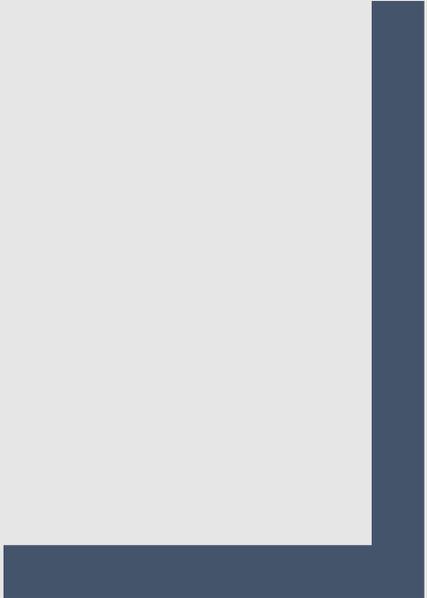




PAPA'S HOME:  
INSPIRED BY "A TREE  
GROWS IN  
BROOKLYN BY BETTY  
SMITH

Ava Van Gelder  
7<sup>th</sup> Grade  
Westside Middle School



## Van Gelder Essay

It was finally time for school again. School meant that the summer heat of Brooklyn would finally turn cool. It meant that the trees would turn brilliant reds, yellows, and oranges. It meant that Thanksgiving was close, the one time of the year where Francie's stomach never grumbled in the night. Most importantly it meant that Francie's Papa would come for a visit.

The last time Francie had seen her Papa was seven years ago when she was just a tiny girl of five. Right before her sixth birthday, Papa started drinking very heavily, for he had just lost his steady newspaper job. He had then taken odd jobs in the evening, and if there weren't any open positions he would spend the night at their neighborhood bar. When he stumbled into the house one two many times, Mama filed for divorce. Francie's older brother, Neil, begged Mama not to, for he loved Papa dearly, but Mama was a stubborn lady, and she had made up her mind. She was tired of his sideways walk, glossy eyes, and horrible laugh. She had run out of love for him.

Francie was now thirteen. She only remembered his beautiful singing voice, his brilliant green eyes, and his crooked smile. It was her idea for Papa to come see Francie, Neil, and Mama again. The only things she had to remember him by were memories, and she wanted much more than that. Francie wanted a normal family again, one with a happy Mama and a strong, sober Papa.

When Francie first asked Mama if she could see Papa, Mama disagreed. She wanted nothing to do with that drunk man, and she hoped to never have to see him again. But Francie was also very stubborn and argued that all children need a Papa, and Mama finally caved. Francie sent him a letter, asking if he would like to come for a visit next Friday night. His one-word reply was a shaky yes.

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Friday night, Francie put on her best dress. She made Neil wear his suit, which was definitely not happy about, and Mama put on her jade green hat. At seven o' clock, the doorbell of Francie's home announced the arrival of their father. As Mama opened the door, Francie gasped. Standing in front of her was a man that looked identical to Neel. He had Neel's eyes, his smile, his nose, and even his ears. The only difference was the hair. Neel's was bright blond, while father's was a dark brown like Francie's. Papa stepped inside and scooped Francie up in a giant hug. She laughed as she flew through the air and was pulled towards Papa's thick chest. His neck smelled of peppermint and cinnamon, no longer of strong alcohol. Francie's grin spread farther as Papa grabbed Ned to him as well. Finally, Mama was pulled into the hug as well, and they were all one, whole, complete family.

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## Van Gelder Essay

That night over a baked chicken dinner, Francie, Ned, Papa, and Mama, were all catching up on missed years. Papa announced that he quit drinking soon after he was kicked out, because he wanted to be reaccepted into the family.

By midnight, the happy family was exhausted. Just as they were about to turn in for the night, Mama asked Papa a question that startled even herself. The six words were "Can I be your wife again?" Tears sprung to Papa's eyes and he cried, "Yes! Of course! I love you!" Once again, everyone was pulled into a giant group hug and the pieces of Papa, Mama, Francie, and Niel finally fit together. The puzzle was complete.