



A Visit to Grandpa's

“A Visit to Grandpa's” is a story within “A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Dog”. Published in 1940, it is a semi-autobiographical collection of short stories based on memories of Thomas' childhood and early years. It is easy to engage with these stories because it evokes recollections that are familiar to many of its readers. Set around Llanstephan village, the story reveals the fondness he had for his holiday visits to West Wales. The characters are introduced to the reader but never truly developed as they would in a novel. Thomas writes about his childhood observations and memories and puts himself as the narrator. There are flashes of humour in the story but parts are also quite dark and thought provoking.

Although touching on a few members of the village community, the main characters in “A Visit to Grandpa's” are Dylan and Grandpa. Thomas doesn't build up to introducing Grandpa but instead the reader is thrust into Grandpa's eccentric world from the outset. Visiting his grandfather at his country home, Dylan is woken from sleep by Grandpa rocking wildly on his bed, yelling at an imaginary horse. Dylan had been warned by his mother that Grandpa “lit his pipe under the blankets” and that he should “run to his help if [he] smelt smoke in the night”, so he is curious to check on his grandfather when he hears the commotion.

When Dylan confronts his grandfather about his behaviour, he tries to cover up the events of the night and says, “Ask no questions...”. He turns the situation back on Dylan and brushes off his grandson's questions. The rest of the story includes some lovely descriptions of village life during the early part of the century.

The story does a good job of portraying a young boy's first exposure to eccentricity. Grandpa is known in the village for these eccentricities and it is obvious to the reader that he is crazy. At the end of the story, when he runs away, it is almost expected that the neighbours find him and bring him home. This also highlights the sense of community within a small Welsh village.