

### **Third Grade**

Friends in the Garden  
By Morgan Gravett  
Gratton Elementary School  
Sheila Amaral, Teacher  
Stanislaus County

Once upon a time there was a happy little third grader named Morgan. She loved math and the outdoors. One day after her math lesson, Morgan was leaving her classroom for recess and decided to go explore the school garden. As she walked into the garden area she saw little objects flying from plant to plant. As one flew by her face she followed it to a nearby plant. To her surprise, she found the objects to be her favorite insects, ladybugs. Morgan watched as the red ladybugs crawled from the leaves to the stems in search of their favorite food, aphids.

On a leaf way up high, Morgan spotted two ladybugs all alone. Suddenly, Morgan had a great idea. She searched the garden and found the perfect jar that even had tiny holes in the lid. She headed back to the leaf and caught the two ladybugs. She picked up five leaves, placed them in the jar and twisted the lid on tight.

As she held the jar up in the air, she said out loud, "I will name you Lucy and Lucky." Her great idea was making pets out of the ladybugs. Morgan ran back to her classroom to show and tell her class about her great adventure in the garden. As Morgan shared information about her new pets with the class everyone listened closely.

She then went on to tell the class a few facts about ladybugs such as: ladybugs love to eat aphids and they can live up to ten weeks. Also, there are nearly 5,000 different kinds of ladybugs in the world and they are a type of beetle. Ladybugs can range in size from 2-12 millimeters.

"Ladybugs have a four-stage process of development that produces an adult. It is called metamorphosis and starts with an egg, and then larva, next is pupa, and last is the adult stage. These ladybugs appear to be adults and are the common seven spotted variety."

The teacher asked Morgan, "What are your plans for the ladybugs now?"

Morgan replied, "Since I have named them I plan to keep them for pets."

The teacher raised her hand for a second question. This time she asked, "Morgan, if you were a ladybug where would you want to live?"

Morgan thought for a moment while she stared at her new pets. Then with a tear welling in her eye she said, "If I were a ladybug, I would want to live in the school garden because I would be able to eat aphids, fly freely, and be with my family."

The class and teacher watched as Morgan walked sadly towards the door.

As she exited she said, "Please excuse me for a few minutes. I will be right back." She walked slowly back out to the garden talking to her new friends all the way. When she reached the garden she sat down and

opened the jar. She gently laid the jar on its side and watched the two ladybugs crawl out and onto a leaf.

She whispered to Lucky and Lucy, "I'll never forget you and I hope you don't forget me."

She then stood up and slowly began to walk from the garden, but after a couple of steps she had a ladybug land on her nose. Morgan stopped to stare cross-eyed at the ladybug. She looked closely and knew it was Lucy. Lucy seemed to wait for a few seconds, then flew away.

Morgan had a smile on her face as she walked back to her classroom, quietly taking her seat. She knew she had done the right thing! Her ladybugs would be happy and content in the school garden.

#### **Fourth Grade**

Team Hamburger Support  
By Matthew Reis  
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Stanislaus County

Joaquin is a typical seven-year-old boy. He is active and happy. He loves to swim, ride his bike, and play basketball. He lives in central California where farming is an important way of life. Joaquin does not like eating healthy foods and thinks farming has nothing to do with him because he loves junk food. Besides candy, pizza, French fries and soda, Joaquin craves fast food hamburgers the most! If he thinks a food is healthy, he won't eat it because it must taste bad.

Joaquin's mother, Beatrice, is always worried about his eating habits. He is always running out of energy and is starting to gain weight. Tonight she is going to make something really special. It is a healthier version of cheeseburgers, made at home from ingredients produced at local farms. She chose whole grain wheat buns, lean ground beef, low-fat cheddar cheese, vine-ripe tomatoes, and fresh lettuce.

At dinnertime, Beatrice calls Joaquin to the table. Joaquin is excited they are having hamburgers for dinner. He could smell them cooking all the way from his room. When he gets there, his dinner is already at his place.

"Yummy! I love junk food!" yells Joaquin.

Just then, he notices there is something wrong with his dinner. The bun is a funny brown color instead of white. There is lettuce and tomato on top of the hamburger patty. To make things worse, his patty isn't dripping in grease!

"Gross! What did you do to this cheeseburger?" yells Joaquin.

"I am worried about your eating habits so I called in Team Hamburger Support!" replies Beatrice.

"Who are they?" asks Joaquin.

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Beatrice has a smart look on her face. "Team Hamburger Support is led by Patty Hamburger. She is the most important part of your meal. She is made with lean ground beef and she gives you twenty-nine grams of protein which help build your strong muscles. She also contains many vitamins and minerals like zinc and iron. Iron is important to your blood because it carries oxygen from your lungs to your muscles. Without that important oxygen, your muscles couldn't help you play."

Joaquin's eyes grew wide and Beatrice can tell he is listening.

"The next team member is Chuck Cheddar Cheese. He gives you twenty percent of your daily required calcium, which grows strong bones and teeth. He also has seven grams of protein for your muscles. He makes Patty taste so delicious!

"Sitting on top of Chuck, is the next team member, Tina Tomato! She not only gives you fiber, potassium, and magnesium, she provides large amounts of vitamin A, all of which nourish your skin and improve eyesight."

"Cool! Are you sure this one cheeseburger can do all that?" asked Joaquin.

"Yes, and there's so much more! The next part of the team is Luis Lettuce. He is amazingly thin and has a light taste. He is packed with vitamins A and C, calcium, potassium, and even one gram of protein. These all help you with blood clotting, in case of a cut or muscle contraction while playing, plus good blood pressure makes for a healthy heart."

"So, can Luis Lettuce help me run faster?" Joaquin asked.

"The whole Team Hamburger Support works together to help you do all the things you love to do," said Beatrice. "But, let's not forget the guy who holds the whole team together, Baxter Bun! He gives you lots of energy with his twenty-three grams of carbohydrates. Because he is a whole grain bun, Baxter provides fiber that helps you digest your entire cheeseburger. This is how all the parts of each team member goes to the right parts of your body. Baxter also contains folate and vitamins B1 and B3 which fight cancer. All together the Team Hamburger Support forms a healthy and delicious meal. That is not junk food at all."

Joaquin sits up tall and stares at his mom and then the cheeseburger. "Mom, I think I want to let the Team Hamburger Support help me become healthier, faster, and stronger." Then Joaquin picks his cheeseburger up and takes a huge bite. There are so many wonderful tastes!

After dinner, Joaquin feels full and energized. Joaquin goes out to play basketball with his friend. When his friend asks what he had for dinner, he tells him all about Team Hamburger Support.

**Fifth Grade**

Honeybee Worker Day  
By Grace Reyes  
St. Anthony School  
Susie Henriques, Teacher  
Merced County

February 24th is "Honeybee Worker Day." We are all so excited! We can't wait to find out what duties we will be assigned to in taking care of our hive and our queen. My teacher, Mrs. Kollem, is teaching the first-week students how to be the best honeybee workers they can be.

"Stop buzzing, stop buzzing," she said. "Listen up! You only have a few days to learn all you can about pollination and collecting nectar. Did you know that we honeybees make up 80 percent of the pollination needed for agriculture? Without us, people probably wouldn't have enough food to eat."

I said, "Wow, I didn't know that we were that important!"

"Yes, yes, little honeybee we are very important," said Mrs. Kollem. "We not only collect nectar to feed ourselves, but people around the world count on our honey and beeswax for many purposes in their daily lives. Now let's get busy."

After three weeks of learning and taking tests, I was finally assigned as a worker bee to Farmer Lincoln's almond orchard. I flew off excited to start collecting nectar for the first time. On my way to Farmer Lincoln's orchard I started to get hungry. I flew over a beautiful flower garden, and remembering my lesson about pollination, I decided to try out my nectar-collecting skills. The flowers were so pretty I had to try each one. I buzzed from one flower to another sucking up enough nectar to fill me up until I reached my job in Farmer Lincoln's orchard. It sure is a long way, I thought to myself, I have been flying all day. I kept telling myself to just keep going because so many people were counting on me to do my job.

As the sun was setting, I arrived at Farmer Lincoln's almond orchard. There were already a whole bunch of worker bees busy pollinating the trees and collecting nectar. I also noticed all of the hives that were set up and ready for us to store our precious honey.

I thought, Wow, this is great! I hurried off to work buzzing from tree to tree collecting nectar and taking it back to my hive when I was full. I worked for several hours. I was tired from the day's long journey and the few hours I had worked, but when the day was done I had helped pollinate more than 100 trees! I felt good.

That was a lot for my first time out. After working an entire week, I realized that there was only one week left in my pollination season. Back and forth, back and forth, I went all day long pollinating almond trees and collecting nectar for two weeks straight. I have to keep going to make sure that my hive collects its 66 pounds of pollen for the year.

I must be getting close because I am beginning to feel more and more tired as each day passes. I remember my teacher, Mrs. Kollem, telling us that when our work is done our duties and life as worker

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honeybees will be over. This makes me very sad to think about, but I will leave this life feeling very proud of the work that I did while taking part in the cycle of life.

**Sixth Grade**

Patty Pear on an Adventure  
By Juliana Gamache  
Scott Valley Jr. High School  
Tracy Dickinson, Teacher  
Siskiyou County

One day I woke up very confused. "Where did all of the other pears go?" I thought. I decided to find out.

I hopped off my branch and began to look. "Mom! Dad! Are you there?" I called. I couldn't see them anywhere so I asked Sir Drools-A-Lot, the dog, if he had any pears.

He said, "I have two pairs in my dog house, come on I'll show you!"

When we got there it was just a pair of Old Farmer Jenkins' cotton socks and a pair of Mrs. Jenkins' running shoes. "Thanks," I said, "But I am looking for my mom, dad, and all of my friends. Have you seen them? They are green and very plump and juicy."

"Oh," he said, "You should ask Old Farmer Jenkins, he would probably know." So I set off to find him.

When I found Old Farmer Jenkins, he was plowing the field with his big green tractor. I asked, "Do you have any pears?"

He said, "Sure, I have some in my shop. He showed me a pair of pliers and a pair of big, brown welding gloves.

I said, "Thanks, but I am looking for my mom, dad, and all of my friends. If you have seen them they are very high in fiber."

"Oh," the old farmer said. "Well I think my wife might have one. She is in the kitchen if you want to ask her." So I headed to the kitchen.

When I got to the kitchen Mrs. Jenkins was dehydrating apples. I said, "Do you have any pears?"

Mrs. Jenkins said, "Sure, Patty, I have a pair right here." She pulled a pair of thick, gold wire glasses from her pocket.

"Thanks," I said, "But I am looking for my mom, dad, and friends. If you have seen them they are high in potassium."

"Oh," said Mrs. Jenkins, "you should try looking at the store in town." So I headed to town.

When I got to the hardware store, the cashier, Earl, was pricing gardening supplies. I asked, "Do you have any pears?"

He said, "Sure, I have some in the back. Come on, I'll show you." When we got to the back he showed me a pair of some really nice jeans. Earl said, "These are my finest pair of boot cut jeans."

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I said, "No, not that kind of pair."

"Well how about a pair of pruning shears?" he said.

"Thanks," I said, "But I'm looking for my mom, dad, and all of my friends. If you have seen them they are very high in vitamin C."

"Oh," said the cashier, "try looking at the Corner Market down the street, I'm sure they will have what you are looking for." So I started rolling down the street.

When I got to the store the cashier, Donnel, was putting ice cream on the shelf. I asked, "Do you have any pears?"

She said, "Absolutely! They are right over here."

I said, "Wait! Are you sure that they are the right kind of pears? You know, the ones that are green, plump, juicy, high in fiber, potassium, and vitamin C—the fruit kind?!"

"Yes!" she said, "and here they are."

Finally I had found my family! I hopped up on the shelf and told them all about my adventures of the day and all the awesome kinds of pairs I had found.

## **Seventh Grade**

The Proud Pluot  
By Nick O'Brien  
St. Stanislaus Catholic School  
Judee Sani, Teacher  
Stanislaus County

As I was getting tucked into my bed one night, I told my dad that some kids were teasing me at school. Every day they called me names and asked me what I really was because they said there was no such thing as a pluot. Pluots have no history. The apple is in the Bible with Adam and Eve. What has a pluot ever done? I am what they call an allogamy or a cross-pollination fruit. We have not been accepted as equals by the pure fruit. My parents are both pluots, but my Grandma Victoria was a plum and my Grandpa Gold Bar was an apricot. I was curious about who I am and so I asked my dad that night to tell me the story of the plums and the apricots. After setting me on my branch and covering me with my leaf, he began to tell the story.

My dad's mom, Grandma Victoria, was the czar of the Replumican Party. The party believed that the plums were the superior fruit. In 65 B.C., Pompey the Great grew the first plums in some beautiful orchards in Rome, Italy. Plums were also seen near the Caspian Sea 2,000 years ago. Eventually, there were more than 300 varieties of plums! Everybody loved the plums and admired their sweet and sour taste and the skin colors that changed during the season. Dad said that plums are a part of the Prunus family and are drupes. Drupes are fruits with a hard stone pit that covers the seed in the middle. Plums are served dried or fresh and make good juice and wine. The people also loved plums because they were nutritious.

My dad said that grandma and the plums were filled with vitamins such as A, B1, B2, and C and they were antioxidants.

"Antioxidant" was a big word I could not even say, and he had to explain what an antioxidant was and why people liked them. Basically, they help protect your body from bad things like cancer and illnesses; people like to eat things that benefit their health.

My Grandpa Gold Bar was an apricot and senator for the Demicot Party. The demicots thought the apricot was superior and better than the replumicans because they have been around since the prehistoric times and were tougher because they had survived so much. The apricot was there in China in 3000 B.C. and Alexander the Great brought it to Greece during his reign. Our apricot side of the family was also a Prunus and a drupe.

I was confused as my dad told me more and more about apricots. They sounded a lot like the plums on grandma's side of the family. They were both filled with antioxidants and both had similar vitamins in them. Why did the replumicans and demicots fight?

Dad said that the two parties fought so much about who was better and what their differences were that they did not see how much they had in common. It was easy for me to see how similar my grandparents were when my dad told me their history stories. I was wondering how they ever got married if the two parties fought all of the time.



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As the party leaders, my grandparents noticed there was a problem between the two parties and they decided to try and talk about what could be done so decisions could be made to improve the Prunus society. My grandpa is a good listener and began agreeing with many of my grandma's ideas from the replumican view. After noticing how well my grandpa listened, my grandma asked to hear his views and those of the demicot party. Soon, they began to understand each other's political views and the two fruits, apricots and plums, lived together in harmony.

Meanwhile, my grandparents fell in love. It was forbidden to like another fruit at the time. Fruits had to stay with their own kind. Gold Bar and Victoria went to a farmer in Modesto, California, and asked him to do the unthinkable. How could two fruits marry and create a completely different fruit? The farmer figured it out and the rest is history... the proud pluot was born. That would be my dad!

## **Eighth Grade**

Chilis for Nina  
By Sarah Rutzen  
San Gabriel Christian School  
Jessica Shunkey, Teacher  
Los Angeles County

It was a busy day in Abuela Bernice's kitchen. The smell of sizzling ground turkey and onions filled the air. You could hear the oil leaping off the pan in tiny bubbles as the tortillas lay on the comal. But today wasn't just any day. No, today was Nina's birthday and Abuela, her grandmother, was making her famous enchiladas. Nina was so excited! She was turning five, and her family was going to have a celebration at one of her favorite places, Abuela's dining room. La familia was coming and that meant a lot of hungry bellies. So Nina and Abuela had to get cooking! They already had made the meat filling for the enchiladas and heated the tortillas; all they had to do was pour Abuela's special chili verde sauce over.

Nina went over to get a fresh chili she had grown from her backyard garden, but there weren't any left! Nina felt heartbroken. She ran to her Abuela to tell her the grave news. But Nina's grandma smiled and knew exactly what to do. "What?" Nina replied when Abuela told her idea.

"We should go to the farmers market," announced Abuela. "Every week local farmers from all parts of California come to sell their fresh produce. Then people from the neighborhood can come and buy whatever fruits and vegetables are provided."

Nina had a funny look on her face. She had never heard of a farmers market and was interested to see what it was like. Abuela put on her sun hat, grabbed her rolling basket, and they were off. Off to find chilies for Nina's birthday enchiladas.

They walked down the blocks until they arrived at the hectic marketplace. It was even busier than Abuela's kitchen! Bright, colorful fruit lined the walkway. Some in shades of colors Nina had never seen before. And the vegetables—they were in so many different shapes, it gave Nina a headache trying to count them. People stood in line looking at produce, talking to farmers, and trying to find the ripest fruit in the crates. Since there were lots of people, Nina held Abuela's hand as they navigated through the congested market. Abuela walked right over to the farmer with the vegetable stand and asked him for eight chilies. Then she introduced herself and her lovely five-year-old granddaughter, Nina. Abuela explained how Nina grows a garden in her backyard and asked if he could tell her how his farm works.

"Nice to meet you, Abuela Bernice, and happy birthday, Nina. My name is Mr. Arroyo and I am a vegetable farmer from the Napa Valley. Napa Valley has very fertile soil and an excellent climate, which is great for growing big, healthy chilies. Farmers usually grow their vegetables in rows, which is like one huge garden—kind of like yours, Nina. First, we use a tractor to dig up the soil and make rows in the dirt so the farmers know where to plant the seeds in an enormous piece of land. Next, we lay the seeds and plant our vegetables. Then we water our seeds and wait for our produce to grow, And after a couple of months, we can pick our naturally grown, California vegetables.

Mr. Arroyo ventured over to the box containing what Abuela and Nina needed to make their enchiladas complete—the dark green chilies.

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Nina and her grandma walked down the street until they arrived at Abuela's casa, or house. When Abuela opened the door, a big "Surprise!" rang from inside of the house. Nina was shocked! There was Tio Robert, Tio Thomas, and Tia Anne, and all her cousins.

Mama and Papa ran to give her a hug. "Happy birthday, Nina! Did you have a good day with Abuela? You are becoming such a beautiful young lady." Nina was speechless. Abuela quickly made her special chile verde sauce with Nina. The hungry familia ate the enchiladas Nina and Abuela had made together. "Es muy rico!" the family exclaimed.

As Nina sat looking at her hot plate, she remembered what a great day she had: cooking with Abuela, going to new places, meeting new people, and learning new things about California farming. And now enjoying a meal with her relatives in Abuela's dining room. This was truly the best birthday ever.

**Honorable Mention (Fifth-Grade Student)**

Imagine this...  
By Gina Brooks  
Sacred Heart Catholic School  
Star Pedron, Teacher  
Stanislaus County

Five years ago, I was lucky enough to move from town out to the country. My family now lives on the land where my father farms. Before we moved, I knew I would like living in the country. I knew I would love the peace and quiet all around me. I knew I would love all of the space we would have to play. I thought I knew all the reasons why I would like my new home. Now that I have lived in the country there are more things about it that I love; things that someone living in a city or town probably could never imagine.

Imagine this... being able to run outside and watch my father drive his tractor through our almond orchard. I am able to see the trees change with each season. The beautiful white flower blossoms on the trees each spring changing to the bright green leaves. Then, I can watch as the nuts are harvested in the late summer.

Imagine this... waking up many mornings to the roar of the crop duster not far away. I love being able to watch the airplane dip and dive in the sky. Sometimes I can even wave to the pilot as he flies by me.

Imagine this... walking out on my front porch to find a bag of apples left by a neighbor. I love sharing our crops with people around us, and I love it when they share with us. All the delicious fruit and vegetables are such a treat.

Imagine this... being able to run from our house and pick a ripe, juicy peach off one of my dad's trees. Then picking a whole bunch of peaches and coming back and helping my mom can those peaches so we can enjoy the bright, delicious fruit all winter long.

Imagine this... riding my bike out to the cherry orchard to go to cherry picking. My cousins and I have picked bags full of cherries on those spring nights. We probably ate as many as we picked! We have had so much fun playing hide-and-go-seek out in the orchard after we're tired of picking.

Imagine this... learning to appreciate the beauty and peacefulness of the country. I am able to live and understand the importance of California agriculture each day. I see how we are so lucky to live where we do and enjoy the fresh and tasty fruits and vegetables I often eat. I hear my parents talk about the importance of agriculture and how it is a valuable California resource that must be appreciated and saved for people to come.

I don't have to "Imagine this." These wonderful things are part of my life that has come from living in the country and being in a farming family. I thought there would be many good things that would come from moving to the country, but there are so many more great things that are a part of my everyday life that, before I moved, I never would have imagined!