

# The Great Gift

I love birthday parties — especially my own. The part I like best about my birthday is presents. In our house, we have two traditions. One is a big party with the whole family. The other tradition is my mother’s rules. About an hour before my party, my mom calls me into the kitchen. Then, she reads the list:

- Say hello to people when they come in.
- Offer guests food instead of eating all the good stuff myself.
- Don’t rip off the wrapping paper as if I’d never seen a present before.
- Always say, “Thank you.” Pretend that I like a present, even if it’s the ugliest thing I’ve ever seen.

On most birthdays, following the rules has been easy. For the last five years, I’ve pretended to *love* the socks that Aunt Laura has given me. I am ready.

Everything is going well this year as I get to the last—and biggest—box in the pile. It is almost as big as I am. I try hard not to rip the paper. As I remove the paper, I say something like, “I can’t wait to see what it is.” It’s from my great-grandfather. He’s smiling a big smile.

The paper falls to the floor. I don’t know what to say. Here, in the middle of the room, stands a rocking horse. It’s the kind a little kid rides. I look at Great Gramps. “It took me six years to make it. Do you like it, Henry?” he says.

My mother looks at me as if she’s afraid of something. But I get on the horse. (It wasn’t like my friends were there to watch.) I rock it, and tell Gramps it’s the best rocking horse I’ve ever had. And it is!

Explicit Information Question: What is the biggest present the author receives?

Drawing Conclusion Question: Why does the author say that it is the best rocking horse?