

Uncle Bob's Tool Shed

Story By: Andrew Frinkle

Uncle Bob was a pretty handy guy. Peter, his nephew, loved to go look at all the tools he had hanging on pegs and sitting in drawers or on shelves in his shed. If anything broke, Uncle Bob could fix it. If you were working on something and needed a rare tool, he'd have it. Peter was over visiting for a family cookout, when he asked his uncle for a tour. Peter wasn't too handy himself, but he did like to help dad when he worked on the house, the car, or the lawnmower. It was nice to know the names of tools and their uses.



The shed had that musty smell that was a combination of dust, motor oil, and sweat. It wasn't a bad smell, but it certainly smelled like hard work to Peter. It made him want to sit down, sip a cola, and relax, as if he'd just worked all day with dad out in the hot sun and the job was done. The shed wasn't large, perhaps 10 by 10 feet, but it housed mostly just the hand tools. The big saws and other tools were in the garage, taking up one of the parking spaces.

Uncle Bob grinned as he pulled the pull chain on the only light in the shed. The swinging bulb was 100 watts, so it was enough to illuminate the shed, and you could find whatever you needed. It wasn't fancy, though. On the left were the yard tools, like pick axes, rakes, and shovels, and also the saws. There were coping saws, keyhole saws, crosscut saws, hands saws, bow saws, and all kinds of saws for cutting different things. Next to them were the shears and cutters, like tin snips and bolt cutters. There were some long-handled loppers, too.



At the back wall, the hex wrenches hung in ascending order of sizes. There were two sets. One was metric and the other was SAE, which they used most of the time. Sockets, breaker bars, ratchets, and other tools were hung carefully beneath them. It was all very orderly. The wrenches, vise-grips, channel-locks, and other pliers were nearby.

On the right were the hammers. There were claw hammers, ball peen hammers, and sledge hammers. There was a different hammer for every job. One even had a hatchet head on it. The hammers were located next to the rainbow of screwdrivers of all sorts and sizes. Peter grinned when he remembered learning that there were more than two kinds of screwdrivers. He'd always thought there were just the flat or slotted ones and then the plus or Phillips style screws. Then he learned about star, hex, torx, square, and even triangular head screws. There sure were a lot of kinds of screws!

Hanging from a shelf was a strange collection of screw-on lid coffee jars. The labels had been peeled off, so you could see what was inside. The lids were glued and screwed to the underside of the shelf, so you just unscrewed the jar part to get out the bolts, screws, and random odds-and-ends that each of the twenty or thirty jars held. It was a smart way to reuse old jars.



The rest of the shed had a series of shelves and drawer units, each one filled with specialty tools for working on cars, brakes, electrical, plumbing, and just about anything else. All of it made Peter want to work on something or fix something. He wanted to be handy and useful, just like his uncle, and his father to a lesser extent.

Someday, when he grew up, he'd have an even better tool shed, he decided. Until then, he'd have to work hard, listen, and learn how to use these things.

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Use the information in the story to answer the questions below.

1. Uncle Bob keeps all the large tools at his house where?
 - A. the auto shop
 - B. his garage
 - C. in the basement
 - D. in his shed

2. The first tools Peter saw were what kind?
 - A. saws
 - B. yard tools
 - C. wrenches
 - D. hammers

3. Which of these is NOT a kind of screwdriver tip that Peter saw?
 - A. triangle
 - B. star
 - C. circle
 - D. hex

4. Uncle Bob keeps all his screws and odds-and-ends in a bunch of jars from what?
 - A. baby food
 - B. soup
 - C. salsa
 - D. coffee

5. Based on the story, you could predict that Peter might do what in the future?
 - A. work with his hands
 - B. be an artist
 - C. be a fisherman
 - D. work an office job

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