

First Place (Third-Grade Student)

Bella Goes to the Garden
By Moorea Kern
Sunset Elementary School
Connie Brooks, Teacher
Ventura County

Once there was a bee named Bella. She was the hardest working bee in her hive. She went from flower to flower collecting pollen and returning it to her hive. One sunny day Bella went to a new garden that had beautiful flowers. This was a girl's garden and her name was Sami. Sami hated bees! And she always killed every bee she saw. Her mother had tried to tell her she needed them. Sami wouldn't listen to her.

When Sami saw Bella she tried to hit and kill her. But, Bella yelled, "No, bees can help your garden!" Sami for some reason stopped to listen.

Bella said, "Bees make honey and make it by getting pollen from flowers. This helps the flowers to grow. For instance if bees were not here, fruits and flowers would not grow. We also make wax so we can store our honey. This people take and put into other things you can buy. Please don't kill us!"

Sami felt different now because her Mom had never told her just why bees were so helpful to a garden.

Bella also told Sami that bees just sting you when you bother them. So leave them alone. Then she asked, "Do you know that there are all kinds of honey, depending on what we pollinate? Some of the things are: sage, pumpkins, flowers, and citrus trees." Sami thought bees only made one kind of honey. Wow! What a tasty thought.

Bella also told Sami that bees only live 45 days unless someone kills them. So they must work fast.

After that Sami felt different about bees and realized how important they are. So she decided she wanted to help bees to make their new homes. She never bothered or killed another bee from that day on.

Sami had learned so much about bees that she invited Bella's whole family to come live in her garden. Now they pollinate her flowers and they grow to be beautiful. With all her new knowledge Sami also collects the honey from the bees.

Sami and her friends always tell everyone about bees. They even formed a club to protect them.

One of the most important lessons Sami learned from Bella was that bees pollinate and make things grow better. Without bees, flowers and plants would not be able to continue their natural cycle and we wouldn't have flowers, plants or honey. Sami's garden is really a honey of a garden now.

First Place (Sixth-Grade Student)

A Corny Tale
By Chris Messer
Yolo Junior High School
Sheila Kendall, Teacher
Stanislaus County

Conrad Corn had a good life, lots of friends, was good in school, and had just been voted president of the Veggie Club. Everything was perfect, until he started middle school. His first class of the day was Agriculture 1 with Ms. Kendall, she was an ear of corn too.

One day Ms. Kendall Corn gave the class a fruit and vegetable quiz. There was a list of foods and you were to put an "F" by the fruits and a "V" by the vegetables. Simple enough, or so he thought. Little did he know it would change his life forever. When his quiz was returned to him he had only missed one. Not bad. Then he noticed what he had missed. Next to corn he put a "V", but she marked it wrong! He thought that she must have made a mistake. After all, Conrad himself was corn, and he had always known that he was a vegetable. Even Ms. Kendall was corn, so she has to know that we weren't fruits!

Conrad raised his hand. He felt as if every kernel in his body was going to pop. "Ms. Kendall," he said, "think you made a mistake on my quiz. I put a "V" next to corn and you marked it wrong." Conrad wasn't prepared for what he was about to hear. "It was no mistake," Ms. Kendall said. "Corn is a fruit. You see, a fruit contains the seeds, and if you are the leaf, stem or root of a plant, then you are a vegetable. As corn, you and I are fruits."

Poor Conrad, here he was voted president of the Veggie Club and he isn't even a vegetable! After school he went to room V-8 for his Veggie Club meeting. When the meeting came to order, poor Conrad stood up and looked at all of his friends. Would they even want to be his friends after he told them that he was a fruit? Slowly he began to speak, telling them what he had learned in school. Then he announced that he could no longer be president. They all stared at him in disbelief. Cecilia Celery fell out of her chair and Larry Lettuce lost a leaf! Then he looked at his best friends, Gary Green Bean and Percy Pea. They were laughing! Conrad couldn't believe his ear, they thought it was funny! Then Gary Green Bean said, "Do you know what this means?" "Yes, I'm out of the Veggie Club," said Conrad. "No," said Percy Pea, "it means WE are out of the Veggie Club. Because, if a fruit contains the seeds, then you, Gary, and I are all fruits! Suddenly being a fruit wasn't so bad after all. Then, they got up and went over to the Fruit Club to make some new friends.

First Place (Seventh-Grade Student)

Facts of Fortune
By Casey Ardrey
Shaffer Elementary
Dean Weaver, Teacher
Lassen County

"Welcome to Facts of Fortune, the trivia game show that tests peoples' knowledge of fruit! I am Phillip, the host of Facts of Fortune. Today's topic is cherries! Our contestants today are Bob, the world-record holder for longest time spent on a couch! Second, Fred, the owner of a vineyard! Last, but not least, Sophie, a famous singer! For the first round, the questions will be based upon popularity facts! Bob, you're first! What is the most popular kind of cherry?"

"Duh...pie?" Bob said stupidly, pulling out a bag of potato chips.

"Wrong answer! The answer is Bing cherries because of their crisp and juicy taste! Sophie, name the four basic types of cherries, with no genetic engineering!" the host yelled into the microphone.

"Like, how should I know!" Sophie said in a high-pitched voice.

"Nope! The answer is Bing, Rainier, Lambert, and Van!" a loud ringing sound interrupted Phillip. "Time's up! No points for anyone! Next round will be based upon how they are grown...Fred, once planted, how long will it take to grow into full production?" asked Phillip.

"Around four to six years!" said Fred in a deep voice.

"Correct! You have ten points! Bob, what season are cherries harvested?" Phillip said.

"Tuesday?" Bob said, spewing potato chips everywhere.

"No! The answer is late spring, through late June and July. That was easy! Sophie, what must an orchardist do to maintain a healthy orchard?" Phillip questioned.

"Like, nobody cares, so, like, I don't!" said Sophie.

"Wrong! The answer is to regularly prune, fertilize, control weeds, bugs, and disease! Fred leads and it is the end of this round! The final round will be based on what happens after they leave the farm, and then a bonus round will commence! Fred, what temperature are cherries best kept at before they are shipped?" Phillip asked excitedly.

"Somewhere around 1 to 2 degrees Celsius." Stated Fred calmly.

"Correct! Wow, Fred leads with 20 points. Bob, stop eating those chips, because it's your turn. How soon should cherries be shipped to the market?" Phillip said.

"Three years and uh... Tuesday?" said Bob, spewing chips everywhere...again!"

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"Wow! Close your mouth! Sick! Anyway, that's wrong. 24 to 48 hours after harvest. Eeughh! Sophie, are cherries packaged at the orchard?" inquired Phillip.

"How should I know? You gave Fred the easy questions! I quit! WAAHHH!" screamed Sophie, stomping off into the crowd crying.

"Wow...she was mad! Well, in case anybody wants to know, the answer is no. Only two people remain. Bonus round! This question is worth 20 points. Bob, this means you can catch up. Here is the question...Write down as many products as you can that cherries are put into." Phillip said.

Several minutes later Phillip read off the lists.

"Bob, you have pie filling, candy, and ice cream. That's three. Fred, you have pie filling, ice cream, candy, yogurts, jellies, jams, sauces, stewed fruit and fruit drinks. You win this fabulous prize!" said the host. A loud voice boomed.

"You win a trip to Japan! How will you get there? With your new private jet! All costs paid!" The host started immediately after voice went away.

Second Place (Third-Grade Student)

The Wheat Life!
By Dallas Franklin
Louisiana Schnell School
Dee Desmond, Teacher
El Dorado County

Hi, I'm Sue the Seed. I'm in the ground at Jo's farm with my family. Hey, what is tickling me? Oh, it's just worms. I feel something wet. Oh it's just Farmer Jo watering me. Those worms help me by keeping the soil healthy.

I was planted in March so I'm a spring seed. I could have been a winter seed, but I guess not. I can't wait until I sprout to see the world? What is that light? Oh, it's the sun. This is great. I had just one leaf, but it split. Then I got more and more leaves and they did the same thing. Now I have three heads of seeds. Each head has twenty seeds on it. It's been five months now and I'm brown.

Wait, that means aaaaaaahhh tractor! I am cut by the big blade on the tractor and cut away from my Nodal roots and Seminal roots too. I'm now at the mill. The miller is grinding me into flour. I'm light and fluffy. The miller put me in a big, fat bag of flour. Then I was put in a truck with lots of other flour bags. I hope I'm in something sweet because I am such a little sweetie. Ha, ha, ha!

Boy have I changed since I was at Jo's farm. Guess what! I'm at the store now! I am in the ninth row on the baking shelf. I hope I get picked soon because I don't want to sit here forever. Gee that didn't take long, I'm already on the conveyor belt. Whoa, I'm in a car now. I'm going to a home!

Aaaaaaahhh, I'm falling! I saw the recipe and it said sugar, flour, butter and egg, mix bake and eat. That's what happened to me. I'm in a cookie. I could have been cereal, cake, bread, crackers or pie. Even noodles have wheat. Isn't that amazing? But I'm in cookies I guess. Halloween cookies, of course, with sprinkles. I have black, red and orange sprinkles. I'm glad that I am wheat because that is a big thing in everybody's life.

Second Place (Fifth-Grade Student)

Cow Conversation
By Logan Coffin
Fremont Elementary School
Sherri Downer, Teacher
Los Angeles County

It all started on a dairy farm called "Winfield Milk". All the cows were out in the pasture grazing on luscious green grass misted by the morning dew. There was only one cow not in the pasture, named Daisy. She was sneaking around the barn when she suddenly heard the Farmer and his stable hand talking. Daisy listened real closely to what they were saying. Daisy ran back to the pasture as fast as she could, but a huge truck suddenly stopped her. The people driving were unloading huge stainless steel things. Daisy did not know what they were. Finally, she went back to the pasture.

Daisy wasted no time telling the other cows what she had heard. "Guess what Farmer Winfield told the stable hand?" Daisy said excitedly. "He told the stable hand that they weren't going to milk us." "Stop!" yelled Daisy. "They have to milk us. Milk is a big part of California. People need strong bones. They also need calcium and vitamins A, C and D to be healthy."

"Oh no!" the cows all said.

As soon as they said that, the Farmer came out with his Stable Hand. They both led the cows to a big building that wasn't there before. On the door was a big sign painted in white letters. It read Parlor. All of the cows were getting nervous now. They directed the cows into the building. There was all the stainless steel in the building. Each of the cows were put into individual slots. Each cow had something hooked to her udder with a tube coming out of it. The farmer flipped a switch and the cows began to get milked by the machine.

All at once the cows stared ahead and started to talk again. It was all a big misunderstanding. They were going to get milked, just not by the farmer or the stable hand. From now on they will all get milked from the parlor and love it!

Second Place (Seventh-Grade Student)

Hanging Around
By Robyn Suzuki
Smith River School
Don Steinruck, Teacher
Del Norte County

My life as an olive started out as a tiny little rootstock buried beneath the ground. After a couple of months my roots had started to grow and my stem came out from the ground. A year and a half later my roots had been planted firmly in to the soil. Different creatures, especially earthworms which bring me nutrients, always visit my roots. Now my trunk is growing and my branches stretch higher towards the bright blue sky.

Two years and a couple of months have passed and my sturdy tree house is growing more branches every day. My leaves collect sunlight and my roots collect nutrients from the farmer's fertilizer. When three years have passed my tree house has grown lots of tiny, cute, round green buds. I'm the very top one and I'm very proud to be at the top of my family tree.

Four years and three months have come and gone since I was a tiny rootstock. All of the buds, including myself have grown into a beautiful pink blossom. Bees come by every day, since this is the first Spring that my tree has bloomed with flowers. The bees are so fuzzy that it tickles me, as they buzz around. When I first saw the blossoms appearing I knew that I would soon have lots of friends to talk to.

The bees have finished pollinating the blossoms. Now that it is summer the days are longer and hotter, but I don't notice the heat at all. The farmer doesn't water my tree as much since I enjoy the heat and don't need as much water. The blossoms on my tree have turned into fruit, and we are getting greener and bigger each day. Soon we will be ripe enough to be harvested and taken away from our home sweet home.

A week or two later, I woke up to a sudden, gigantic banging. I could feel the vibrations flowing from trunk to my branches and down to me tips of my leaves. I was a bit shocked, but I realized that we were ripe for the picking. Our entire tree was banged and in a matter of minutes we were all knocked off and sent sliding down a big blue tarp. We were dumped into crates and shipped off to a processing plant. It was cool inside and very shady. My family and I enjoyed the first minute of our trip, but soon after we started, we were rolling all over each other.

Once inside the plant, we were dumped into a tub of freezing cold water. It was so cold that I shivered all over. I was put into a big container filled with a lye curing brine that helped me change from my wondrous green color to my new black shiny self. I was shocked that my skin had changed. Right after my second bath, I was put into a bin where I saw lots of similar sized and colored olives. We had a lot to talk about and then I saw a lot of shiny metal cans.

Suddenly, I was grabbed along with many others and stuffed into a can surrounded by cold brine. Then the lights went out and it became very dark and quiet. I felt that we were constantly on the move and after some time we came to a rest.

After many restful months, we felt ourselves being picked up from our resting-place and on the move again. A couple of hours later, we were at rest again and we sat all alone in our tin can. I was happier on the tree, but I knew I was here for a reason. Many days later, I finally saw the light. Some of us were chopped up for homemade pizzas. Others became toppings for a taco fiesta.

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I finally realized that I was used everywhere in thousands of ways. Even as I speak, I am on a child's thumb watching a party, while four other olives are on the child's other fingers. We are dying for the chance to be eaten on such a happy occasion. Looking back on my life I now know why I was picked. I realize that many other olives are being propagated, nurtured, harvested, packed, sold and eaten just like me. I am proud to be an olive, because I know that I am an important commodity to California, just like apples and grapes.

Imagine this... Story Writing Contest – 2002 State Winning Stories

Honorable Mention (Fourth-Grade)

Halloween Harvest
By Cassandra Barwis
Louisiana Schnell School
Dee Desmond, Teacher
El Dorado County

Honorable Mention (Sixth-Grade Student)

For the Farm
By Orion Day
Sonora Elementary School
Marlene Dotur, Teacher
Tuolumne County

Honorable Mention (Eighth-Grade Student)

Tomato Jones and the Temple of Fruit
By David McCray
Gladys Poet-Christian School
Veronica Bens, Teacher
San Joaquin County