

Gabrielle Warmerdam

Grade 3

Gracie Changes Her Mind

Teacher: Christiana Warmerdam

Gracie Changes Her Mind

Brrrrnnngggg. When Gracie heard the school bell, she grabbed her lunchbox and went to the cafeteria with her friend Abby. She opened her lunchbox to find a sandwich and...kiwis.

“KIWIS? Doesn’t Mom know that I don’t like them?”

“You don’t like kiwis?” Abby asked. “I’ll take them. I love kiwis!”

When Gracie got home from school she asked her mom about the kiwis. “You know I don’t like them!”

“Yes, but I hoped you would grow to like them because they are very healthy for you!” Mom said.

“I don’t think I’ll ever like them,” Gracie said.

That night, Gracie hopped into her bed and fell asleep. In the middle of the night, Gracie had a dream about...kiwis.

She found herself in a field of kiwi vines. There was something that stood out about two new kiwis on top of the vine beside her. One of them had a blue bow and the second one had a pink bow.

“That’s strange!” she said. She picked them up to look closer at them.

“Hi, my name is Hayward,” said the kiwi that had a pink bow. “It might sound like a boy’s name but in the kiwi world it’s a girl’s name.”

“AAAAHHHH! The kiwi can talk!” Gracie yelled.

“Yes, and so can my friend,” said Hayward.

“Hi, I’m Chico,” said the kiwi with the blue bow.

“Okay, this is weird. Why am I here with talking kiwis?” Gracie wondered.

Hayward responded, “Because you need to learn about kiwis. Why do you not like kiwis?”

“Because they look funny,” Gracie replied, “and they are green inside and they look like they are not ripe!”

“We are ripe when we are green,” Hayward said.

“And the fuzz is weird,” Gracie said.

“Our fuzz helps protect us,” said Chico. “But I don’t think that we look THAT weird!”

Hayward explained to Gracie, “Fruits are all different. That’s what makes them special! Peaches have fuzz too, but kiwis are just as sweet. And kiwis have more vitamin C than oranges have. You like oranges, don’t you?”

“Have you even tried a kiwi?” Chico asked.

“Well, um, not really,” Gracie said, a little embarrassed.

“How can you not like them when you haven’t tried them?” Hayward said. “Take a bite!”

“Of you?!?” Gracie asked. “Okay....”

Before she bit into her fuzzy friend, Gracie woke up. She dashed out of her room and asked her mom to put a kiwi in her lunchbox.

“Okay, I will, but I thought you didn’t like them,” her mom said.

“I had a dream about kiwis, and in the dream the kiwis told me that all fruits are different and that kiwis are good to eat even if they are green inside,” Gracie said.

“What do you mean the kiwis told you?” her mom asked, surprised.

“I was surprised too, and I actually screamed when they started to talk to me. There were two of them: One had a pink bow and the other a blue one. The one that had a pink bow was named Hayward and she told me lots of cool things about kiwis and now I can’t wait to try one,” Gracie said.

Her mom asked, “What was the name of the one with the blue bow?”

“Chico!” Gracie replied.

Gracie got on the bus and told her friend Abby that she had a dream about kiwis and her mom put some kiwis in her lunchbox to try.

“Do these kiwis talk?” Abby asked.

“No, these kiwis don’t, only the ones in my dream.”

“Good!” Abby replied. “But does this mean you won’t share them with me anymore?”

Gracie answered, “Of course I will. I brought two so we can share them!”

That night Gracie went to bed happy because she had tried a kiwi...and liked it!

Nicoletta Dowd

Grade 4

Friend of a Farmer

Teacher: Sheila Amaral

Friend of a Farmer

It all started one summer when Sawyer Robinson got a call from his Grandpa Jim saying he was getting older and needed help on the farm a couple of days a week.

“Mom! It’s Grandpa Jim,” Sawyer said, handing the phone to his mother, Melissa. “He wants to know if we can help on the farm this summer.”

“We’d be happy to help Dad,” she said. “How about Mondays and Fridays?”

“Perfect,” said Grandpa Jim. “I’ll see you Monday. Thanks, Melissa.”

The following Monday, Sawyer and his parents drove to the farm. When they got there, Sawyer was surprised to see Grandpa sitting on a hay bale by the cows. It wasn’t like him. He usually started working at dawn.

“Good morning,” his grandpa said as they walked up, and he handed a list to Sawyer’s mom that read:

1. Feed the chickens and gather the eggs – Sawyer
1. Fix the sprinklers that water the almonds – Mom and Dad
1. Milk and feed the cows – Grandpa Jim

After a long first day, they walked back to the house where Grandma Pauline was making dinner.

“How do chicken, potatoes, and green beans sound?” Grandma asked.

“Yum,” said Sawyer. He sat down and ate every bite. After dinner and goodbye, Sawyer and his parents drove home.

Friday morning Sawyer woke to the smell of bacon, eggs, and pancakes. He jumped up and ran to the kitchen. His mom was making a huge breakfast, something she didn’t usually do.

“If we’re going to help on the farm, then we need to start the day with a hearty breakfast,” said Sawyer’s mom.

That morning, the chickens had laid about a dozen more eggs than they had Monday. Sawyer was struggling to carry them all and tried putting a few in his pockets. When he bent to get more, they cracked in his pants. Suddenly, he heard laughter. He looked around and didn’t see anyone, so he picked up more eggs. More eggs broke, followed by more laughter. He looked up and saw a girl next door watching him through her window and laughing.

“Maybe you should use the basket next time,” she said, pointing toward the barn.

Sawyer looked and saw a bright red basket over by the cows he hadn’t noticed. He walked over and put the uncracked eggs inside.

“Thanks for the tip,” Sawyer said. “I’m new at farming.”

“Would you like some help?” she offered.

“That’d be great! My name is Sawyer. I’ll be back again Monday.”

“I’m Mia,” she said. “See you then.”

When Sawyer got to the farm Monday, Mia was waiting by the barn.

“Thanks for coming, Mia. My grandpa needs help this summer and I have a lot to learn.”

“Sure,” Mia said. “First, I’ll teach you how to milk the two cows.”

As she attached the suction cups to the cows, Mia asked, “Did you know cows produce about seven gallons of milk per day? That’s enough for 45,000 bowls of cereal per year.”

“Wow, that’s a lot. How does it make it from here to my cereal bowl?” Sawyer asked.

“It’s transferred in big refrigerated trucks that go from the dairy to the processing plant, where it is tested, filtered, and then bottled for delivery and sent to stores,” said Mia.

When they finished, Sawyer thanked Mia and asked if she would come back Friday to show how to repair sprinklers before harvest.

Friday came, and Mia was waiting for him by the barn again.

“Today, we’ll help your parents fix the sprinklers that water the almonds,” Mia said.

“How often do you water the almond trees?” Sawyer asked.

“Usually about every other week, unless it’s really hot. Then maybe once a week,” Mia answered.

“How do farmers know when it’s time to harvest?” asked Sawyer.

“They have to wait until 95 percent of the fibrous casing from around the kernel is split before knocking the nuts off the trees and picking them up,” Mia said.

“How do you know so much?” Sawyer asked.

“Well, I’ve followed my grandpa around since I could walk, and he’s taught me everything from farm to fork.”

“Maybe with all your help I can become a farmer too someday,” Sawyer said.

“Maybe,” she said. “You’ve already come a long way from putting eggs in your pockets.”

They both laughed and walked back to the barn.

In the end, after many years of learning, Sawyer did become a farmer. Mia became Mrs. Robinson, and she’s still teaching Sawyer to this very day.

Katelyn Warmerdam

Grade 5

Drip's Adventure

Teacher: Christiana Warmerdam

Drip's Adventure

Hi. My name is Drip! I am a water drop. I live with my family in a cumulus cloud. When I grow up I want to rain on California, and help their agriculture grow. That's been my dream for over 4 billion years!

Then, finally, one day, my parents said, "Pack your things! We're going to California!"

"Whoo-hoo!" I hollered.

The next day we were over California.

"Time to go!" my dad said.

Yes! I'm finally going to California.

"Cannonball!" I shouted as I jumped.

I started to get chilly as I was falling. It was very cold. Soon, I realized I had turned into a snowflake! Then, I started to slow down and landed gently on top of a tree. I waited forever, but I still couldn't move.

While I waited, I thought about all the possibilities for my life. I could irrigate a vineyard or help grow livestock. I could end up in a vegetable garden or a meadow of flowers. Just think of all the different fruits or vegetables I could help grow! I had a long time to think about my future.

Eventually it started to get warmer. It was spring! I dripped down to the ground and began to slide down the mountain. Then, I started meeting up with my friends, getting bigger and bigger as we went. At the bottom of the mountain, we rolled into a lake.

"What is this big wall doing here?" I asked.

"This is a dam," my cousin Drop said. "We get to stay here for a while and then we get to go down the river."

Soon enough, we were sliding into the river. It was very fun! We twisted and turned until we came to a fork in the river. I started to slide to the right, while my cousin Drop kept going straight.

“Goodbye, Drop!” I yelled.

And then we went into what looked like a smaller river, but my friends told me it was called a canal. The canal wasn’t as fun as the river; we just went straight and slow. Then all of a sudden, we started to be swirled up into a pipe. It was like the time I was in a hurricane! I got sucked out of the canal and spit out the other side and found myself in a fruit field.

I rolled down to a tree and started to sink into the ground. Then, a tree root sucked me up. It was dark inside the tree. I didn’t know where I was going, but I kept on going up. When I could tell I was really high up, I just stopped.

“Where am I?” I thought.

Then, I heard someone say, “Drip, is that you?”

“Splash!” I yelled. It was my other cousin, Splash. “Where are we?”

“I think we are inside a peach,” Splash answered.

In a little while, we were sure we were in a peach because we could smell it.

One day, the peach started to shake.

“What’s going on?” I hollered.

“We are going to be picked!” yelled Splash.

Soon, we stopped shaking. Splash and I went to the skin of the peach to see where we were.

“We are in a packing shed,” said Splash. “This is where they get fruit ready to sell.”

Then we started to move again.

All of a sudden, something covered our view.

“It’s a sticker! And look what it says on it: CALIFORNIA!”

My dream had finally come true!

Catherine Gruen

Grade 6

Saving Grandmother's Tree

Teacher: Ingrid Gruen

Saving Grandmother's Tree

"Elizabeth Tibbets!" Mother called, using her full name. "Get your jacket on and come outside to help us!"

Dark smoke billowed from the smudge pot and filled the air beneath the orange trees. Father struck a match and lit another smudge pot. A smudge pot is an oil-burning device used to prevent frost on fruit trees. Lizzy hugged her knees. She wished there would be a different, *safer* way to protect the tree and fruit from dangerous freezing temperatures.

The sun started to set. Six smudge pots were lined in a row between each tree. The strong stench of smoke crammed its way through the crack in the window.

Choofa, choofa, the pots chanted in unison.

Lizzy wished she could gather the courage to start the smudge pots, lightening the load her parents had.

The orange grove had been divided into quarters. One of those quarters had been entrusted to the Tibbetses. Her parents were the caretakers throughout the year.

Lizzy wrapped herself in a blanket and pulled herself away from the window. She could not bring herself to go outside when it involved *fire*.

She set to work making a warm soup, since she knew that her parents would be tired and hungry when they came back. Lizzy sparingly sprinkled salt over the soup and stirred it.

The soup simmered in the pot. The clock ticked, and twilight dawned. Lizzy heard a knock and left the wooden spoon in the pot. She pulled open the door.

Choofa, choofa, thousands, it seemed, of smudge pots beckoned.

Sirens, Lizzy thought grimly, and greeted her parents as they came back from their tiring work. Even though it was California, the mild winters could still be freezing.

Mother started to unbutton her jacket. "I know you are afraid of fire, Lizzy, but you really must try to overcome your fear." She unwrapped the scarf from her neck. "Thank you for

cooking dinner.” Lizzy smiled halfheartedly, still watching with a worried eye the flames that shot out of the smudge pots.

After a silent dinner, she walked the few steps to her room, at the back of the house.

From her window, she could see the oldest tree in the grove, the one that had been planted over a century ago.

Grandmother’s tree.

In this same manner, days passed.

Her mother and father were burdened with loads of work, never once forgetting to light the smudge pots next to Grandmother’s tree.

Lizzy pulled the covers up to her chin. The stars twinkled brightly. Tonight was extra chilly.

Lizzy looked out the window to Grandmother’s tree expecting to see fire shooting out of the smudge pot. But it was nowhere to be found.

Surprisingly, the smell and the sight of it would have been welcome. Though Lizzy had been previously sleepy, she was wide awake now.

Choofa, choofa, the other smudge pots teased Grandmother’s tree.

The smudge pots and oil are in the shed, she recalled, and the matches are in the pantry. Before she knew what she was doing, she had pulled on her boots and wrapped the warm woolen scarf around her neck.

Creeping down the hall, Lizzy found the pantry and switched on the dim lights. Her hand hovering over the cabinet door, Lizzy realized what she was doing. *Lizzy Tibbets*, she thought-scolded, *what do you think you’re doing? How can you expect to light a fire, for the first time without the help of Mother or Father?*

At first, she was about to wake her parents. They’d been out all day working in the orchard. How could she wake them up when it was already...midnight?

Steeling herself, she reached for the matches, and before she could regret it, stuffed them in her pocket.

Cold air blew in her face when she opened the door. Quickly, she ran to the shed and heaved a smudge pot to the clearing where Grandmother’s tree stood. Lizzy dashed back to the

shed and took the can of oil in her hands. Finally, the oil was poured in and the smudge pot was directly next to the tree.

Lizzy drew the matches out of her pocket. She had come this far.

Only one strike.

One touch to the oil.

And it would be over.

Lizzy took a deep breath and with a shaky hand lit the match. She let the flame touch the oil.

She brought her hand back and blew as hard as she could. The flame flickered and burst forth from the smudge pot.

Lizzy stepped back, watching the fire.

Elizabeth Tibbets had done it. She had saved Grandmother's tree.

Christian Perez

Grade 7

Sacred Heart School

Teacher: Elaine Magni

The Gift

“Marianna, Mija. I need you to go to your *abuelo*. He wants you to follow him during his work.”

For the past couple of minutes Mama has been calling my name. It’s my birthday tomorrow. I should be resting. I finally decide to go to her because it’s avocado season, the peak of spring. The first thing I see is Abuelo’s old, rusty pickup truck. The door is open and Abuelo looks annoyed. I quickly run out the door and hop into his truck before he gets too impatient.

He takes me down to our Hass avocado orchard, but there is nothing to see. As we progressively get farther down, I start to notice many people picking avocados. Abuelo says they are using avocado clippers to pick the five hundred avocados off one tree. Then, they carefully place the avocados in their harvest bag until full and then put that fruit into field bins that can hold about nine hundred pounds. Field trucks pick up the bins. Abuelo and I get out of his truck and switch to one of the many others filled with the avocados.

“Where are we headed to now, Abuelo?”

“To the packing houses. I’ll explain the process of what will happen to the avocados when we get there.”

Once we’re at the packing houses, waiting for our truck to unload, Abuelo points at a big building and says, “The avocados are washed in a hydro cooler to remove field dust and heat. Then, they are stored in a cold storage room. Finally, they are placed on the packing line, weighed, sorted by fruit size, and immediately sent to the markets.”

We are on our way back home and Abuelo says that he enjoyed teaching me all about his job. I turn to him and tell him that I really love his job.

With a grin, he says, "Very well. Now get your sleep. There is a big celebration tomorrow!"

When I awoke the next day, Abuelo was there to congratulate me and wish me a *feliz cumpleaños*. With a gift in his hands, he told me to open the gift early. As he handed me the gift, he said, "You are ready!"

Inside the package was my own beautiful apron and my own avocado clippers! I knew this was my best birthday yet! Mama sent me out to the orchard with my new apron and clippers as she prepared a special surprise.

I followed Abuelo's instructions and clipped a couple of avocados from a tree and brought them back to the house. After several days, I washed the avocados and gave them to Mama. Several minutes later, I smelled something wonderful coming from the *cocina*. As a special birthday surprise, Mama used the avocados I had clipped to prepare fresh guacamole and homemade tortillas. She said the avocados would start my thirteenth year off on a healthy path, since avocados are sodium and cholesterol free, and heart healthy. Abuelo and Mama had made my thirteenth birthday one that I would never forget.

Matthew Dunn

Grade 8

Our Lady of Fatima Catholic School

Teacher: Star Pedron

Randy the Redwood

Papa had a perplexed look on his face while he talked to Bob, the private owner of 40 acres of forest in Santa Cruz County where Randy and his family lived. Randy wondered what they were talking about. Randy's grove of redwoods had been growing on the coast of California for hundreds of years now. Randy had seen all sorts of trees cut down, but new trees sprouted from the stumps within months. Bob seemed to know how to keep the grove in balance. After talking to Bob, the ocean breeze blew through Papa and he whispered to Mama who nodded with a saddened sway. Papa said, "Randy, Bob needs to cut us down to make space for the smaller trees that are growing, so he called the lumber company and they are going to cut us down tomorrow." Shock ran through Randy. He thought this can't be real. I must be having a nightmare. He was restless all night waiting to wake up from this nightmare, but he didn't.

The next day lumbermen arrived with their chainsaws and cut down his family. Train tracks ran next to the property. A crane lifted each tree, cut off its branches, and cut it in half. The lumberman stacked Randy's whole family on several train cars and strapped them down. After a bumpy ride, the train stopped at the lumbermill. They were unloaded and kept in the back to dry. Mama kept telling Randy, "It's going to be all right."

After a week of being stacked and drying at the mill, men took Randy inside one of the warehouses and put him in a machine that spun Randy in circles while pulling the remaining bark off. Seconds later, Randy was a big rectangle. From there, he was cut into planks of wood in a variety of shapes. Some were small and others were about 10 feet long.

After another week of being stacked in the yard, a man operating a forklift lifted Randy up and put him in another truck to take him away. Every last piece of Randy, even the smallest

shavings of woods, were used as he was turned into a variety of products. Randy was soon dropped off at a construction site and realized that he was going to become a school.

Due to his size, Randy was perfect for the support beams holding up the school. Over the years, Randy was happy to see the school kids learn and grow up. The students' sense of humor always had Randy laughing about something. They gave Randy a home away from home. Randy was always sad when the children graduated. Over time, fewer children came to the school. After a while, the school was shut down. Randy waited alone for a long time mumbling to himself, "What happened?" Finally, one day, people came to take down the school. Randy wondered what would happen to him. Instead of being thrown away, they shipped Randy to a hardware store. Randy stayed there for several months and missed the school kids' laughter. One day, an old man walked by with one of the store employees and pointed to Randy and said, "That piece of timber would be fine. It looks great for its age."

Randy was carried to a pickup truck, placed in the bed of the truck, and taken to an old house where he was nailed together. Randy wondered what the man was going to do to him. After a couple of hours, the man said, "I am done." Randy figured it out: He was a picnic table! The man put the table in the back of the truck and it was taken to a park next to a playground where Randy was again with kids. It was the happiest day of Randy's life.

Randy realized what he thought started out as a nightmare, was part of an amazing wood cycle of life. He and his family had helped employ numerous people from the farmer, to the lumbermen, to the mill workers, to the construction site workers, to school employees and now to the old carpenter. Randy's family grove was renewed by now as trees had regrown from their roots due to good conservation practices. Randy was part of one of California's most important agricultural industries: timber.