

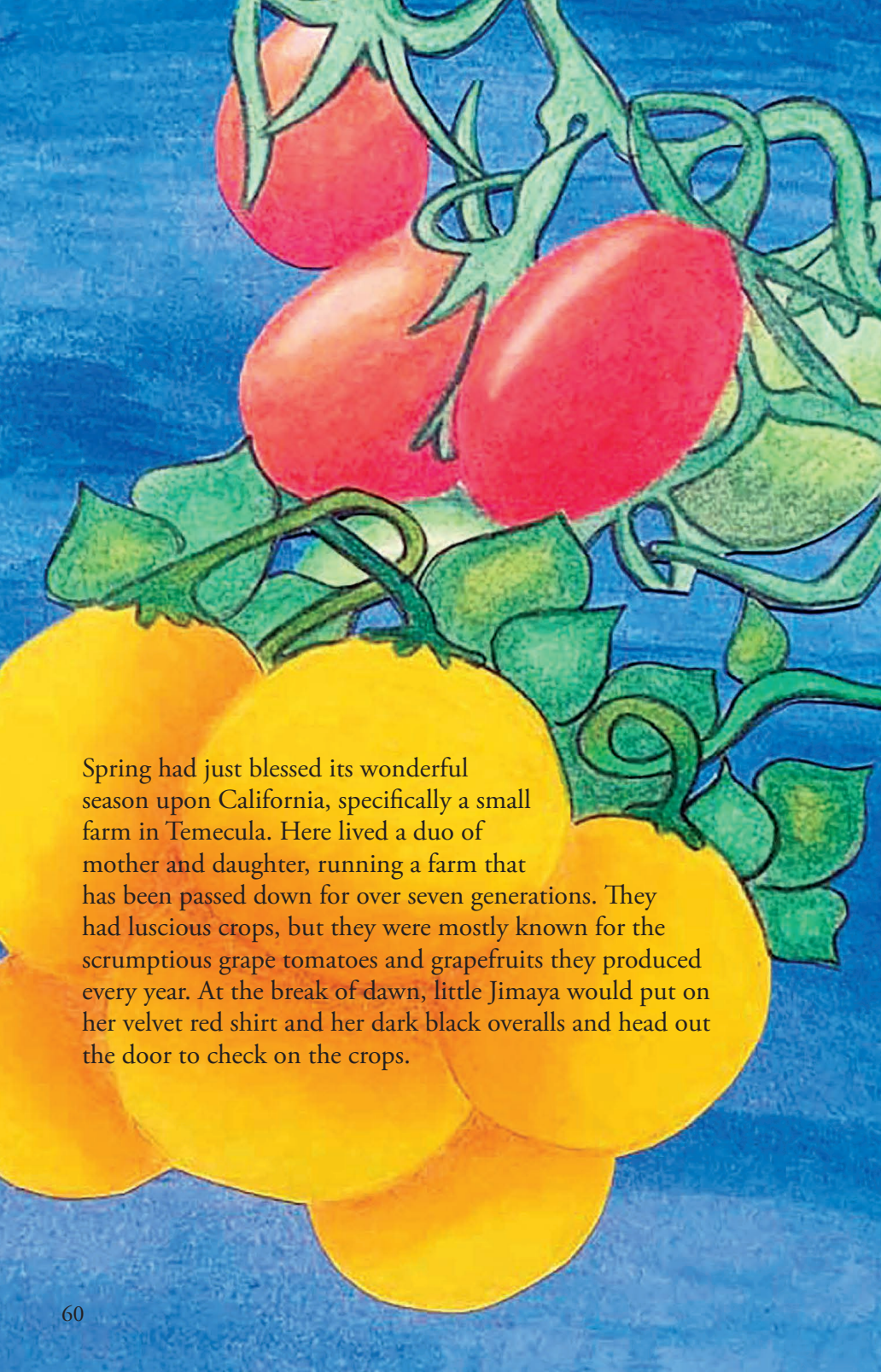
7th GRADE STATE WINNER

A Crop Invasion

By Sophie Granados-Moreno

Rachel Bizzotto, Teacher | Sandburg Middle School
LOS ANGELES COUNTY

Illustrated by: Calvin High School



Spring had just blessed its wonderful season upon California, specifically a small farm in Temecula. Here lived a duo of mother and daughter, running a farm that has been passed down for over seven generations. They had luscious crops, but they were mostly known for the scrumptious grape tomatoes and grapefruits they produced every year. At the break of dawn, little Jimaya would put on her velvet red shirt and her dark black overalls and head out the door to check on the crops.

On one of her daily checks, she was shocked to find a large patch of crops decimated, rotten to be precise. She went to the first row of grape tomatoes and witnessed the horror of what the unknown invaders had done to her family's pride. The tomatoes were shriveled, and had many black spots on them, one of which had what Jimaya thought was a dead bug trapped inside but ended up flying in her face. She swatted it away and ran inside to tell her mother of the insidious crime.



“Mama!” she yelled in horror, running to their room on the second floor. She burst open the door, running to her mother’s side.

“What is it?” Jimaya’s mother, Delilah, asked while she awoke in a panic, holding her daughter’s hand. “Did you have a bad dream again?” she questioned.

“No, Mama! This is no nightmare! Come outside, quick!” Jimaya ran out the door, walked onto the front porch, and to the patch of infected tomatoes. Delilah soon followed, her wavy, long brown hair swaying from side to side. “Oh no...” Delilah said, horrified by the state of the crop.

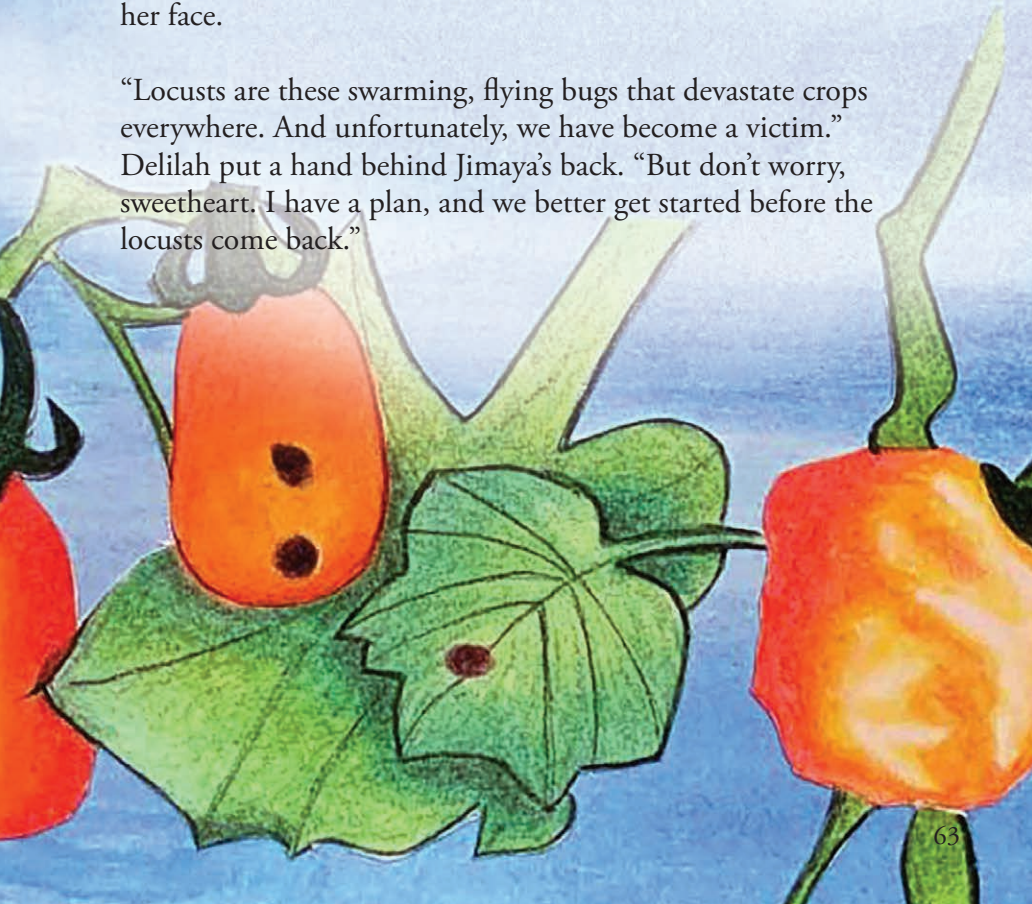




She went to examine the small patch of grape tomatoes, seeing them shriveled and yucky.

“Locusts. I knew we would get them sooner or later.” She backed up, putting her hair back with her hand. “What are locusts, Mama?” Jimaya asked, turning to her mother with a disappointed look on her face.

“Locusts are these swarming, flying bugs that devastate crops everywhere. And unfortunately, we have become a victim.” Delilah put a hand behind Jimaya’s back. “But don’t worry, sweetheart. I have a plan, and we better get started before the locusts come back.”



The mother was determined to save their crops, so she grabbed Jimaya's hand and grabbed her keys.

"Where are we going, Mama?" Jimaya asked. "To get supplies. Your grandma taught me a way to get rid of locusts when I was your age, a gardening remedy from the olden days and you better bet it's gonna work." Her mother started the car with confidence and drove on the highway to the city.



They both exited the car, walked inside a grocery store, and grabbed 20 giant bags of flour. Jimaya's face remained inquisitive and confused the entire time, but she didn't question her mother's plan, considering all the confidence she started the car with.

They checked out and drove back to the farm, unloading the bags one at a time and taking them inside. “Mom, I can’t hold it anymore. How do we know that 20 bags of flour are gonna stop hundreds of locusts? I mean, Mom, come on.” Jimaya met eyes with her mother, who seemed to understand her doubt. “My plan is to put this flour on the leaves of our wonderful crops outside, and it will take a while, but I’m sure we can do it. The theory is that this flour will work because when the locusts attempt to eat the flour-sprinkled leaves, it will make their mouths gum up. That way they won’t eat any of the crops!” She started opening bags. “Now stop asking questions and help me open bags.” Jimaya walked over and smiled at her mom, as they both slowly opened every bag and began heading outside and tossing flour on every single vine and tree they had ever planted.



By the time they finished, a swarm of locusts was flying in from above. “Mom! Look!” Jimaya pointed at the crop killers, as her mom rushed her inside, and quickly closed the windows and the door.

“You could have given me a warning-” Delilah quickly covered her mouth as they both observed the locusts land on the crops. The locusts began chewing on leaves and crops. “HA! Take that, locusts!” Jimaya’s mother laughed, as the duo high-fived each other in excitement.

They repeated the process over and over again and watched as little to no locusts were coming to prey on their crops. Was it the flour? Luck? A change in seasons? They may never know, but the duo continued to produce mass amounts of grape tomatoes and grapefruit every year, and never had to deal with locusts again because of their determination and dedication to saving their crops.

Editor’s Note: There is no scientific evidence that flour eliminates locusts.



About the Author



/// Sophie Granados-Moreno ///

12 years old

Determination and courage are the underlying themes of Sophie's story. While researching topic ideas, she discovered that locusts are the most common crop pest, and the story unfolded from there. Sophie's favorite part of the writing process was creating the story ending, where the characters triumph over adversity. She hopes readers enjoy the bond between her characters, as it was inspired by her own life bond with her mom.

About the Illustrators



**Kali Dennis, Alaysia Hart, Sarah Hamidi,
Karyme Nava, Julianna Reyna**

Calvine High School
Corrie Soderlund, Art Teacher

Five students created illustrations for “A Crop Invasion.” They learned a lot! The group had no idea how much damage locusts could do, and these upper-level art students also discovered that grape tomatoes look different depending on their growth stage.

Coordination was key to working as a team. They started by deciding what they felt comfortable drawing or painting and what mediums they liked working with. As some students were in different class periods, the exchange of materials and ideas had to be done before school or at lunchtime. Watercolors, colored pencils, and ink were the materials of choice. The artists found the story creative and educational. They enjoyed the opportunity to make art and be challenged.