

Hooty the Owl

By Henry Moon

Paul Rios, Teacher | Hale Charter Academy
LOS ANGELES COUNTY

Illustrated by: Monterey Trail High School

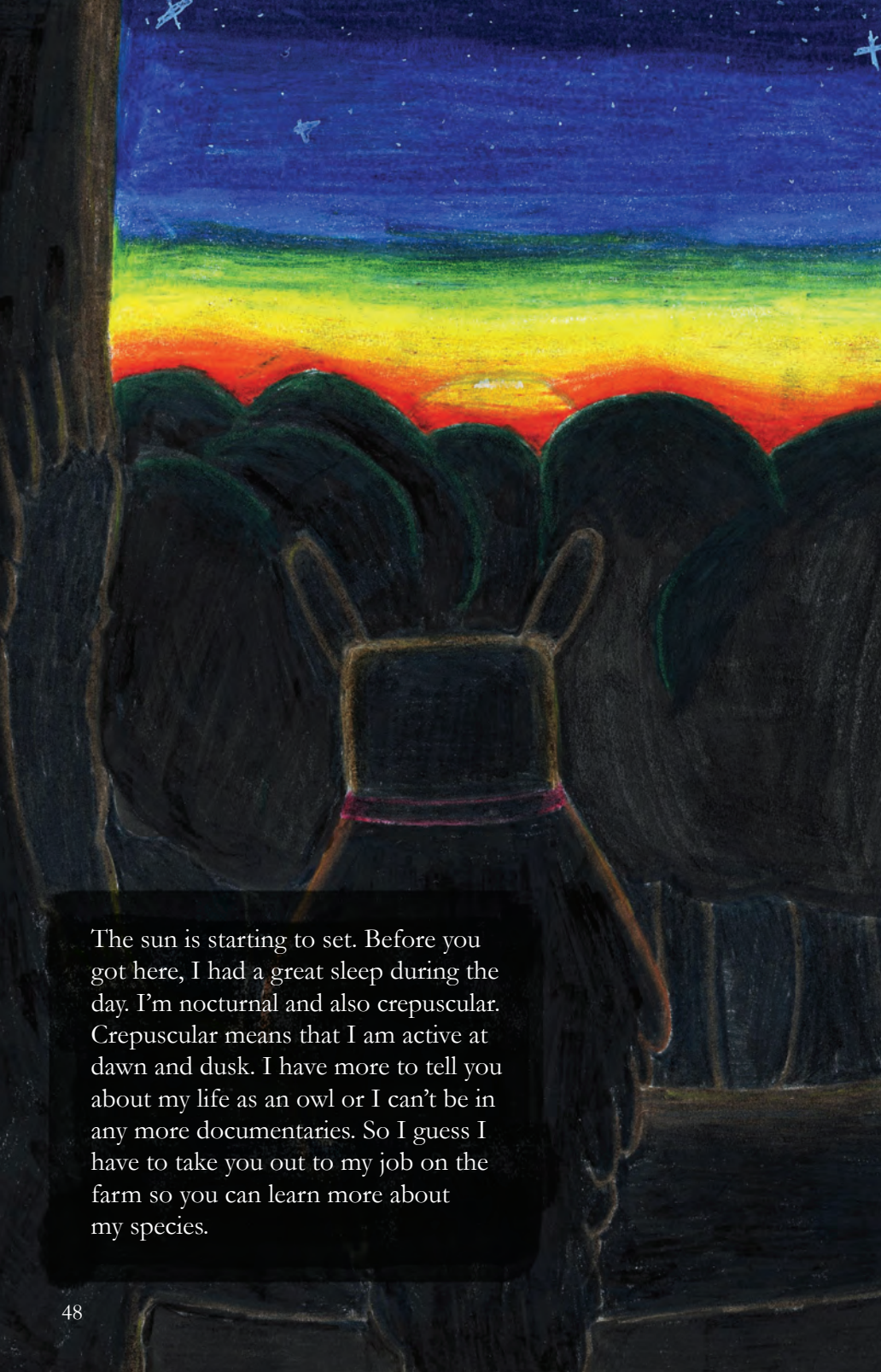




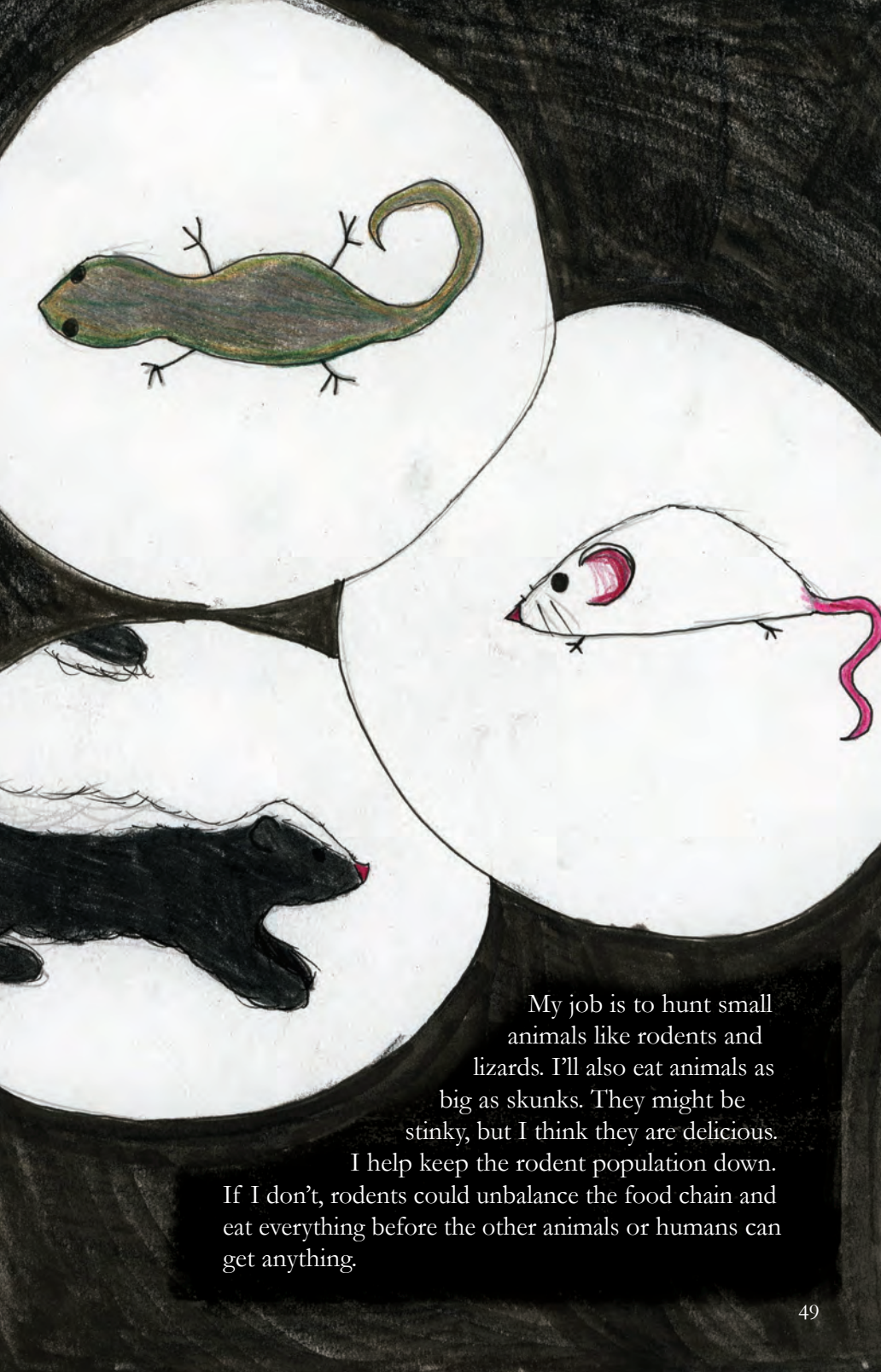
Hey there, I'm Hooty the Great Horned Owl and I am on my flight back to my house. I love my job because I get to eat yummy rodent snacks for work! I eat the animals and I can keep the farm clear of voles that can eat entire root systems, ruining a harvest. Thankfully they never get that far when I'm around. I'm an amazing hunter and parent.

I can't wait to tell you more about my job, but first let me take you on a tour of my home. My home or nest is located high up in a tree between four branches. My house isn't the fanciest of places, due to all of my belongings being my nest materials, leftovers, oh, and my kids, which are still in their eggs. The average hatch time for my owl eggs is 29 to 34 days. And, it's been 28 days already. So I'm expecting them soon.





The sun is starting to set. Before you got here, I had a great sleep during the day. I'm nocturnal and also crepuscular. Crepuscular means that I am active at dawn and dusk. I have more to tell you about my life as an owl or I can't be in any more documentaries. So I guess I have to take you out to my job on the farm so you can learn more about my species.



My job is to hunt small animals like rodents and lizards. I'll also eat animals as big as skunks. They might be stinky, but I think they are delicious. I help keep the rodent population down. If I don't, rodents could unbalance the food chain and eat everything before the other animals or humans can get anything.



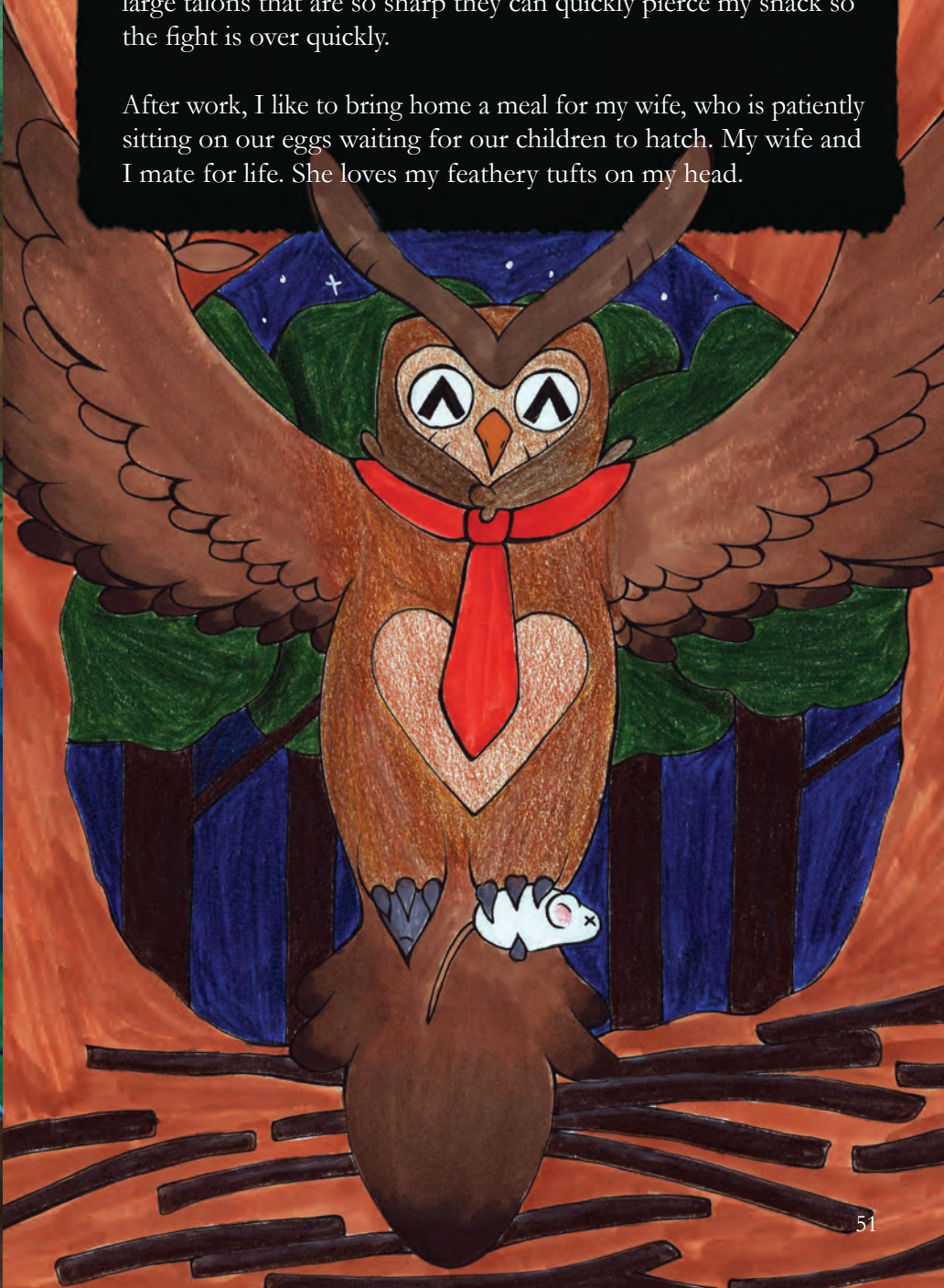
I have many supercool abilities that make me an excellent hunter. As a great horned owl I can hear a lot of what happens around me. I can hear a twig snap from a distance of 75 feet or 23 meters (for you metric fanatics). Like, do you hear that mouse in the bush about 20 feet away? “Snap!” Finally, my first snack of the night was a small, delicious mouse. I like to eat all parts of the mice, including the bones and tails.

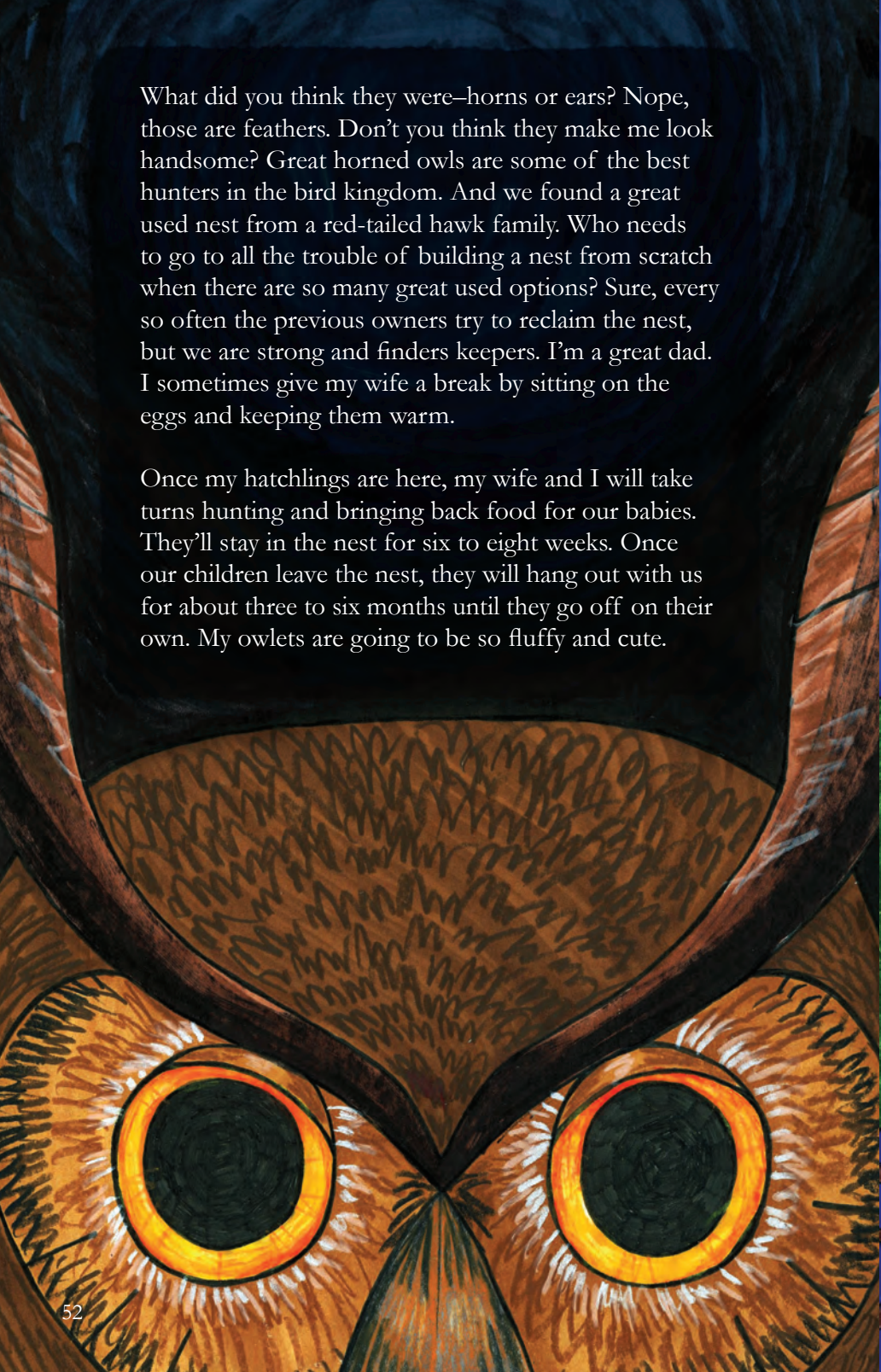
Another thing I can do really well is see in the dark. I have really large eyes. My pupils can get really big to be able to let lots of light in to see my prey moving around on even the darkest nights when there isn't a moon out. I can also turn my head almost completely around—270 degrees. This lets me see and hear so many creatures moving around, even the smallest things.



Now listen as I fly over to the tree next to you.... You could barely hear my wings making any sounds. This allows me to swoop down on my prey and they never hear me coming. I have these large talons that are so sharp they can quickly pierce my snack so the fight is over quickly.

After work, I like to bring home a meal for my wife, who is patiently sitting on our eggs waiting for our children to hatch. My wife and I mate for life. She loves my feathery tufts on my head.





What did you think they were—horns or ears? Nope, those are feathers. Don't you think they make me look handsome? Great horned owls are some of the best hunters in the bird kingdom. And we found a great used nest from a red-tailed hawk family. Who needs to go to all the trouble of building a nest from scratch when there are so many great used options? Sure, every so often the previous owners try to reclaim the nest, but we are strong and finders keepers. I'm a great dad. I sometimes give my wife a break by sitting on the eggs and keeping them warm.

Once my hatchlings are here, my wife and I will take turns hunting and bringing back food for our babies. They'll stay in the nest for six to eight weeks. Once our children leave the nest, they will hang out with us for about three to six months until they go off on their own. My owlets are going to be so fluffy and cute.

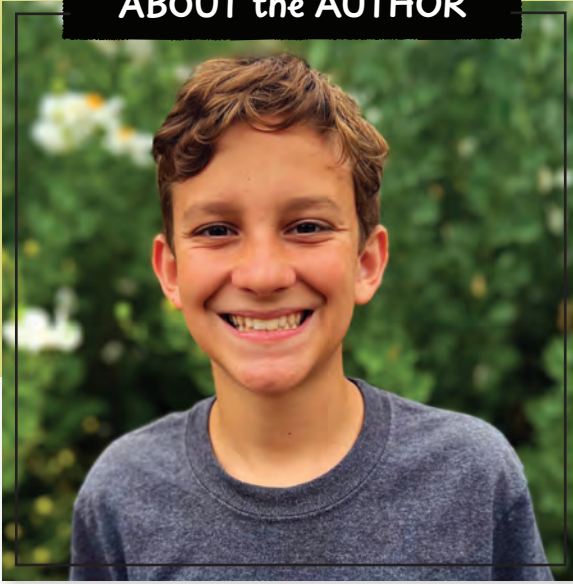
“Ring ring ring ring ring ring!” It’s my wife. I have to take it. She says it’s time—the eggs are starting to hatch.



It's been great getting to share with you my job
and what it's like at my nest. Keep a lookout for
me at night and listen for my hoots. Bye for now.



ABOUT the AUTHOR



Henry Moon

Hale Charter Academy
Paul Rios, Teacher

Humor helped Henry's writing process. "My favorite part was writing the jokes," he said. On a serious note, he hopes readers learn about the importance of owls to the ecosystem and to agriculture. He also hopes readers appreciate the humor sprinkled throughout the story. Henry, a student from Los Angeles County, was surprised at how easy it was to initially write the story and noted that he learned a lot in the process of writing a rough draft through the final copy.

ABOUT the ILLUSTRATORS



Vivian Ning, Vanessa Palafox & Savannah Farmer

Monterey Trail High School
Monica Ortega, Art Teacher

These high school juniors think this story is a hoot! Pun intended. They learned a lot throughout the illustration process, first about great horned owls, and their importance to agriculture, but they also learned about experimenting with new art techniques and collaboration.

After researching the topic, including watching a short documentary on great horned owls, studying their anatomy, how their wings fold and other characteristics, they divided up the story and started creating. The team decided on the overall character design and color schemes followed by sketching, adding ink, color, and final touches.

They enjoyed creating nature-themed art, working as a team, and making Hooty (and his jokes) come to life!