

The Picture



**a short story for English
reading and speaking**

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Introduction

Have you ever found an old photograph or object that brought back strong memories? What was it, and how did it make you feel?

Do you believe it's possible to discover something completely new about your family later in life? What might that be?

Why do you think families sometimes keep secrets? Can secrets ever be a good thing?

Have you ever seen a photo of someone you didn't recognize in a family album? What did you think or do?

The Picture

Andrew had been given the job of clearing out the house.

His mum and dad were both gone. First Dad, three years ago. Then Mum two years later. Now, the family home stood silent, heavy with memories, waiting to be emptied.

His sister Kate couldn't face it. Any time she stepped through the door, she dissolved into tears.

"I can't deal with this," she had said. "It's too much."

So Andrew had taken it on himself. He told her to focus on her daughter and the chaos of college applications. It was easier that way.

"It's just old stuff anyway," he said.

He stood alone in the hallway now, a scrap of paper and a pen in his hands, ticking off rooms and deciding what to do with the furniture. Most of it would go to a second-hand store. Neither he nor Kate wanted any of it. Too many ghosts clung to the fabric of those armchairs, too many echoes lived

in the creak of that wooden floor.

But the attic was different. That was where the real weight lived—the photographs, the memorabilia, the little forgotten fragments of their parents' lives.

He climbed the narrow attic stairs and pushed open the hatch. Dust motes swirled in the sunbeams cutting through the skylight. The room smelled of old paper and wood polish. It was warmer than he expected.

Andrew sat in a rickety chair and began sorting through boxes. Books yellowed at the edges. Knick-knacks from forgotten holidays. Handwritten letters in envelopes with curling corners. And photographs—so many photographs.

He flipped through stacks of them: holidays in Cornwall, summer days in the garden, birthdays, family dinners. His father had always used a film camera. The images had a different quality to them—softer, warmer, more alive.

The photos stirred up emotions he had tried to suppress. He smiled at one where Kate was wearing a crown made of paper and holding a slice of birthday cake. Then his eyes welled with tears as he spotted another, a candid shot of his

mum in the kitchen, caught mid-laugh.

He found a shoebox bound with old sticky tape. On the lid, in his mother's handwriting in capital letters: OLD PHOTOS. DON'T THROW OUT.

Curious, Andrew sliced through the tape with his pocket knife and opened the box. Inside was another bundle of photographs, older than the rest. As he flipped through them, something strange caught his attention.

These were pictures of himself as a child, but younger than he remembered in the other photos. In some, he was alone. But in others, there was another boy.

Not a cousin. Not a neighbour. Someone unfamiliar.

The boy had darker hair, and he was bigger. Older. He appeared in multiple photos, always close to Andrew. In one, the boy held his hand protectively as they walked along the garden path. In another, they were playing football—Andrew laughing, the boy in mid-kick.

Andrew frowned. Who was this?

He found a photo of the boy sitting on the big red sofa with Andrew and their cousin Daniel.

The boy was holding a picture book, telling a story with exaggerated gestures. Andrew and Daniel watched him with rapt attention.

There were more.

The boy sitting on Dad's lap behind the wheel of the car, grinning, pretending to drive.

The boy washing the car with Dad, scrubbing a wheel with determined energy.

The boy helping Mum decorate a Christmas tree, placing a bauble carefully near the top while she smiled at him.

In each one, the boy wasn't just present—he was part of the family.

Andrew's heart began to pound. He picked up a close-up photograph. The boy's face was captured in a candid moment, laughing at something off-camera. His eyes, that lopsided smile—there was something hauntingly familiar in them. Something in the angle of the cheekbones, the slight crease near the mouth.

He looked like Andrew.

He looked like Kate.

Andrew dropped the photo, his fingers trembling.

He stared at the pile of pictures around him, then slowly leaned back against the attic wall.

This boy—this unknown boy—was not a visitor. Not a friend. Not a neighbour's child.

He was family.

Their brother.

An older brother.

Andrew tried to breathe, but his chest tightened. Why hadn't anyone ever said anything? Why were there no stories, no offhand comments, no evidence at all—except this hidden shoebox?

He thought of Kate. She wouldn't know. She'd have told him if she did. And their cousins? The older ones—they might remember. Had they kept this secret too?

Andrew's mind whirled, grasping for answers that didn't exist.

He picked up the photos again and turned them over, looking for dates or names. Nothing.

What had happened to him?

Where had he gone?

And why had he been erased?

Was it grief? Shame? Tragedy?

Or something worse?

Andrew gathered the photos and placed them carefully back in the box, his hands unsteady. His parents had kept these hidden. His mother had written Don't Throw Out, as though they mattered deeply. As though they should not be forgotten—but also never discussed.

He stared at the shoebox for a long moment.

This changed everything. His image of his family—the shape of it, the weight of it—had always been incomplete. And now, it could never be the same again.

He reached for the attic light cord and stood. The bulb flickered once before darkness swallowed the room.

Carrying the box, Andrew made his way slowly down the stairs. The house, stripped of furniture and almost empty, felt heavier now than it ever had before.

He paused in the hallway, staring at the front door.

Tomorrow, he would call his oldest cousin.

He would ask.

And if no one told him the truth, he would find it himself.

Because some secrets might stay hidden for years.

But they don't always want to stay that way.

Reading Comprehension Questions

Who is the main character in the story?

Where is he? And what is he doing?

Why is Andrew the one clearing out the house?

How does Kate feel when she enters the house?

Why don't Andrew and Kate want to keep the furniture?

Why does Andrew think the attic is different from the rest of the house?

Where does Andrew sit in the attic?

What are some of the items Andrew finds in the attic?

What scenes do the photos show?

What kind of camera did Andrew's father use?

What memories are stirred by the photos Andrew looks at?

What does the writing on the shoebox say, and who wrote it?

What does he use to cut through the sticky tape?

What is inside the shoebox?

What surprises Andrew in the photos from the shoebox?

How is the mysterious boy described?

Does Andrew know who this boy is?

What activities does the boy appear in with Andrew's family?

How does the boy interact with Andrew and the others?

What does Andrew notice about the boy's appearance?

How does Andrew react when he realizes the boy looks like him?

What does Andrew believe about the boy in the photos?

Why is Andrew confused about what he's discovered?

What questions does Andrew ask himself about the missing brother?

Why might Andrew's parents have kept the photos hidden?

How has Andrew's understanding of his family changed?

What does the atmosphere in the house feel like to him now?

What is Andrew planning to do next?

What does the story suggest about secrets and truth?

Story and Reading Comprehension Questions

The Picture

Andrew had been given the job of clearing out the house.

His mum and dad were both gone. First Dad, three years ago. Then Mum two years later. Now, the family home stood silent, heavy with memories, waiting to be emptied.

His sister Kate couldn't face it. Any time she stepped through the door, she dissolved into tears.

"I can't deal with this," she had said. "It's too much."

So Andrew had taken it on himself. He told her to focus on her daughter and the chaos of college applications. It was easier that way.

"It's just old stuff anyway," he said.

Reading Comprehension Questions

- Who is the main character in the story?

- Where is he? And what is he doing?
- Why is Andrew the one clearing out the house?
- How does Kate feel when she enters the house?

He stood alone in the hallway now, a scrap of paper and a pen in his hands, ticking off rooms and deciding what to do with the furniture. Most of it would go to a second-hand store. Neither he nor Kate wanted any of it. Too many ghosts clung to the fabric of those armchairs, too many echoes lived in the creak of that wooden floor.

But the attic was different. That was where the real weight lived—the photographs, the memorabilia, the little forgotten fragments of their parents' lives.

He climbed the narrow attic stairs and pushed open the hatch.

Reading Comprehension Questions

Why don't Andrew and Kate want to keep the furniture?

Why does Andrew think the attic is different from the rest of the house?

Dust motes swirled in the sunbeams cutting through the skylight. The room smelled of old paper and wood polish. It was warmer than he expected.

Andrew sat in a rickety chair and began sorting through boxes. Books yellowed at the edges. Knick-knacks from forgotten holidays. Handwritten letters in envelopes with curling corners. And photographs—so many photographs.

He flipped through stacks of them: holidays in Cornwall, summer days in the garden, birthdays, family dinners. His father had always used a film camera. The images had a different quality to them—softer, warmer, more alive.

Reading Comprehension Questions

- Where does Andrew sit in the attic?
- What are some of the items Andrew finds in the attic?
- What scenes do the photos show?
- What kind of camera did Andrew's father use?

The photos stirred up emotions he had tried to suppress. He smiled at one where Kate was wearing a crown made of paper and holding a slice of birthday cake. Then his eyes

welled with tears as he spotted another, a candid shot of his mum in the kitchen, caught mid-laugh.

He found a shoebox bound with old sticky tape. On the lid, in his mother's handwriting in capital letters: OLD PHOTOS. DON'T THROW OUT.

Curious, Andrew sliced through the tape with his pocket knife and opened the box. Inside was another bundle of photographs—these older than the rest.

Reading Comprehension Questions

- What memories are stirred by the photos Andrew looks at?
- What does the writing on the shoebox say, and who wrote it?
- What does he use to cut through the sticky tape?
- What is inside the shoebox?

As he flipped through them, something strange caught his attention.

These were pictures of himself as a child, but younger than he remembered in the other photos. In some, he was alone. But in others, there was another boy.

Not a cousin. Not a neighbour. Someone unfamiliar.

The boy had darker hair, and he was bigger. Older. He appeared in multiple photos, always close to Andrew. In one, the boy held his hand protectively as they walked along the garden path. In another, they were playing football—Andrew laughing, the boy in mid-kick.

Reading Comprehension Questions

- What surprises Andrew in the photos from the shoebox?
- How is the mysterious boy described?

Andrew frowned. Who was this?

He found a photo of the boy sitting on the big red sofa with Andrew and Daniel, a cousin.

The boy was holding a picture book, telling a story with exaggerated gestures. Andrew and Daniel watched him with rapt attention.

There were more.

The boy sitting on Dad's lap behind the wheel of the car, grinning, pretending to drive.

The boy washing the car with Dad, scrubbing a wheel with

determined energy.

The boy helping Mum decorate a Christmas tree, placing a bauble carefully near the top while she smiled at him.

Reading Comprehension Questions

- Does Andrew know who this boy is?
- What activities does the boy appear in with Andrew's family?
- How does the boy interact with Andrew and the others?

In each one, the boy wasn't just present—he was part of the family.

Andrew's heart began to pound. He picked up a close-up photograph. The boy's face was captured in a candid moment, laughing at something off-camera. His eyes, that lopsided smile—there was something hauntingly familiar in them. Something in the angle of the cheekbones, the slight crease near the mouth.

He looked like Andrew.

He looked like Kate.

Andrew dropped the photo, his fingers trembling.

Reading Comprehension Questions

- What does Andrew notice about the boy's appearance?
- How does Andrew react when he realizes the boy looks like him?

He stared at the pile of pictures around him, then slowly leaned back against the attic wall.

This boy—this unknown boy—was not a visitor. Not a friend. Not a neighbour's child.

He was family.

Their brother.

An older brother.

Andrew tried to breathe, but his chest tightened. Why hadn't anyone ever said anything? Why were there no stories, no offhand comments, no evidence at all—except this hidden shoebox?

He thought of Kate. She wouldn't know. She'd have told him if she did. And their cousins? The older ones—they might remember. Had they kept this secret too?

Reading Comprehension Questions

- What does Andrew believe about the boy in the photos?
- Why is Andrew confused about what he's discovered?

Andrew's mind whirled, grasping for answers that didn't exist.

He picked up the photos again and turned them over, looking for dates or names. Nothing.

What had happened to him?

Where had he gone?

And why had he been erased?

Was it grief? Shame? Tragedy?

Or something worse?

Andrew gathered the photos and placed them carefully back in the box, his hands unsteady. His parents had kept these hidden. His mother had written Don't Throw Out, as though they mattered deeply. As though they should not be forgotten—but also never discussed.

Reading Comprehension Questions

- What questions does Andrew ask himself about the missing brother?
- Why might Andrew's parents have kept the photos hidden?

He stared at the shoebox for a long moment.

This changed everything. His image of his family—the shape of it, the weight of it—had always been incomplete. And now, it could never be the same again.

He reached for the attic light cord and stood. The bulb flickered once before darkness swallowed the room.

Carrying the box, Andrew made his way slowly down the stairs. The house, stripped of furniture and almost empty, felt heavier now than it ever had before.

Reading Comprehension Questions

- How has Andrew's understanding of his family changed?
- What does the atmosphere in the house feel like to him now?

He paused in the hallway, staring at the front door.

Tomorrow, he would call his oldest cousin.

He would ask.

And if no one told him the truth, he would find it himself.
Because some secrets might stay hidden for years.
But they don't always want to stay that way.

Reading Comprehension Questions

- What is Andrew planning to do next?
- What does the story suggest about secrets and truth?

Essential Vocabulary

clearing out	heavy with memories	dissolved into tears
chaos	second-hand store	memorabilia
fragments	dusty motes	rickety
yellowed	knick-knacks	handwritten
candid	protectively	determined
exaggerated	rapt attention	captured
trembling	grasping	unsteady
flickered	swallowed	stripped
paused	erased	tragedy
grief	shame	incomplete
evidence	attic	hatch
creak	curling corners	unfamiliar
pounding	hauntingly	shoebox

Exercise

Write down all the words and phrases in your vocabulary

notebook. Look in your dictionary and find the meaning of each word. Write the definition next to each word.

Then make up your own sentences using each word or phrase.

For example:

Chaos — *complete disorder and confusion*

Fragments — *small parts broken off or separated from something*

Then write a sentence of your own that uses the new word or phrase correctly.

When the fire alarm went off, the classroom erupted into chaos.

She found fragments of the broken vase scattered across the floor.

Do this with all the vocabulary and, over time, this will help

improve all your English skills – reading, writing, speaking and listening.

True or False?

Look at all the statements below.

State whether they are true or false. If a statement is false, then correct it and make it true.

You can find all the correct answers at the end of the lesson plan.

Andrew was responsible for clearing out the family home after both of his parents passed away.

Kate took charge of sorting through the attic because Andrew couldn't handle it emotionally.

Andrew found a shoebox labelled in his father's handwriting that said: "OLD PHOTOS. DON'T THROW OUT."

The attic was full of furniture and old electrical equipment.

In one of the photographs, Andrew's mother was caught mid-laugh in the kitchen.

Andrew recognized the older boy in the photographs as a childhood friend from school.

The older boy in the photos had a strong resemblance to both Andrew and Kate.

The boy appeared in only one or two photos and always looked like a visitor.

The discovery of the photos made Andrew question everything he knew about his family.

Andrew found written notes on the backs of the photos that explained who the boy was.

The boy in the photos seemed to be integrated into the family—appearing with both parents and cousins.

The attic smelled like fresh paint and flowers.

Andrew planned to call his oldest cousin the next day to ask about the mysterious boy.

Kate had always known about their older brother, but chose to keep it a secret.

The story ends with Andrew leaving the house, determined to uncover the truth.

What is the Correct Synonym?

Look at the table of words below.

Match the words on the left with the correct synonym on the right.

A synonym is a word of similar meaning.

You can find all the correct answers at the end of the lesson plan!

Chaos	Faded
Fragments	Specks
Dusty motes	Sorrow
Rickety	Shaking
Yellowed	Proof
Determined	Pieces
Trembling	Deleted
Grasping	Disorder
Erased	Committed
Tragedy	Unstable
Grief	Disaster
Evidence	Seizing

What is the Correct Antonym?

Look at the table of words below.

Match the words on the left with the correct antonym on the right.

An antonym is a word of opposite meaning.

You can find all the correct answers at the end of the lesson plan!

Chaos	Basement
Fragments	Still
Rickety	Known
Captured	Beamed
Trembling	Joy
Unsteady	Whole
Flickered	Comfortingly
Erased	Harmony
Grief	Missed
Attic	Recorded
Unfamiliar	Solid

Hauntingly	Balanced
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Words and Meanings

Look at the table of words below.

Chaos	Memorabilia	Rickety
Protectively	Determined	Exaggerated
Unsteady	Flickered	Stripped
Tragedy	Shame	Incomplete
Evidence	Hatch	Hauntingly

Now match each of the words above with one of the meanings below.

You can find all the correct answers at the end of the lesson plan!

1. A small opening or door, often in the floor or ceiling.
2. Made to seem more extreme or dramatic than it really is.
3. Not firm, shaky, or likely to fall.

4. Information that proves or disproves something.
5. In a way that is eerily memorable or emotionally evocative.
6. A deeply sad or disastrous event.
7. Shone or moved unsteadily or briefly.
8. Unstable or likely to collapse due to age or poor construction.
9. Not finished or lacking some parts.
10. A painful feeling of guilt, embarrassment, or humiliation.
11. Complete disorder and confusion.
12. Removed completely, often leaving something bare.
13. In a way that shows care and a desire to shield or guard.
14. Showing firmness or resolve to do something.
15. Objects kept or collected because of their historical or sentimental value.

Fill In The Gaps

Look at the table of words below.

Chaos	Memorabilia	Fragments
Rickety	Protectively	Determined
Captured	Trembling	Flickered
Stripped	Tragedy	Grief
Shame	Incomplete	Unfamiliar

Now use all the words from the table and place them in the correct places in the sentences below.

You can find all the correct answers at the end of the lesson plan!

The photographer captured the couple's joy perfectly.

She wore her grief like a heavy coat she couldn't take off.

The language on the sign was unfamiliar to her.

He stood protectively in front of the child as the dog

approached.

The candle flickered in the draught, casting shadows on the wall.

All that remained of the photograph were torn fragments.

The museum displayed memorabilia from the singer's early career.

The fire was a tragedy that the community would never forget.

She was trembling as she opened the envelope.

He looked down in shame after realizing his mistake.

She climbed the rickety ladder, hoping it wouldn't collapse beneath her.

The room had been stripped of furniture, echoing with emptiness.

After the storm, the town square was a scene of chaos.

The puzzle felt incomplete without the final piece.

She was determined to finish the race, no matter how long it took.

Discussion Questions

Why do you think Andrew was the one who took responsibility for clearing the house?

How does the story show the different ways people deal with grief?

What does the attic symbolize in the story?

Why do you think the photos in the shoebox were hidden away?

What might the title The Picture suggest about the story's theme?

How did the discovery of the mysterious boy change Andrew's understanding of his family?

What emotions did you feel while reading the story? Which part affected you most?

Why do you think the parents never told Andrew or Kate about the older brother?

If you were Andrew, how would you feel finding those

photographs? What would you do next?

Have you ever discovered a family secret or something surprising about your family's past? If yes, how did it affect you?

What role do photographs play in preserving family history and memory?

Do you think it's better to keep painful family secrets hidden or to share them? Why?

What are some reasons a family might choose to erase someone from their history?

How does the story build suspense and mystery? What clues are given along the way?

What kind of relationship do you think Andrew and the unknown boy might have had, based on the photos?

Imagine Andrew speaks to his cousin and learns the full story. What do you think he might discover?

How might this discovery change Andrew's relationship with his sister Kate?

Do you think Andrew will ever feel the same way about his parents again? Why or why not?

What would you do if you found out you had a sibling you never knew about?

Do you think the story ends with hope, sadness, or something else? Explain your view.

Role Play

This is a role play activity.

Role Play: "The Secret Brother"

Objective:

Students will practice speaking by role-playing a sensitive conversation between Andrew and Kate. The goal is to:

- Express emotions (curiosity, shock, confusion, concern)
- Ask and answer questions
- Use polite and emotional language
- Build conversation gradually

Roles:

Andrew: *He has found old photos in the attic. There is a mysterious boy in many of them, someone who looks like family but who was never mentioned before. He needs to tell Kate, gently.*

Kate: *She is emotionally overwhelmed by the house and avoids talking about the past. She doesn't know anything about the boy in the photos.*

Preparation:

Divide students into pairs (or groups of three if a moderator is used).

Give each student a role card (see below).

Provide useful phrases based on level (see below).

Allow 5–10 minutes to prepare the conversation.

Students act out the conversation. Encourage them to improvise and respond naturally.

Role Cards:

Andrew's Card

You have found strange photos in a box marked "Old Photos. Don't Throw Out."

The photos show a boy you don't recognize—but he looks like you and Kate.

You are confused and emotional.

You want to tell Kate, but gently.

Start by talking about the attic.

Then mention the box.

Then ask her if she remembers the boy.

If she doesn't, show her the pictures.

Try to stay calm, but be honest about your feelings.

Kate's Card

You don't like being in the family house—it's too painful.

You feel guilty that Andrew is doing everything.

He says he found something strange.

Be a little impatient or nervous at first.

When he talks about the boy, try to remember—but you don't know who the boy is.

Ask questions: "Are you sure?" "Where did you find this?"

Try to support Andrew, but you're confused too.

Useful Phrases:

"I found something strange."

"Do you remember this boy?"

"He looks like family."

"I don't understand... Who is he?"

"This is confusing..."

"Why didn't they tell us?"

"There's something I need to talk to you about."

"I came across a box in the attic—it has some disturbing photos."

"This boy... he looks just like us. But I don't recognize him."

"Could we have had a brother no one talked about?"

“I think there’s a part of our family story we never knew.”

Follow-Up Discussion (Whole Class):

- What do you think happened to the boy?
- Why might a family hide something like this?
- Do you think Andrew and Kate will find out the truth?
- What should Andrew do next?

Debate

This is a debate activity.

Debate: “Should Parents Keep Big Family Secrets from Their Children?”

Objective:

Students will practice expressing opinions, agreeing/disagreeing politely, using argumentation, and developing ideas in English by debating a central question raised by The Picture.

Debate Question:

Should parents keep big family secrets—like a lost sibling or family tragedy—from their children?

Group Setup:

Divide students into two teams:

Team A: *Yes, sometimes it's better to keep secrets.*

Team B: *No, children have a right to know the truth.*

For smaller classes, students can pair off to prepare arguments and then debate in front of the group. For individual practice, students can write short argumentative speeches.

Suggested Format (30–45 min):

Warm-up (5–10 min)

Introduce the debate topic and quickly review the story.
Ask students: What do you think the parents were hiding in "The Picture"? Why?

Preparation (10 min)

Each team prepares 2–3 main arguments and examples.
Encourage use of emotional and logical reasoning (family, safety, psychological effects, etc.)

Debate (15–20 min)

Opening statements (1–2 min per team)
Rebuttals (each team responds to the other's points)
Open discussion or crossfire
Closing statements
Class Vote & Reflection (5–10 min)
Students vote for the stronger arguments.

Discuss:

- Did the story change your opinion?
- What would you do as a parent or child in this situation?

Useful Phrases:

I think parents should / shouldn't hide big secrets
because...

Children need to know the truth / need to be protected.

It's difficult, but it's better to be honest.

Sometimes secrets protect people from pain.

In my opinion, withholding the truth can cause more harm
in the long run.

There are situations where the emotional impact justifies
secrecy.

Children deserve to understand their family history, even if
it's painful.

The story suggests that secrets often come to light—and
create more confusion when they do.

Optional Extension:

Ask students to write a short opinion paragraph or blog post titled:

“Would I Want to Know If I Had a Secret Sibling?”

Writing

This is a creative writing exercise.

Writing Exercise: Family Secrets

Instructions:

Choose one of the prompts below. Write a short story (250–500 words) or a personal reflection.

Try to include:

- Strong emotions
- Dialogue (if it fits)
- A sense of mystery or discovery
- How the secret changes the characters

Prompt 1: The Hidden Letter

While cleaning out your grandmother's old house, you find a sealed envelope hidden behind a drawer. The letter inside reveals a shocking family secret that changes how you see one of your parents.

- What does the letter say?
- Who was hiding the secret?

- How do you react?

Prompt 2: The Family Photo That Doesn't Make Sense

You find an old photograph of your family at a beach picnic—but there's someone in the picture you've never seen before. When you ask your parents, they hesitate to answer.

- Who is the mystery person?
- Why were they erased from your family's story?
- Do you decide to find them?

Prompt 3: The Secret Room

After your grandfather passes away, you discover a hidden room in his house. Inside, there's something you never expected—a diary, a locked box, or evidence of a life no one talked about.

- What do you find in the room?
- What does it reveal?
- How does it affect your family's future?

Write your story.

When you have finished, you can ask your teacher for a review.

Or you can read your story out loud in front of your class and ask your classmates for feedback.

Reading Comprehension Questions — Answers

First Section

Who is the main character in the story?

Andrew is the main character.

Where is he? And what is he doing?

He is at his parents' house, clearing it out after their deaths.

Why is Andrew the one clearing out the house?

His sister Kate is too emotional to handle it, so Andrew takes on the responsibility.

How does Kate feel when she enters the house?

She becomes overwhelmed and cries; she says, "I can't deal with this."

Second Section

Why don't Andrew and Kate want to keep the furniture?

The furniture is filled with memories and emotional weight — "too many ghosts" and "echoes."

Why does Andrew think the attic is different from the rest of the house?

The attic holds the deepest emotional weight—old photos, memorabilia, and forgotten parts of their parents' lives.

Third Section

Where does Andrew sit in the attic?

He sits in a rickety chair.

What are some of the items Andrew finds in the attic?

He finds books, knick-knacks, handwritten letters, and many old photographs.

What scenes do the photos show?

They show holidays, garden scenes, birthdays, and family dinners.

What kind of camera did Andrew's father use?

A film camera.

Fourth Section

What memories are stirred by the photos Andrew looks at?

He smiles at happy moments, like Kate with a birthday cake, but also feels deep sadness, especially seeing his mum laughing in the kitchen.

What does the writing on the shoebox say, and who wrote it?

It says: "OLD PHOTOS. DON'T THROW OUT." It's in his mother's handwriting.

What does he use to cut through the sticky tape?
His pocket knife.

What is inside the shoebox?
Another bundle of older photographs.

Fifth Section

What surprises Andrew in the photos from the shoebox?
There is a boy in the pictures that Andrew doesn't recognize.

How is the mysterious boy described?
He's older, has darker hair, and appears close to Andrew in the photos.

Sixth Section

Does Andrew know who this boy is?
No, he doesn't recognize the boy at all.

What activities does the boy appear in with Andrew's family?
He plays football, tells stories, sits on their dad's lap, helps wash the car, and decorates the Christmas tree.

How does the boy interact with Andrew and the others?
He seems close to them, like part of the family—not just a

visitor.

Seventh Section

What does Andrew notice about the boy's appearance?

The boy looks like Andrew and Kate—he shares similar facial features.

How does Andrew react when he realizes the boy looks like him?

He's shocked and physically shaken—his fingers tremble, and he drops the photo.

Eighth Section

What does Andrew believe about the boy in the photos?

He believes the boy is their older brother—someone from the family's past.

Why is Andrew confused about what he's discovered?

No one ever mentioned a brother. There were no stories or evidence—just this hidden box of photos.

Ninth Section

What questions does Andrew ask himself about the missing brother?

He wonders what happened to him, where he went, and why he was erased from memory.

Why might Andrew's parents have kept the photos hidden?

Possibly because of grief, shame, tragedy, or something even more painful.

Tenth Section

How has Andrew's understanding of his family changed?

He realizes his understanding was incomplete; there was a hidden part of his family history.

What does the atmosphere in the house feel like to him now?

It feels heavier, even though it's nearly empty—because of the emotional weight of the secret.

Final Section

What is Andrew planning to do next?

He plans to call his oldest cousin to ask about the boy and uncover the truth.

What does the story suggest about secrets and truth?

It suggests that secrets can remain hidden for a long time, but they don't always want to stay that way—they eventually come to light.

True or False — Answers

These are the correct answers below.

How well did you do?

1. True

Andrew was responsible for clearing out the family home after both of his parents passed away.

2. False

Kate couldn't handle being in the house and cried whenever she entered. Andrew took on the task because she couldn't face it.

3. False

*The shoebox was labelled in his **mother's** handwriting: "OLD PHOTOS. DON'T THROW OUT."*

4. False

The attic was filled with boxes containing old books, letters, knick-knacks, and photographs—not furniture or electrical

equipment.

5. True

In one of the photographs, Andrew's mother was caught mid-laugh in the kitchen.

6. False

*Andrew did **not** recognize the older boy in the photographs. He was unfamiliar and mysterious.*

7. True

The older boy in the photos had a strong resemblance to both Andrew and Kate.

8. False

*The boy appeared in **multiple** photos and seemed closely integrated into the family—not just a visitor.*

9. True

The discovery of the photos made Andrew question everything he knew about his family.

10. False

*There were **no** written notes or names on the backs of the photos to explain who the boy was.*

11. True

The boy in the photos seemed to be integrated into the family —appearing with both parents and cousins.

12. False

*The attic smelled of **old paper and wood polish**, not fresh paint and flowers.*

13. True

Andrew planned to call his oldest cousin the next day to ask about the mysterious boy.

14. False

Andrew believed Kate didn't know about the older brother and would have told him if she did.

15. True

The story ends with Andrew leaving the house, determined to uncover the truth.

What is the Correct Synonym — Answers

These are the correct answers below.

Did you get them all right?

Chaos	Disorder
Fragments	Pieces
Dusty motes	Specks
Rickety	Unstable
Yellowed	Faded
Determined	Committed
Trembling	Shaking
Grasping	Seizing
Erased	Deleted
Tragedy	Disaster
Grief	Sorrow
Evidence	Proof

What is the Correct Antonym — Answers

These are the correct answers below.

How many did you get right?

Chaos	Harmony
Fragments	Whole
Rickety	Solid
Captured	Missed
Trembling	Still
Unsteady	Balanced
Flickered	Beamed
Erased	Recorded
Grief	Joy
Attic	Basement
Unfamiliar	Known
Hauntingly	Comfortingly

Words and Meanings — Answers

These are the correct answers below.

Were you successful?

1. Chaos — Complete disorder and confusion.
2. Memorabilia — Objects kept or collected because of their historical or sentimental value.
3. Rickety — Unstable or likely to collapse due to age or poor construction.
4. Protectively — In a way that shows care and a desire to shield or guard.
5. Determined — Showing firmness or resolve to do something.
6. Exaggerated — Made to seem more extreme or dramatic than it really is.
7. Unsteady — Not firm, shaky, or likely to fall.

8. Flickered — Shone or moved unsteadily or briefly.
9. Stripped — Removed completely, often leaving something bare.
10. Tragedy — A deeply sad or disastrous event.
11. Shame — A painful feeling of guilt, embarrassment, or humiliation.
12. Incomplete — Not finished or lacking some parts.
13. Evidence — Information that proves or disproves something.
14. Hatch — A small opening or door, often in the floor or ceiling.
15. Hauntingly — In a way that is eerily memorable or emotionally evocative.

Fill In The Gaps — Answers

These are the correct answers below.

Did you miss any?

Chaos — After the storm, the town square was a scene of chaos.

Memorabilia — The museum displayed memorabilia from the singer's early career.

Fragments — All that remained of the photograph were torn fragments.

Rickety — She climbed the rickety ladder, hoping it wouldn't collapse beneath her.

Protectively — He stood protectively in front of the child as the dog approached.

Determined — She was determined to finish the race, no matter how long it took.

Captured — The photographer captured the couple's joy

perfectly.

Trembling — She was trembling as she opened the envelope.

Flickered — The candle flickered in the draught, casting shadows on the wall.

Stripped — The room had been stripped of furniture, echoing with emptiness.

Tragedy — The fire was a tragedy that the community would never forget.

Grief — She wore her grief like a heavy coat she couldn't take off.

Shame — He looked down in shame after realizing his mistake.

Incomplete — The puzzle felt incomplete without the final piece.

Unfamiliar — The language on the sign was unfamiliar to her.

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