

Passage

This passage is from a 2019 novel. The narrator is reflecting on a time when she was about ten years old. A ham (amateur) radio is a device for exchanging messages and requires a license to operate.

(1) One day, my father brought home a pile of the parts needed to build a ham radio and asked if I wanted to help him put it together. (2) It took us a week, and we built it at our kitchen table, which meant that for that week we ate dinner on our laps in our living room.

(3) After dinner, my father went straight to the kitchen table where he'd left a mess of wire and cables and vacuum tubes, and got to work. (4) I started by helping my mother clean up, but then I went over to him, leaning over the part of the radio he was working on to study the diagrams and assembly instructions.

(5) Once the receiver was built, we took it into the garage and built a simple transmitter. (6) Then we studied for the radio license, quizzing each other on Morse code¹ and electrical principles and radio wave characteristics every night. (7) My father already knew all of it from the war. (8) He'd been a radio operator as a soldier, and he told me how radio waves could go far, far out into space—and how a few years ago two radio operators from opposite sides of the world had sent messages to each other by bouncing them off the moon.

(9) After we received our radio licenses, we spent many nights sitting side by side in the garage, picking up radio stations and messages from other amateur radio operators. (10) There were so many messages floating around, waiting to be picked up: Are you lonely? (11) How are you? (12) What's the weather like there? (13) There were reports of shipwrecks, and messages from as far away as Canada—and we decoded each message as it arrived. (14) Nowadays, when communication is so instantaneous, I cannot help remembering with nostalgia how my father and I turned the knobs to the contraption we had built as the messages came in through our complicated machine of vacuum tubing and plumbing wire. (15) We recorded the taps as they came in—and I marveled that each tap traveled only a little bit slower than the speed of light. (16) Tap tap tap came the pulses of radio waves into our earphones, and I transcribed the taps as fast as I could into letters, watching them gather into words and then sentences. (17) It was the closest thing to performing magic that I could imagine: manipulating the radio waves that were all around us to talk to someone across the world.

¹ A method of sending and receiving messages using electronic signals

Adapted from Catherine Chung, *The Tenth Muse*. ©2019 by Catherine Chung

Question

Which choice best summarizes the passage?

- The narrator receives a ham radio from her father, then begins using it to exchange messages with another child.
- The narrator's father is interrupted as he's putting together a ham radio, but later returns to the project and eventually completes it.
- The narrator's father brings home the parts needed to build a ham radio, but he and the narrator struggle to assemble them.
- The narrator and her father put together a ham radio and get radio licenses, then use the radio to receive messages.

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