

## A Christmas Memory (page 272)

### Active Reading SkillBuilder

#### Noting Sensory Details

Good descriptive writing is usually rich in **imagery**—words and phrases that appeal to the various senses. Capote gives readers a vivid, lasting impression of his holiday memory by creating descriptions that appeal to one or more of the five senses.

While reading “A Christmas Memory,” use the chart to note phrases or details that seem especially striking. For each description, check off the sense or senses it appeals to.

Description	Sight	Smell	Hearing	Taste	Touch
<i>Cracking open the pecans</i>	✓		✓	✓	

**A Christmas Memory (page 272)****Literary Analysis SkillBuilder****Autobiographical Fiction**

**Autobiography** is the story of a person's life written by that person. **Fiction** is a narrative that springs from the imagination of the writer, though it may be based on actual events and people. "A Christmas Memory" combines both of these forms. Use the chart below to identify the elements of fiction—characters, plot, setting, and theme—in Capote's story.

**Characters**

Main: \_\_\_\_\_

Minor: \_\_\_\_\_

**Plot**

Rising Action: \_\_\_\_\_

Climax: \_\_\_\_\_

Falling Action: \_\_\_\_\_

**Setting**

Place: \_\_\_\_\_ Time: \_\_\_\_\_

Importance of Setting: \_\_\_\_\_

**Theme:**

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

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### Words to Know SkillBuilder

#### Words to Know

cavort

exhilarate

goad

noncommittal

sever

conspiracy

garish

inaugurate

prosaic

squander

**A.** Fill in each set of blanks with the correct word from the word list. (One word will be used twice.) Then use the boxed letters to complete the sentence below the puzzle.

- People who are part of a plot or scheme are involved in this. \_\_\_\_\_  \_\_\_\_\_  \_\_\_\_\_
- Workers who accidentally do this to a power line will cause a blackout. \_\_\_\_\_  \_\_\_\_\_
- This describes anything that is boring or unoriginal. \_\_\_\_\_  \_\_\_\_\_  \_\_\_\_\_
- It's easy to do this with time, especially when you have homework to do. \_\_\_\_\_   \_\_\_\_\_
- In the United States, we do this to a presidency every four years. \_\_\_\_\_  \_\_\_\_\_  \_\_\_\_\_
- You might do this when you're feeling really happy—or really goofy. \_\_\_\_\_  \_\_\_\_\_
- This is what you do when you strongly encourage someone to do something. \_\_\_\_\_  \_\_\_\_\_
- If your answer is "Maybe, maybe not," this describes you. \_\_\_\_\_  \_\_\_\_\_
- This might well describe the costumes of clowns and circus performers. \_\_\_\_\_  \_\_\_\_\_
- People do this to a relationship if they decide never to see one another again. \_\_\_\_\_   \_\_\_\_\_
- If something does this to you, you want to sing and dance and laugh.  \_\_\_\_\_  \_\_\_\_\_  \_\_\_\_\_

Complete the following sentence with the words that the boxed letters spell out.

Buddy and his friend send a Christmas fruitcake to \_\_\_\_\_.

**B.** Write a paragraph or two telling the story of a "picture show" as Buddy might tell it in a letter to his friend. You can describe a real movie you have seen or a made-up one. Use at least **four** of the Words to Know in your work.



**A Christmas Memory (page 272)****Selection Quiz**

Recall the events in Capote's short story, and then answer the questions in one or two sentences.

1. Why are Buddy and his cousin making fruitcakes?

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2. When Buddy and his cousin go to buy whiskey, how does Mr. Haha surprise them?

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3. After they finish baking the cakes, why does Buddy's cousin spend the evening in tears?

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4. As they drag their Christmas tree home, how does Buddy's cousin show her pride in the tree?

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5. As they relax after flying their kites, Buddy's cousin suddenly has a new idea about God. What is it?

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### Selection Test

**A.** Reread the quotation below that Capote wrote at the end of "A Christmas Memory." Then write notes to answer the questions in the boxes. (8 points each)

"And when that happens, I know it. A message saying so merely confirms a piece of news some secret vein had already received, severing from me an irreplaceable part of myself, letting it loose like a kite on a broken string. That is why, walking across a school campus on this particular December morning, I keep searching the sky. As if I expected to see, rather like hearts, a lost pair of kites hurrying toward heaven."

1. What does the phrase "like a kite on a broken string" communicate about Capote's feelings toward his friend's death?

2. What does the phrase "rather like hearts, a lost pair of kites hurrying toward heaven" communicate about Capote's feelings toward his friend?

3. What might kites symbolize to Capote and his friend before they are separated? Briefly explain.

4. What might kites symbolize to Capote after his friend's death? Briefly explain.

**B.** Write the letter of the best answer. This exercise is continued on the next page. (6 points each)

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. Which of the following would Capote **most** probably say caused him the greatest grief during his childhood?
- God
  - nature
  - poverty
  - those who Know Best

- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. Capote and his friend bake their fruitcakes mostly for
- celebrities.
  - kind strangers.
  - family members.
  - close friends and neighbors.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. On their last Christmas together, Capote's friend realizes that God shows Himself
- in everyday things.
  - only at Christmas time.
  - only at the moment of death.
  - only to children and old people.

**C. Words to Know.** Write the letter of the best answer. (4 points each)

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. An activity that exhilarates you makes you feel
- exhausted.
  - sad and lonely.
  - happy and energetic.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. When you squander money, you
- waste it.
  - steal it.
  - save it.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. Which is the **most** noncommittal answer to a question?
- "Yes."
  - "No."
  - "Maybe."
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. Which is the **best** place to cavort?
- a highway
  - a playground
  - a restaurant
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. When you sever a friendship, you
- end it.
  - begin it.
  - continue it.

**D.** Answer **one** of the following questions based on your understanding of the selection. Write your answer on a separate sheet of paper. (15 points)

1. What does "fruitcake weather" mean to Capote as a child? What do you think it means to him, 20 years later, as he records his memories of it? Use details from the selection to support your answers.
2. In what ways does Capote's friend differ from "those who Know Best"? How do you think these differences make her special to him?

**E. Linking Literature to Life.** Answer the following question based on your own experience and knowledge. Write your answer on a separate sheet of paper. (15 points)

Many people believe that holidays have become more about spending money and meeting obligations than about expressing feelings and sharing experiences. Do you agree? Why or why not?