

Third Grade

The Magic of a Seed
By Daphne Genardi
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Once upon a time there was a little seed caught in a seagull's mouth. The seagull's name was Gully. He had been eating an apple left by a boy. The little seed was named Sally.

"Hi, I'm Sally, I was trapped in Gully's mouth. One day Gully dropped me into a big school garden. I was dug in the soil and got watered every day."

"A few days later, I felt my roots sprouting, and I was looking like a tree more and more. Sometimes it was very hot, but when it was I got more water."

"I saw Gully once. He was looking to see what had happen to me. Now... I had blossoms on me. Soon I would have little apples on my branches."

"I started thinking about all I been through when I was a seed and when I was growing and growing and growing. Before long my apples were ready to be picked, and they were."

"While the family was eating some apples, a little girl dropped a seed in the soil, Gully picked it up and flew away."

"I wonder if the same thing that happened to me will happen to that little seed, and that is the magic of a seed."

Fourth Grade

Mean Joe Green Bean
By Caitlin Voorhees
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Once upon a time there was a green bean named Joe. He loved football. He longed to play on the Legume football team. When he was old enough to play he went to the team and asked if he could play with them. They would not let him play because he did not look like Black-eyes, Limas, or Garbanzo's. Joe was thin and dark green. He looked a lot different than the other players. The next day he went to the head coach and asked him if he could play on this team. The coach laughed and said no. Joe Bean wanted to know why he couldn't play. The coach said, "You are too thin and green. You could get hurt. It takes a strong legume to play on our team."

Joe Bean said, "I am very high in protein, vitamins A and C, and iron. I am very strong. If you give me a chance I will show you that I am a great football player." "I will think about it", said the coach.

Joe Bean was sad. He went home to the garden and waited for the head coach to call. Two days went by. Finally the coach called and told Joe that there were tryouts that weekend. He would let Joe tryout, and if he did well he would let Joe play on the Legumes Football Team.

Joe could hardly wait for tryouts. When the weekend came he suited up in his football gear. The Legumes laughed at him but Joe was not afraid. He was determined. He said, "I will do a lot better than you think. Then you will not laugh at me."

When tryouts began Joe Bean did what he said. He was great. He threw the ball farther than any other player. He ran faster and hit harder than any other player. After tryouts the coach called all the players over to announce who had made the team. Joe waited for his name to be called. Finally the coach said, "And our final position will go to Joe Bean. He will start in our first game."

The first game was the Legumes versus the Carrots. The coach put Joe in the first quarter. He did so well that the coach let him play the rest of the game. Joe wasn't good at one position; he was good at all of them. With Joe's help the Legumes won that game. The Legumes went on to have a winning season. They went to the playoffs and won that game.

At the next practice the coach said that they would be playing in the Vegetable Bowl. They would be playing the first team they had played that season, the Carrots.

It was an exciting game. The Carrots were three points ahead. The Legumes needed a touchdown to win. The Legumes got closer and closer to their goal line but time was running out. Then Joe Bean threw the football to the receiver. Everyone held his and her breath. It was caught. Touchdown Legumes! They won. At the end of the game the coach said to Joe, "You are mean and green and you helped us win. I am going to call you Mean Joe Green Bean." Joe's green cheeks turned red. Joe played many more seasons with the Legumes and became very famous. All of the little green beans wanted to be like Joe. He was drafted into the Can of Beans. He truly was the best bean of all.

The End.

Fifth Grade

Spear Me
By Kendall Vierra
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One night, the Troughton family was eating dinner.

"No way! There's no way I'm going to eat asparagus!" yelled their daughter Natalie.

"Just eat one little bite," ordered her mother.

"Well, you know, it's a member of the lily family and is related to some of your favorite things, onions and garlic," her dad told her.

"Really!" An asparagus jumped up from her plate. "It's true, I'm a member of the lily family."

"That's cool but I still don't want to eat you!"

"Okay. It's your loss. I'm a nutritious vegetable because I'm packed with important vitamins and minerals that help your body be healthy. Asparagus is a great source of potassium and is low in sodium. It also has more folacin than any other vegetable or fruit. Folacin is important for blood cell reproduction and helps prevent some cancers. Asparagus is also a good source of vitamin B-6, vitamin A, and vitamin C. Asparagus has no fat or cholesterol, and is naturally low in calories."

"Okay, I guess I'll try it." Natalie stabbed at one of the spears on her plate. She cut a little piece of the tip or crown of the asparagus, took a deep breath, and then swallowed it whole. "Wow! This is delicious! Where can I get more?"

"Well, California leads the nation in asparagus production. In the year 2002, California farms produced approximately ninety-three million pounds of asparagus. Fifty percent of the crop was exported to Japan."

"How do they grow all that asparagus? Is it hard?" Natalie questioned.

"Well, first, the farmer plants tiny plants called crowns in a furrow. It takes nearly three years before a field can be harvested for a full season." "It takes that long?" Natalie asked.

The asparagus continued, "There are three stages. One is the growing stage, another is the fern stage, and then there is the dormant or "sleep" stage. All of these stages are needed for the spears, also known as the asparagus plants, to grow.

In the spring, workers walk along the furrows collecting the stalks that are ready to be harvested. Next, they cut the stalks with a special knife and set them on the ground in a bunch. Later, other workers come with a tractor and pick up the bunches, loading them into a sleigh connected to a tractor. They are taken to a packing shed. There the spears are washed, trimmed, and then sorted by hand in various sizes. The asparagus takes an ice

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bath through a hydro cooler. Finally, they are packaged in wooden crates or cardboard boxes. Workers do not fill the crates or boxes all the way because the asparagus will continue to grow!"

"The asparagus will still grow? That's amazing!" Natalie exclaimed.

"Then it is stored in cold rooms until it is sold. When you are picking out asparagus in the grocery store, look for firm, straight spears with closed, compact tips."

The asparagus soon fell back on her plate, looking just like the rest of the spears. Natalie finished her asparagus and asked her mother, "May I have seconds please?"

Sixth Grade

Milkman's Story
By Amber Liu
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DING! The lunch bell rang. A flood of people ran to the cafeteria. After I bought lunch, I sat down and opened a carton of milk. As someone walked by, he accidentally pushed me, which made me spill my milk. As I stared at the puddle a white figure popped up. It said, "Milkman's the name, Healthy bones is my game," I froze in amazement. "Who are you?" I asked. "Weren't you listening silly head?" "Sorry". He then asked me "Why do you drink milk?" "My mom told me to," I replied. "Did your mom ever tell you what a delight it is to drink milk?" "What?" I asked. He suddenly said, "Follow me and I will tell you everything from the beginning," and jumped in the puddle. I was then sucked into a portal, which led me to a dairy farm.

On my shoulder stood Milkman. "Farms like these," Milkman said, "You won't believe what cows eat—their food is a mixture of left over cereal, chips, cottonseed, hay, barley, and field grass. Cows are fed around eight pounds of food a day and drink thirty to forty gallons of water. When the cow has a baby or calf, the mother cow starts making the milk." As Milkman was done explaining, my vision blurred and the scenery changed.

Milkman pointed to a cow and a man in a small building. "That what you see right there is a farmer milking his cow. The cow stores her milk in her udder and every day the cow produces about eight gallons of milk a day. Can you believe this special room is called a Parlor." Milkman then pointed to the cows in the building. "Cows are usually milked by hand or machine but what is amazing is that the machine or person does not hurt the cow. Again my vision blurred and the area changed.

This time I appeared in a factory. Milkman stood on a pipe with milk flowing inside of it. He looked liked he had been waiting for thirty minutes. "Finally" he said once he saw me. "Where are we?" I asked. "We're in a milk factory. This is the place where the milk is transferred to be cleaned. The particular word for cleaning the milk is called pasteurization. Pasteurization is when milk is heated to a boiling one hundred forty-five degrees Fahrenheit, which kills the germs. Then they are put into a refrigerator to be cooled down. Once again the place changed and my vision blurred.

This time I found myself in a chair in front of nutrition fact table. Milkman, holding a long stick said, "Pay attention, have you ever heard the saying milk does a body good?" "No," I said. "Well calcium is what makes your body bone and teeth strong and Vitamin D promotes normal growth. So now you know why you need milk." As he finished I found myself back at school. From that point on I drank milk because it's good for me.

Seventh Grade

Yikes, Worms!
By Annalie Riordan
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Once there was a little girl named Jellabella who loved spending time in her garden planting flowers, watering, and just watching everything grow. Though she was only five years old, Jellabella was quite an expert at gardening.

One day, while digging up a dried up flower, she saw something wriggling beneath the soil. She picked it up, held it close to her nose, and realized it was an earthworm. "Yikes!" she screamed, and dropped it. "I hate worms!"

Just as she was about to smash it with her shovel she heard a little squeaky scream. "No, don't kill me! I don't have the ability to regenerate like some worms. Besides, your garden needs me!"

Jellabella could hardly believe her ears. Could the worm actually be talking? She thought.

Just then the earthworm breathed a sigh, "Phew! I thought I was a goner."

"It was you! I didn't know worms could talk," exclaimed Jellabella.

The earthworm backed away from Jellabella's feet, afraid of being stepped on. "Well, ordinarily, worms can't talk. We can't see or hear either."

Jellabella was utterly confused. "If you can't talk or hear, how am I having a conversation with you? And if you can't see, how did you know I was about to kill you?" she asked.

The earthworm explained, "I needed to teach you that earthworms are extremely important for the soil. With my keen sense of smell and my ability to detect others around by my sensitivity to vibrations, I knew I was in trouble. Just then my Guardian Angel gave me the gift of speech to save my life and your garden. By the way, my name is Gaylord and I'm a segmented worm. See all the lines? There are over a hundred of them and each have organs and in some, the organs are repeated."

Although Jellabella had a green thumb, she was still only five years old and didn't have the best of manners. "I don't want you in my garden! You are so ugly and goopy! Where did worms come from anyway?"

Gaylord made himself as tall as a stick. "Many people believe we came in potted plants and seed stocks that European settlers brought with them to America."

Jellabella sighed. "And you had to come to my garden. Phooey."

"Actually, I was born here. My parents were born here; my grandparents were born here; and my great grandparents were born here, and so on. So my family was here way before yours. So there! Phooey on you!"

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Jellabella curled her mouth and thought of something to say back, but instead asked, "You told me before that earthworms are good for soil and plants. How?"

Gaylord shot his nose high up in the air and replied, "When earthworms tunnel through soil, we bring in oxygen, drain water, and create space for plant roots. Without us, soil would all be hard and airless."

Jellabella looked at her garden carefully and saw the flowers dancing with the wind. She could not help smiling at how she and the earthworms have done a wonderful job with it. She felt amazingly proud.

She looked back at the worm and said, "I learned where worms came from and how tunneling helps the roots and everything. But how does the soil become rich?"

Gaylord smiled as wide as the cat in Alice in Wonderland. "Our casts make the soil rich."

"What are casts?" asked Jellabella.

"Casts mean the same thing as manure. Our manure is full of nutrients, and it acts like fertilizers! It really makes the soil rich. Worms are invertebrates and are the simplest organism on earth, but we sure know how to take care of gardens!"

"Wow, that's cool! I didn't know that! Well, let's see. I can't think of any more questions." Jellabella thought very hard but couldn't think of anything else to ask.

"Well, I guess you know enough about worms so I better go now," he proclaimed as he turned around, stretching and contracting his segmented body rather quickly.

"No! Don't leave yet! I have so much more to learn about you!" but when she realized he wasn't coming back, she yelled, "Thank you! I learned a lot and I'll never try to kill another worm in my life!"

She eagerly waited for a "You're welcome," but Gaylord didn't seem to hear her. Maybe he couldn't. Not anymore.

Eighth Grade

War of the Wasps
By William Chesnut
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Over many fields, you will hear the drone of a crop-duster or the hiss of pesticides from a tractor, yet over our field you hear only the buzz of insects and the swaying of the grasses nearby. I look at this field much differently than the human who dropped me here. For starters, I cannot see as well as a human and live in an altogether smaller world. I was dropped on this field only a few months ago along with twenty-five thousand relatives. We were placed here to do what we do best, eat other insects. You see we are wasps, the most common insect used to eradicate other pesky insects. We are helped in our duties by Ladybugs and Lacewings, being the next most common insect used as pest controls.

As we enter this story, our colony scouts just found the head of our missing scout. This horrified us, for we had never been preyed on before in this field. We had immediately sent ambassadors to the colonies of Lacewings and Ladybugs. This took a while, for the ladybugs were dispersed at this time in summer, and the lacewings are most solitary.

In a few days, we had a meeting of the leaders of PICI. For those who do not know what that stands for, it is Pest Insect Control by Insects. In the middle of this council, a lone scout burst in gibbering that he had seen a lacewing being devoured by a monster. It had a small triangular head with huge multifaceted eyes. The scout informed us that its most striking feature was two, long scythe-like arms. The council agreed that these monstrosities could not go on terrorizing us. The very next day, we had declared war on these monsters. In a week, we had been beaten back at many fronts, including the Apricot Tree and the Battle of Fallen Apples. We would have had a crushing victory if the fruit flies had not joined in from Funce. From captured spies, we learned that the monsters were Praying Mantises, another type of pest control insect.

The final battle was at the Siege of the Peach Tree, and our forces surrendered. Soon the treaty of Fruris was signed, and we gave the Praying Mantises the control of half the garden. Soon we learned that the Praying Mantises were just as effective at killing pests as we were; they just took longer to grow than we wasps. Praying Mantises are preferred in Hawaii where they are the most common pest control insects, more than in California. We wasps learned to never declare war on any other thing and how to coexist with other types of insects.