Butterfly House

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illustrated by Greg Shed

When I was just a little girl I saw a small black creature like a tiny worm, and saved it from a greedy jay who wanted it for lunch.

I carried it inside, safe on its wide green leaf. My grandpa said it was a larva and soon would be a butterfly.

We laid the larva carefully on thistle leaves inside an empty jar, put in a twig for it to climb—then made a lid of soft white paper all stuck around with glue.

My grandpa knew exactly what to do. “I raised a butterfly myself,” he said, “when I was just your age.”

How strange to think my grandpa once was young like me. “We would have been best friends if I’d been there back then,” I said.

My grandpa smiled. “It worked out anyhow. We’re best friends now.”

Up in his room we found a box. I cut a window in its side, then covered it with screen. Soon I could look inside and see my larva looking back at me.

What would she see? A human face so big and scary, strange and starey? What would she think?

“I want it pretty till she goes,” I said.

And so Grandpa and I drew flowers on colored paper. Cone flowers, purple-blue, and marigolds, lantana, bright as flame, and thistles, too.

We wedged a garden twig inside the box for her to walk on, so her wings could dry once she became a butterfly.

My grandpa knows the flowers butterflies like best.

The ones where they can rest and drink the sweet, clear nectar.
We glued the painted flowers inside the box so it was bright with color. Made a sky above, the lid all blue with small white cotton clouds, and green with tops of trees that seemed to sway in soundless air.

I made a curve of rainbow like a hug to keep her safe while she was there. We set the jar inside and closed the painted lid. Through the screened window I could see the garden house. A place of flowers and space and waiting stillness.

Each day I put out leaves for food and watched my larva change.

My grandpa knew when it was time to gently pull away the paper top she hung from. I taped it to the wall inside her house and let her be. She would hang free inside the chrysalis that kept her hidden from the world.

Inside that magic place she grew, transformed herself, came out, drooped, limp and slack, with crumpled wings. She was a butterfly, all spotted, orange, black, and brown as if someone had shaken paints and let the drops fall down.

“Our Painted Lady,” Grandpa said. “It’s time.”

He meant that it was time for her to leave for her new life. I swallowed tears. From the beginning I had known today would come. Now it was here.

My grandpa took my hand. “Cry if you like,” he said. “We understand.”

We carried out the box and raised the lid. I watched her falter as she felt the first warm touch of sun, saw trees, felt breezes brush across her wings. She rose, then rested on the fig tree branch. I saw her fly.

“Good-bye.”
In the passage “Butterfly House,” the girl wants the butterfly to be happy in the house until it flies away. How do the girl and her grandpa make the house special for the butterfly? Use details from the passage to support your answer.
How does the girl in “Butterfly House” feel at the end of the passage? Why does she feel that way? Use details from the passage to support your answer.
Planning Page

You may PLAN your writing for question 35 here if you wish, but do NOT write your final answer on this page. Your writing on this Planning Page will NOT count toward your final score. Write your final answer on Pages 9 and 10.
Imagine if the girl in “Butterfly House” had found a tadpole instead of a butterfly. What would the girl have done to take care of a tadpole? Do you think it would be more interesting to take care of a tadpole or a butterfly? Use details from both passages to support your answer.

In your answer, be sure to
• describe how the girl would take care of a tadpole
• explain whether you think it would be more interesting to take care of a tadpole or a butterfly
• use details from both passages to support your answer

Check your writing for correct spelling, grammar, capitalization, and punctuation.