

My Father's Miracle (Fiction—reversing the Chicago River)

In school we learned about the earth. We learned that rivers flow from higher ground to lower ground. They usually end at a bigger river or go into a lake or ocean. I can see that every day in Chicago. Our river goes into the lake. It's a giant lake.

We used to go fishing on the river every summer. Most days you would find me and my grandfather there, fishing. My father was busy working for the city. I did not know what his job was. He said it was in the Sanitary and Ship Canal. He left early each morning and came home at night, always very dirty.

My grandfather would take me to the river. We'd sit all day and catch fish. I would listen to my grandfather tell about the times he had when he first came to Chicago. He had built our home by himself. "In the old days," he said, "This was a clean stream. "Now look at it. It is filthy."

That day was the end of our fun. We would see boxes floating by. Sometimes we even saw dead fish floating on it. When we brought the fish home, my mother would throw them out. "We can't eat this. This is dirty, bad fish." She sounded angry. But I thought she really liked my grandfather.

So my grandfather and I stopped bringing the fish home. Sometimes we would go to fish and throw them back. But mostly we just stayed at home. We were sad about it.

Then one Christmas my father was so busy he was not home. He even went to work on Christmas day. That New Year's day he worked, too. My mother was worried. "It is too cold." But he went anyway.

Then two days later the newspaper said, "It is a miracle!" That was the headline. I read the article. It told how the workers on the Sanitary and Ship Canal had done something impossible. They had reversed the Chicago River. They dug such a great hole that the river rushed away from the lake. It now went to the west. Now you could go on the river and canal all the way to the Mississippi River.

I was excited. So was my grandfather. He said, "Now we can go fishing this summer." We both laughed. So did my mother. My father smiled a lot, all day long.

What is the theme of this story?

Underline the parts of the story that show that is the theme.