the author uses the verb phrase *hadn't meant*. What other past perfect verb phrase appears in the same sentence?

and vile tasting was coming up in my mouth; I was afraid I was going to be sick. I didn't need any sympathy speeches. He sighed loudly and went back to his big desk. He looked at me, biting his lip, as if thinking.

"Okay. We'll make an exception in your case. I'll tell the Board, you'll get your jacket."

I could hardly believe it. I spoke in a trembling rush.

"Oh, thank you sir!" Suddenly I felt great. I didn't know about *adrenalin*<sup>5</sup> in those days, but I knew something was pumping through me, making me feel as tall as the sky. I wanted to yell, jump, run the mile, do something. I ran out so I could cry in the hall where there was no one to see me. At the end of the day, Mr. Schmidt winked at me and said, "I hear you're getting a scholarship jacket this year."

His face looked as happy and innocent as a baby's, but I knew better. Without answering I gave him a quick hug and ran to the bus. I cried on the walk home again, but this time because I was so happy. I couldn't wait to tell Grandpa and ran straight to the field. I joined him in the row where he was working and without saying anything I crouched down and started pulling up the weeds with my hands. Grandpa worked alongside me for a few minutes, but he didn't ask what had happened. After I had a little pile of weeds between the rows, I stood up and faced him.

"The principal said he's making an exception for me, Grandpa, and I'm getting the jacket after all. That's after I told him what you said."

Grandpa didn't say anything, he just gave me a pat on the shoulder and a smile. He pulled out the crumpled red handkerchief that he always carried in his back pocket and wiped the sweat off his forehead.

"Better go see if your grandmother needs any help with supper."

I gave him a big grin. He didn't fool me. I skipped and ran back to the house whistling some silly tune.

<sup>5</sup> A chemical released into the blood in times of stress or excitement, *adrenalin* (ə dren'əl in) increases the body's energy.

### Vocabulary

**vile** (vil) *adj.* very bad; unpleasant; foul

### Conflict and Resolution

How is Marta's conflict resolved?

### BQ BIG Question

How do you think this experience influences Marta's view of her grandfather?

**Selection Test**

Score

**The Scholarship Jacket** (page 494)**Recall and Interpret** (30 points total; 6 points each)

Write the letter of the best answer.

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. The letter jacket in the story is given to the person who  
A. is the best athlete.  
B. has the best attendance.  
C. has the highest grades.  
D. is the most popular.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. Marta had been raised by her grandparents since she was six because  
A. her parents were too poor to raise her.  
B. her parents had died.  
C. her grandparents needed help on their farm.  
D. she didn't get along with her sister.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. Marta feels that her best characteristic is  
A. her athletic ability.  
B. her brain.  
C. her physical appearance.  
D. her musical ability.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. Marta listens to a conversation between two teachers because  
A. they are her favorite teachers.  
B. she hopes to hear something she can tell others.  
C. she wants to know the answers to her next test.  
D. they are talking about her.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. Marta speaks to her grandfather in Spanish because  
A. it is the only language he knows.  
B. she likes to show off her knowledge.  
C. she doesn't want him to understand her.  
D. they were taking Spanish classes together.

**Vocabulary Practice** (15 points total; 3 points each)

Write the letter of the best answer.

- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. An event called a coincidence would most likely be  
A. planned.                      B. unexpected.                      C. impossible.



## Selection Test *continued*

- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. A withdrawn person would probably
  - A. be outgoing.
  - B. enjoy being with people.
  - C. be very shy.
  
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. A vile character in a movie would probably be the
  - A. hero.
  - B. villain.
  - C. sidekick.
  
- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. One way to eavesdrop is to
  - A. press your ear against a wall.
  - B. turn on the television.
  - C. attend a lecture.
  
- \_\_\_\_\_ 10. A change in a policy usually results in
  - A. stronger enforcement of a rule.
  - B. continuing a routine.
  - C. doing things differently.

**Analyze and Evaluate** (30 points total; 10 points each)  
 Think about the conflicts and resolutions that form the plot of "The Scholarship Jacket." Then complete the chart below.

The people involved are . . .	The conflict is . . .	The resolution is . . .
11.	One wants the other to falsify Marta's grade record. The other refuses.	One of them storms out of the classroom.
Marta and her grandfather	12.	She is angry, but she realizes that he is right.
Marta and the school board	The principal informs her that the school board wants \$15 for the jacket. She cannot pay.	13.

Copyright © by The McGraw-Hill Companies, Inc.