

6th GRADE STATE WINNER

Lessons from the Grapevine

By Sofia Magni

Sarah Ward, Teacher | Sacred Heart School
STANISLAUS COUNTY

Illustrated by: Sheldon High School



I feel so blessed to be living on Mr. Bloom's farm in Fresno, California. I have been living here for several months as part of my growing process, but Mr. Bloom started his grape-growing process about three years ago. He explained the process to me recently while checking on the vines.





At first, he was just walking along, singing his favorite song. I always think it's funny when he sings the line, "I heard it through the grapevine." I giggle every time I hear him singing it. Anyway, as I was saying, a few days ago, he stopped singing mid-song and started talking about his process of growing us grapes in California, the producer of 99% of the nation's commercially grown table grapes.

He turned to me and said, “Kelsi (that’s the name he’s given me), when I first planted your grapevine in the spring two years ago, it was just a small set of shoots. It grew quickly in the first year, developing a thick trunk and side canes that required training along a trellis. But it wasn’t ready to produce grapes.



The next spring, the plant was still getting established, although a few tiny bunches of grapes did appear. They were not lush, full bunches of grapes, but a few were edible. Now, this spring, the third since planting, has arrived. I'm expecting a much larger yield of sweet, tasty grapes on the now-mature plant, and you, Kelsi, are my favorite one."

A small illustration showing a brown, textured bud on a branch, with a small green leaf beginning to emerge from it.

BUD BURST

An illustration of a green vine branch with several clusters of small, pink, star-shaped flowers and tiny green buds.

FLOWERING

An illustration of a green vine branch with several large, green, lobed leaves and small clusters of green grapes.

LEAF GROWTH

An illustration of a green vine branch with several clusters of small, green, round grapes.

FRUIT SET

An illustration of a bunch of purple grapes hanging from a branch. A small, round, purple grape with a face and arms is shown climbing up the bunch.

VERAISON

A large illustration of a bunch of purple grapes hanging from a branch. A small, round, purple grape with a face and arms is shown climbing up the bunch.

HARVEST

This makes me smile and giggle. Even though it makes me happy that I am Mr. Bloom's favorite, I don't completely understand everything he just said. I ask, "Why am I your favorite? You said that last spring, only a few grapes were edible. What does that word mean?" Before he can answer, I also ask, "Why do you want the grapes to be sweet and tasty?"

Mr. Bloom replies cautiously, "You are very cute on that vine, but you are really a food meant to be eaten. Food is any nutritious substance that people or animals eat or drink or that plants absorb in order to maintain life and growth. Do you get it now?"



“No, Mr. Bloom!” I whine. “Why would you want me to be your food?” “That’s easy to answer. You’re a very important fruit. You’re a perfect snack that helps people stay healthy. You are a good source of vitamins C and K, low in calories, have no fat or cholesterol, and virtually no sodium. You contain antioxidants and polyphenols that help maintain a healthy heart. And, you’re delicious,” he explains. “Now do you understand?”



Still unsure, Kelsi hesitantly asks, “Those are all good things that help people, right?”

“Yes! A healthy heart will allow me to live a long life on my farm, surrounded by my family.”

“Right, your family! I saw your daughter out here running along the vines with a little boy. I can help them?”

“You can help anyone: me, my daughter and the little boy, my son, my friends, and people I don’t even know,” replies Mr. Bloom.

“Wow! There are a lot of people I can help!” Kelsi declares. “I definitely get it now!”





Even though I understand all of my important roles as food, later that night while swaying on my vine, I begin to get nervous. I want to stay so I can become the table grape I am being raised to be. I also want to help Mr. Bloom and his family stay healthy and strong. But, if I'm being honest, I also want to jump off this vine and run away. Being eaten seems scary, and it wouldn't be hard to sneak away during the night while Mr. Bloom is sleeping.

That's it! I'm running away. I jump off the vine and begin rolling as fast as I can. Passing by Mr. Bloom's window, I hear a faint noise. It's Mr. Bloom. He's singing that song, "I Heard it Through the Grapevine." As I listen, I'm reminded of all the things Mr. Bloom has taught me and how much I care about him.



I want him to stay healthy, so I climb through the window and roll into the kitchen. I find a bowl of grapes in the center of the table. I hop into the bowl, close my eyes, and dream of how wonderful it will be once Mr. Bloom or one of his children find me and eat me as a healthy morning treat.



About the Author



////////// **Sofia Magni** //////////

12 years old

A summertime snack prompted Sofia to start her *Imagine this...* story months before the contest deadline. As she snacked on grapes, she started brainstorming story ideas, looking up facts, and talking to her mom about grapes. It was her mom singing “I Heard it Through the Grapevine” that really sparked her imagination. Sofia, a repeat State Winning author, loves writing stories, especially ones with an underlying message. She wants readers to embrace the fact that like the grape, we each have a purpose, and to be proud of who we are!

About the Illustrators



Jacquelyn Ngo-Le and Jacob Yang

Sheldon High School
Theresa Nguyen, Art Teacher

In the beginning, the only thing Jacquelyn and Jacob knew about grapes was that they are delicious!

The Sheldon High School seniors started the illustration process by researching grape-growing techniques and storyboarding the tale, and then the teamwork began. Jacquelyn was the character design artist, while Jacob oversaw the background setting design. With how descriptive the story was, they both enjoyed personifying the grape, Kelsi, and the turmoil she was experiencing.

The team utilized watercolors and ink as their art media. Both students enjoyed the collaboration and getting feedback from their mentor. The experience also fulfilled a younger dream for both students, becoming published illustrators!