

# Dreams

belt in karate. "It's not really much of a dream," I say. "It's not like a buried treasure dream." A buried treasure dream is a really big dream, like finding Uncle Jimmy's spoons and money. Or going for a black belt.

**PAUSE AND THINK:** Why does Grandpa Nick think that everyone needs a dream?

How will Alex ever earn his orange belt in karate?  
With a lot of practice—and some dreaming too.

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## THINK AND READ

**How a Character Changes**  
As you read, think about how Alex changes throughout the story.

**M**y Grandpa Nick says that everyone needs a dream. He says dreams give you a reason to keep trying. Then he asks me about my dreams and tells me that being 10 is no excuse for not having any.

I have two. The first is a big one—to find the treasure that my great-uncle Jimmy lost. Grandpa helps me with that one. It seems that Uncle Jimmy buried

and then forgot where he put them. Before Uncle Jimmy passed away, he whispered to Grandpa that he thought it was all hidden in an alleyway in my New York City neighborhood.

Grandpa and I **scour** the streets for it every chance we get. Last week we searched near a candy store. I came home with a bag of gummy bears, chocolate bars, and a monster stomachache. But no treasure.

Since Grandpa Nick knows all about my first dream, I tell him about the second—I want to earn my orange

Day 1

What is the relationship between Nick and his grandpa? (RL1.1)

Underline details from the text that support your answer.



LOOK FOR WORD NERD'S

Using evidence from the text how can you describe the relationship between Alex and his Grandpa?

Type your  
answer  
here.

Fill in the circle that shows Alex and his Grandpa have a good relationship.

- Ⓐ Grandpa and I scour the streets for it every chance we get. Ⓑ Last week we searched near a candy store. Ⓒ I came home with a bag of gummy bears, chocolate bars, and a monster stomachache. Ⓓ But no treasure.



## A Little Dream

A black belt is the highest rank in **martial arts**. An orange belt means you're no longer a beginner, but it also means you have far to go. Since I've been studying for two years now, I should have been an orange belt a long time ago. It's hardly a dream at all.

Grandpa disagrees. "Wanting an orange belt is nothing to be ashamed of, Alex. Not all dreams are big buried treasure dreams." Grandpa Nick rests his hand on his cane. "What you've got is a good, little dream that's within reach. That's what I call a silver dollar dream. Nothing wrong with that."

What I didn't tell Grandpa was that I had more of a chance of finding Uncle Jimmy's treasure and the ghost of Uncle Jimmy himself than I had of reaching

my silver dollar dream.

Everyone who goes for an orange belt has to break a board. The scariest part? It has to be done bare-handed. Boards are hard and solid. Even the thought of hitting one makes my fingers numb.

"Your punches and kicks are good," Grandpa Nick says. "Remember, there's nothing wrong with a little dream. Have enough of them, and they can turn into something big." Grandpa reaches into his pocket and tosses me a coin. "A silver dollar for your silver dollar dream."



**PAUSE AND THINK:** What is a silver dollar dream?

Day  
2

Why doesn't Alex think he can ever achieve his silver dollar dream? (RL1.1)

## The Big Test

That Tuesday, Mom drops me off at the karate school. I bow at the door before I step into the room. I say hello to Sensei Foster—*sensei* means *teacher* in Japanese. Then I search for my friend Jocelyn.

I find her in the corner, practicing her kicks and punches. “Are you going for your orange belt?” she asks. “The test is tomorrow.”

I shrug.

“All you have to do is break a board. Sensei says you’re ready.”

I shrug again.

“The secret is to pretend the board isn’t there. That’s what I do,” Jocelyn whispers.

Pretend the board isn’t there? That’s like trying to pretend that Superman is a wimp. Some things can’t be done.

Before I can ask Jocelyn any questions, Sensei Foster tells us it’s time to practice board-breaking. One by one, the students face Sensei Foster. I listen to the sound that each board makes when it breaks. Sometimes it’s a sharp, quick snap. Other

times it’s a long **crackle**, like someone poured milk onto a giant bowl of Rice Krispies.

Sensei calls my name. He holds the board firm. “Focus. Don’t aim at it. Aim through it. See past it.”

But all I can see is the board in front of me, and all I can think about are the many things that are made from wood.

Sturdy things.

Hard things.

Like baseball bats.

And chairs.

Fences.

Houses.

**crackle:** a series of short, snapping sounds

Hard-to-break things.

I close my eyes. And I hit the board.

A sharp sting runs through my hand. The board stays solid and whole. I try to hide my pain.

Jocelyn **mouths** the words “try again.” And Sensei Foster says the same thing out loud.

Instead, I how to show that I’m done. “There’s another test in a few weeks,” Sensei Foster says as he pats my shoulder. “I hope you’ll try again.”



**PAUSE AND THINK:** How does Alex feel about trying to break a board?

# Day 3

## What are the main events of the story so far? (RL1.2)

Use sticky notes to tell the events of the story so far. Use the last slide to help.

Event 1:

**ALEX and Grandpa want to find treasure.**

Event 2:

**Alex tells about his dreams.**

Event 3:

**Alex can't break the board**

## A Bad Fall

When I reach my apartment, Mom is sitting in the kitchen. Grandpa, who is usually in the living room waiting for me, is not around.

“I have some bad news,” she says. “Grandpa Nick fell today. Your dad is with him at the hospital.”

I reach for the silver dollar in my pocket and hold it tight. “Is he OK?”

Mom nods. “Bad **sprain**. It’s going to take him a while to recover.”

Later that night, Grandpa comes

**mouths:** to move your lips as if you are talking without making a sound

**sprain:** an injury to a ligament

home. Instead of his cane, he uses a squeaky metal walker.

For the next few weeks, Grandpa doesn’t leave our apartment. There are no trips to get candy. No searching the streets for Uncle Jimmy’s treasure.

“When is he going to be off that thing?” I ask my dad one morning, pointing to the walker.

“His leg is probably healed enough for him to be off it now,” says Dad. “But he’s worried about falling again. This is hard for him.”

I hate the squeak. And how Grandpa Nick never once asks about my dreams. I miss the old Grandpa.



**PAUSE AND THINK:** What has happened to Grandpa Nick?

# Day 4

How has Grandpa changed from the beginning of the story? Think about his feelings and actions. (RL1.3)



# Day 5



What lesson  
does Alex  
learn? (RL.2)

## What's the Difference?

After school, I go to Jocelyn's house. She helps me with my punches, and I pretend that pillows are boards.

"If only I could take a pillow-bashing test, I'd have that orange belt for sure," I say as we walk to karate class.

"Pillow. Board. What's the difference?" asks Jocelyn.

*What is the difference?* I wonder. I remember what Grandpa said—my punches and kicks are good. Suddenly, I realize that I already have what it takes.

"I will break it," I whisper.

Later that afternoon, I rush home. The first thing I do is ask Grandpa about his dreams.

When he tells me he's not sure, I tell him that being 75 is a poor excuse for not having any dreams. And I bring him his cane and hand him back his silver dollar.

"Take one step with your cane," I say. "It's what I call a silver dollar dream. Remember, there's nothing wrong with a little dream. Have enough of them,

and they can turn into something big."

Then I take the broken board from my knapsack and add, "Wait till I tell you what happened in karate class today." ■



**PAUSE AND THINK:** What does Alex realize about breaking the board?

## THINK AND WRITE

Imagine you're Alex. Write a journal entry about the day you finally broke the board. Include lessons you learned from Grandpa Nick and Jocelyn.

FIND  
SKILL  
BUILDERS  
ONLINE!

**Independent  
Practice (RL.1)**

In the section “The Big Test,” how do you think Alex feels before he tries to break the board in karate class?

- Ⓐ afraid
- Ⓑ calm
- Ⓒ excited
- Ⓓ proud

5. Fill in the bubble before the sentence from the story supports the correct answer to Question 4?

- Ⓐ “I bow at the door before I step into the room.”
- Ⓑ The secret is to pretend the board isn’t there.
- Ⓒ “Even the thought of hitting one makes my fingers numb.”
- Ⓓ “‘Your punches and kicks are good,’ Grandpa Nick says.”



**Independent Practice (RL1.3)**

**Drag the sticky note to fill in the correct box. One sticky note for box.**

	<b>At the Beginning</b>	<b>At the End</b>
<b>1.</b> How does Alex feel about having to break a board to earn his orange belt?		
<b>2.</b> How does Alex react to Jocelyn's ideas for how to think about board breaking?		
<b>3.</b> How does Alex feel about silver dollar dreams?		

Alex sees that enough silver dollar dreams put together can turn into something big.

Alex is afraid to try breaking the board he doesn't believe he can do it.

Alex thinks his silver dollar dream is small and not important.

Alex realizes he has the skill to break the board.

Jocelyn helps Alex realize he has the skill to break the board.

Alex thinks that Jocelyn's idea to pretend the board isn't there won't work.



