How do you keep in touch with family and friends who are far away?
Mail for Matty

Nana has been visiting for two weeks, but now it’s time for her to go home. I wish she could stay.

At the Airport

“Why so sad, Matty?” I’m going home, not to the moon!” joked Nana.

“Montana’s so far away, it might as well be the moon,” I answered. I tightened my hold Nana’s plane ticket until it began to crackle.

Nana laughed. “Oh, it’s not that far! You’ll see me soon,” she said. “I promise.”

Just then a voice on the loudspeaker announced that Nana’s flight was boarding.

“Time to go,” said Nana. “When I get home, I’ll send you a surprise. Watch for it!” She hugged us goodbye. We waited until her plane soared up high into the dark but starry sky. I wondered what my surprise was.

Waiting for the Surprise

When I got home, I kept checking the door and looking out the window for my surprise. Then Dad called, “Hey, Matt, come over here!”

Dad was at the computer. The screen showed a picture of an envelope. I had an e-mail! The title of the e-mail said “Surprise!”

It read:

Dear Matty,

Uncle Pete set up my new computer while I was gone. Now we can send e-mails every day. Can you see the photograph I sent? It’s a picture of me. I told you you’d see me soon! Write back.

Hugs and kisses,

Nana

Reread for Comprehension

Analyze Story Structure

Character, Setting, Plot

Every story has characters, a setting, and a plot. These elements make up the story’s structure. The main character is the person who the story is about.

A Character Web helps you figure out a character’s traits, or personality. Reread “Mail for Matty.” What one thing can you tell about Matty’s character based on what he does and thinks after Nana leaves?
Comprehension

Genre
Realistic Fiction is an invented story that could have happened in real life.

Analyze Story Structure
Character, Setting, Plot
As you read, use your Character web.

Read to Find Out
How does Juno try to communicate with his grandmother?
Juno watched as the red and white blinking lights soared across the night sky like shooting stars, and waited as they disappeared into faraway places. Juno wondered where they come from. He wondered where they were going. And he wondered if any of the planes came from a little town near Seoul where his grandmother lived, where she ate persimmons every evening before bed.

Juno looked at the letter that came that day. It was long and white and smudged. He saw the red and blue marks on the edges and knew the letter came from far away. His name and address were neatly printed on the front, so he knew the letter was for him. But best of all, the special stamp on the corner told Juno that the letter was from his grandmother.
Through the window Juno could see his parents. He saw bubbles growing in the sink. He saw dirty dishes for the cleaning to be done before his parents could read the letter to him.

“Maybe I can read the inside, too” Juno said to his dog Sam. Sam wagged his tail. Very carefully, Juno opened the envelope. Inside, he found a letter folded into a neat, small square.
He unfolded it. Tucked inside were a picture and a dried flower.

Juno looked at the letters and words he couldn’t understand. He pulled out the photograph. It was a picture of his grandmother holding a cat. He pulled out the red and yellow flower. It felt light and gentle like a dried leaf. Juno smiled. “C’mon, Sam,” Juno said. “Let’s find Mom and Dad.”
“Grandma has a new cat,” Juno said as he handed the letter to his mother. “And she’s growing red and yellow flowers in her garden.”

“How do you know she has a new cat?” Juno’s father asked.

“She wouldn’t send me a picture of a strange cat,” said Juno.

“I guess no,” said Juno’s father.

“How do you know the flower is from her garden?” asked Juno’s mother.

“She wouldn’t send me a strange flower from someone else’s garden,” Juno answered.

“No, she wouldn’t,” said Juno’s mother. Then Juno’s mother read him the letter.
Dear Juno,

How are you? I have a new cat to keep me company. I named him Juno after you. He can’t help me weed, but the rabbits no longer come to eat my flowers.

Grandma

“Just like you read it yourself,” Juno’s father said.

“I did read it,” Juno said.

“Yes, you did,” said his mother.
At school, Juno showed the class his grandmother’s picture and dried flower. His teacher even pinned the letter to the board. All day long, Juno kept peeking at the flower from his grandmother’s garden. He didn’t have a garden that grew flowers, but he had a swinging tree.

Juno looked at the letter pinned to the board. Did his grandmother like getting letters too? Yes, Juno though. She likes getting letters just like I do. So Juno decided to write one.
After school, Juno ran to his backyard. He picked a leaf from the swinging tree—the biggest leaf he could find.

Juno found his mother, who was sitting at her desk. He showed her the leaf. “I’m going to write a letter,” he told her.

“I’m sure it will be a very nice letter,” she answered, and gave him a big yellow envelope.

“Yes it will,” Juno said, and then he began to draw.
First he drew a picture of his mom and dad standing outside the house. Second, he drew a picture of Sam playing underneath his big swinging tree. Then very carefully, Juno drew a picture of himself standing under an airplane in a starry, nighttime sky. After he was finished, he placed everything in an envelope.
“Here’s my letter,” Juno announced proudly. “You can read it if you want.”

Juno’s father looked in the envelope. He pulled out the leaf. “Only a big swinging tree could grow a leaf this big,” he said.

Juno’s mother pulled out one of the drawings. “What a fine picture,” she said. “It takes a good artist to say so much with a drawing.”

Juno’s father patted Juno on the head. “It’s just like a real letter,” he said.

“It is a real letter,” Juno said.

“It certainly is,” said his mother. Then they mailed the envelope and waited.
One day a big envelope came. It was from Juno’s grandmother. This time, Juno didn’t wait at all. He opened the envelope right away.

Inside, Juno found a box of colored pencils. He knew she wanted another letter.

Next, he pulled out a picture of his grandmother. He noticed she was sitting with a cat and two kittens. He thought for a moment and laughed. Now his grandmother would have to find a new name for her cat—in Korea, Juno was a boy’s name, not a girl’s.

Then he pulled out a small toy plane.

Juno smiled. His grandmother was coming to visit.
“Maybe she’ll bring her cat when she comes to visit,” Juno said to Sam as he climbed into bed. “Maybe you two will be friends.”

Soon Juno was fast asleep. And when he dreamed that night, he dreamed about a faraway place, a village just outside Seoul, where his grandmother, whose gray hair sat on top of her head like a powdered doughnut, was sipping her morning tea.

The cool air feels crisp against her cheek. Crisp enough to crackle, he dreams, like the golden leaves which cover the persimmon garden.
Getting in touch with Soyung and Susan

Author
Soyung Pak was born in South Korea, but she does not remember very much about it. She moved to the United States when she was just two years old. Like Juno, Soyung had a grandmother who lived in South Korea. Soyung remembers playing in her American backyard. It was a lot like Juno's yard, with a nice, big tree.

Other books by Soyung Pak: A Place to Grow and Sumi's First Day of School Ever

Illustrator
Susan Kathleen Hartung says she's been drawing ever since she could hold a crayon. Unlike Juno, who used paper, Susan would draw on any surface she could find. Susan's parents were not too happy about that. But when they saw how much she loved to draw, they encouraged her to study art.

Retell the Story
Use your Character Web to help you tell the story of Dear Juno. Describe the characters of Juno and his grandmother based on things they did in the story.

Think and Compare
1. Use your Character Web to tell about Juno and his grandmother. How do Juno and his grandmother feel about each other? How can you tell? Analyze Story Structure: Plot, Character, Setting
2. Why couldn't Juno read the letter his grandmother wrote? How was he able to understand her message anyway? Use story details in your answer. Evaluate
3. What items would you put in an envelope to send to a faraway relative in order to tell about your life? Explain your choices. Apply
4. What are some problems that can happen when relatives live far from each other? Explain your answer. Analyze
5. Read "Mail for Matty" on pages 40–41. How are Matty and Juno alike? How are they both surprised at the end of each story? Use details from both selections in your answer. Reading/Writing Across Texts

Write About It
Juno and his grandmother enjoyed getting letters. If you could get a letter from anyone in the world, from whom would it be? Why would you enjoy that?
When your great-grandparents were young, the world was very different. People did not have the kind of technology that we have today to communicate with each other. Things such as cell phones and computers were not yet invented. It took longer for people to get news about each other.

Today’s technology makes it easier and faster to stay close to people.

Long ago, people wrote letters to stay in touch. From 1860-1861, some letters were carried by the Pony Express. Only the fastest horseback riders were hired to carry letters and packages across the country. Then trains began to carry the mail from city to city. By the early 1900s, airplanes were a faster way to carry mail across the country and around the world.

Sometimes a message had to reach someone almost immediately. Telegraphs were machines that could send signals in a special code over an electric line.
As times changed, the tools we use to communicate have improved. New inventions have made it easy to contact friends and family within seconds!

Telephones came into use in the late 1800’s. They were very different from the phones you use now. Early phones did not have dials. Many people shared phone lines with others. The shared lines were called party lines.

Modern phones can do so many things. Wireless phones can be carried with us wherever we travel. Some phones let you play games, get text messages, and even take pictures! These images can be sent to other wireless phones.

The fax machine was patented in 1843, but it came into regular use in the 1930’s. A fax machine sends images on paper as electric signals. Then, another machine receives the signals and prints them. Many offices and homes have fax machines.

Computers have made some of the biggest changes in communication. The Internet sends e-mail messages around the world in seconds! Some families have their own Web sites. They can post pictures and family news so everyone can be kept up-to-date.

Although new technology helps us stay in touch with each other, many people still enjoy sending and getting letters. With so many ways to communicate, it’s easy to find your favorite way to keep in touch.
Dear Chris,

My mom took me to a professional soccer game on Sunday. It was so much fun! We ate hot dogs and popcorn. Our team made lots of goals. They won the game by a score of 5 to 2. The best thing happened after the game! I met my favorite player.

Will you come with us next time?

Your friend,

Keri