This passage is about a young girl's struggle to accept and appreciate her unique qualities. Is beauty more than skin deep?

Flowers and Freckle Cream
by Elizabeth Ellis

1 When I was a kid about 12 years old, I was already as tall as I am now, and I had a lot of freckles. I had reached the age when I had begun to really look at myself in the mirror, and I was underwhelmed.

2 I had a cousin whose name was Janette Elizabeth, and Janette Elizabeth looked exactly like her name sounds. She had waist-length naturally curly blond hair too, but to me her unforgivable sin was that she had a flawless peaches-and-cream complexion. I couldn't help comparing myself with her and thinking that my life would be a lot different if I had beautiful skin too—skin that was all one color.

3 And then, I found the answer: an advertisement for freckle-remover cream. I knew that I could afford it if I saved my money. The ad assured me that the product would arrive in a "plain brown wrapper." Plain brown freckle color.

4 For three weeks I went to the mailbox every day precisely at the time the mail was delivered. I knew that if someone else in my family got the mail, I would never hear the end of it. There was no way that they would let me open the box in private. Finally, after three weeks of scheduling my entire day around the mail truck's arrival, my package came.

5 I went to my room with it, sat on the edge of my bed, and opened it. I was sure that I was looking at a miracle. But I had gotten so worked up about the package that I couldn't bring myself to put the cream on. What if it didn't work? What would I do then?

6 I fell asleep that night without even trying the stuff. And when I got up the next morning and looked at my freckles in the mirror, I said, "Mary Ellen, this is silly. You have to do it now!" I smeared the cream all over my body. There wasn't as much of it as I had thought there would be. I could see that I was going to need a part-time job to keep me in freckle remover.

7 Later that day I took my hoe and went with my brother and cousins to hoe corn, as we did nearly every day in the summer. Of course, when you stay out hoeing corn all day, you're not working in the shade. And there was something important I hadn't realized about freckle remover. If you wear it in the sun, it seems to have a reverse effect. Instead of developing a peaches-and-cream complexion, you just get more and darker freckles.

8 By the end of the day I looked as though I had leopard blood in my veins, although I didn't realize it yet. When I came back to the house, my family,
knowing nothing about the freckle-remover cream, began to say things like, “I’ve never seen you with that many freckles before.” When I saw myself in the mirror, I dissolved into tears and hid in the bathroom.

9 My mother called me to the dinner table, but I ignored her. When she came to the bathroom door and demanded that I come out and eat, I burst out the door and ran by her, crying. I ran out to the well house and threw myself down. I was still sobbing when my grandfather came out to see what was wrong with me. I told him about how I’d sent for the freckle remover, and he didn’t laugh—though he did suggest that one might get equally good results from finding a four-leaf clover.

10 It was clear that Grandpa didn’t understand, so I tried to explain why I didn’t want to have freckles and why I felt so inadequate when I compared my appearance with Janette Elizabeth’s. He looked at me in stunned surprise, shook his head, and said, “But child, there are all kinds of flowers, and they are all beautiful.” I said, “I’ve never seen a flower with freckles!” I ran back to my room, slamming the door.

11 When my mother came and knocked, I told her to go away. She started to say the kinds of things that parents say at times like that. But my grandfather said, “Nancy, leave the child alone.” She was a grown-up, but he was her father. So she left me alone.

12 I don’t know where Grandpa found it. It isn’t at all common in the mountains where we lived. But I know he put it in my room because my mother told me later. I had cried myself to sleep that night, and when I opened my swollen, sticky eyes the next morning, the first thing I saw, lying on the pillow next to my head, was a tiger lily.
What lesson does Grandpa try to teach Mary Ellen? Why is this an important lesson? Use information from this passage and your own observations and conclusions to support your answer.
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| 4     | I explain the main ideas and important information from the text.  
       | I connect my own ideas or experiences to the author's ideas.  
       | I use examples and important details to support my answer.  
       | I balance the author's ideas with my own ideas. |
| 3     | I explain some of the main ideas and important information from the text.  
       | I connect some of my own ideas and experiences to the author's ideas.  
       | I use some examples and important details to support my answer.  
       | I balance only some of the author's ideas with my own ideas. |
| 2     | I explain only a few ideas from the text.  
       | I summarize the text without including any of my own ideas or experiences.  
       | OR  
       | I explain my own ideas without explaining the text.  
       | I use general statements instead of specific details and examples. |
| 1     | I explain little or nothing from the text.  
       | I use incorrect or unimportant information from the text.  
       | I write too little to show I understand the text. |
| 0     | I write nothing.  
       | I do not respond to the task. |