**THE TREASURE OF LEMON BROWN** by Walter Dean Myers

**Summary**

At the beginning of the story Greg sits outside his apartment and doesn’t go in. He knows his father will be mad at him so he starts walking down the street. It starts to rain, so he enters an abandoned building. Suddenly, Greg hears a scraping noise and later hears someone or something breathing and becomes scared. At first, Greg thinks he imagines the noises but then a voice from behind him says: ”**Don’t try nothin’, ’cause I got a razor sharp enough to cut a week into nine days**.” Greg is very much afraid. The person who moves toward him wears dirty shoes and his legs are covered in rags.

The person says that his name is Lemon Brown and asks Greg why he entered the building. Greg says he entered the building because it was raining. Greg realizes the old man is homeless. Greg says that he has seen the old man in the past – taking clothes from a charity organization drop box, so he calms down because he doesn’t think Lemon Brown is a threat.

Lemon Brown asks Greg if he came to the building to try and steal his treasure like those who tried before him. Greg does not believe that Lemon Brown has a treasure at all. He asks him what treasure is he talking about. Lemon Brown says that “**everyone has a treasure**”. Then he asks Greg if he ever heard of him. He tells Greg that he was a famous Blues singer.

While Lemon Brown and Greg are talking, three neighborhood thugs holding a piece of metal pipe enter the building. They threaten Lemon Brown and demand he give him the treasure. They think he is hiding money. The thugs tell him to throw down his money, and they threaten to beat him if he doesn’t give it to them. Together, Lemon Brown and Greg scare them away.

Greg wants to get out of the building before the thugs return. Lemon Brown says it is dangerous to leave now because the thugs may still be out there waiting to attack them again. Now that they trust each other, Lemon finally shows Greg what his treasure is. Lemon Brown’s treasure was a harmonica and old newspaper clippings telling about his success as a Blues singer.

Lemon Brown was a successful and popular Blues singer. One day his wife died suddenly. After that, his son, Jesse, went to live with his aunt. His success as a Blues singer continued to grow but he couldn’t sing about how bad he felt any more. Many years later, Jesse went off to war and his father, Lemon Brown gave him his newspaper clippings and a harmonica.

Jesse died in the war and the newspaper clippings and harmonica were found on his body. The army returned these things to Lemon Brown. He understood his son kept what he gave him as if it was a treasure. It was very important to him. Greg asks Lemon Brown if his “treasure” is worth fighting for against the scary thugs. Lemon Brown says that the most important thing in life is what a man can pass on to his children.

Lemon puts his treasure back under his rags and tells Greg that the thugs have gone. He says that it is safe for Greg to go back home. The story ends when Greg returns home, stands in front of his house, knowing he is going to get a lecture from his father but this time he accepts it with a smile.

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| **Receptive** | **Productive** |
| abandoned | attack |
| scraping | to scare away |
| razor | similar |
| homeless | neighbourhood |
| clippings | to accept |
| thugs | to demand |
| metal pipe | to compare |
| rags | to contrast |
| dangerous | scary |
| suddenly | solution |
| charity | to be mad |
| threaten | a threat |
| treasure | is worth |
| harmonica | setting |
| famous | sadness |
| Blues | advice |
| pass on | a lesson |
| success | to succeed |
| lecture | to lecture |

Vocabulary

**QUESTIONS**

1. Explain why you would/would not like to have Greg as a friend.
2. Write how you would feel if you were Greg / his father. (choose one)
3. Describe an event from your own life in which you felt happy/sad/surprised/embarrassed/angry/disappointed/thrilled. Compare and contrast it with a similar event Greg / Lemon Brown goes through. How are your feelings similar/different?
4. Explain Greg’s / Lemon Brown’s problem and then offer your character advice on how to solve his problem.
5. Which character changes and which doesn’t? How is the character’s change important in the story?
6. Did you like the end of the story? Why did you like it? If you did not like it, how would you change it?
7. Is the setting important to the story? How?
8. Describe a time in which you faced a similar problem to that one the main character faces. How did you solve it? How would the character have solved it?