

Third Grade

Airborne
By Blake Vierra
Maxwell Elementary School
Dena Lausten, Teacher
Colusa County

Early one spring morning, Michael heard a loud rumbling noise. He sat up in his bed and said, "What's making all that noise?" He looked out the window and saw a bright yellow plane. The plane was going back and forth over the fields. Something was falling from the plane, it looked like rain.

After a couple of minutes, the pilot landed the plane on the airstrip by Michael's house. Michael ran out to the airstrip to talk to the pilot.

"Wow! What kind of plane is that?"

The pilot climbed out of the cockpit and said, "Hi, My name is Timmy and this is a crop duster. Crop dusters are used to plant seeds, fertilize crops, and spray weeds and pests. Would you like to go for a ride with me?"

Michael excitedly replied, "Hold on! I'll ask my mom." Michael came running out and told Timmy he could go. A big truck was filling up the plane. Michael asked, "What are you filling up with?" Timmy explained that they were using a loader truck to fill up the hopper with seeds. Michael wanted to know if they loaded anything besides seeds. Timmy answered, "Sometimes we fill it full of fertilizer for the crops or we fill up with pesticides to spray for pests." They jumped into the cockpit and buckled up. After they buckled themselves in, both of them put on helmets. Timmy turned the crop duster on and took off. He had to watch out for trees, telephone poles, and other planes.

Timmy told Michael not to touch anything. Michael asked, "how do you steer the plane?"

"The crop duster is steered by a joystick. If you pull back, the plane goes up. If you push it forward, the plane goes down. Push to the left and we go left and same goes for the right." They flew back and forth over the field. Timmy opened and shut the gate lever. He did that so the seeds would fall out of the hopper. After a couple of fields, Timmy shut the gate lever.

Michael asked Timmy what the little television screen was doing in a cockpit. Timmy explained that it was a satellite. A satellite helps the pilot line up the plane in the correct position. It also helps a pilot make sure that he hasn't overlapped or skipped any part of the field.

Timmy called Michael's mom and told her to meet them at the hanger. When they got back to the hanger they parked the crop duster inside the building. Michael jumped out and said, "Thanks, Timmy, I'll never forget that I went for a ride in your crop duster!"

Fourth Grade

Super Baling Man
By Rebecca White
Williams Middle School
Angela Stephens, Teacher
Colusa County

Super Baling Man bails alfalfa hay. Whenever he goes baling, he sings his song.

It goes like this:

Baling, Baling, Baling
Get those balers baling
Through wind and rain and weather
I'll get those bales together!

One day Super Baling Man stopped and talked to me while he was waiting for the hay to cure. He taught me about baling alfalfa.

"To bale alfalfa," he said, "you need to remember these things."

--"But, what *is* baling?" I asked.

"Baling is a process of dehydration. This is so the grass or hay doesn't rot. You can keep it stored for a long time so that your animals can eat all year round. You can think of the bale as a kind of package."

"Oh, kind of like a raisin?" I asked.

"Yeah, kind of like a raisin," Super Baling Man said. "You need to dry the alfalfa, but not too much. This drying process is called curing. The sun dries the alfalfa. This puts Vitamin D in it. If the alfalfa gets too dry, the leaves will fall off. That is why you need to bale with a little bit of moisture in the hay. You need between 14% and 22% moisture in order to bale. If the alfalfa is too wet, it will rot in the bale!"

"Why does it matter if the leaves fall off?" I asked.

"Then, no animal will want to eat it. Most of the nutrition in alfalfa is in the leaves," Super Baling Man explained.

A few days later, Super Baling Man was sick. He told me I had to bale the alfalfa before the big storm hit. "It's all up to you, Rebecca," he pleaded.

I got everything together to get ready to bale. I got on my goggles and coat. I loaded the truck with twine and fuel. I headed out to the field. The sky was turning black. I knew I had to hurry.

When I got there, I checked if the alfalfa was cured. I picked it up and felt it with my hands. I could tell it was ready. I got on the tractor and baled a few bales. I looked in back of me and saw some bales of alfalfa.

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I stopped the tractor and went back to check the bales. I first went to see how long they were with the tape measure. It was 47 inches. Perfect! I then checked the moisture with my tester. It was 20%. Perfect! I took off on the tractor again and started baling. When I was done, it had already been an hour. The storm was almost here! I called for a harrow bed to pick up the bales and stack them in the barn. I had saved the day, just in time.

I hopped in my truck and told Super Baling Man that I had finished. He was really proud of me and told me that when he dies, I will be Super Baling Woman!

Fifth Grade

Vegetable Stars
By Loris Mousessian
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Sherri Downer, Teacher
Los Angeles County

Smaegle, the onion, and his friends go to Vegetable Theatre School. They have to do a play called the "Healthy Veggies." The veggies chosen to do the play are Brock the broccoli, Pat the sweet potato, Gary the garlic, Sid the spinach, Cary the carrot and of course, Smaegle the onion. They are talking among themselves and want to decide who should be the star of the play.

Trying to get everyone's attention, Smaegle said, "I am the healthiest vegetable on earth, so I should be the star." Gary protested, "No, I am the healthiest vegetable." They all started arguing about who is the healthiest vegetable on earth.

"I can help fight many diseases, even cancer!" Smaegle said. "People who eat more onions have nearly 50% less chance of getting cancer than those who eat no onions. In many cultures I am *loved* for adding flavor to variety of dishes."

"Well," Gary said in a bragging voice, "I can help the human body stay healthy and strong *too*. For over 5,000 years I have been valued for my healing powers. I can prevent heart disease, stroke and cancer. I am a *natural* antibiotic."

Then Cary, Pat, Sid and Brock started voicing themselves. "We are healthy, too!"

"So," Cary boasted. "I am *excellent* for the human eyes. I have lots of vitamin A in the form of beta-carotene. My antioxidants slow down the aging process. My juice is considered no less than a miracle juice."

"But I have lots of calcium, protein, folic acid and fiber. I also have plenty of cancer fighting properties," announced Brock.

Pat interrupted, "I am an important source of vitamin A and C, fiber and potassium. I reduce the risk of high blood pressure and stroke. Best of all I am *delicious*."

Sid said, "You all know that *spinach* is the best vegetable on earth because of its great iron, antioxidant and health promoting benefits. I can build strong bones and teeth."

Mrs. Corn, the teacher, heard the commotion and broke their argument. She said, "You are *all* the stars of the play." Everyone looked at each other in amazement. Mrs. Corn continued, "*Every* vegetable is healthy in their own way. The human body needs *every one of you* to stay healthy and strong. You should team up and not argue."

The vegetables thought about what Mrs. Corn had said. They decided to work together and make a great play.

Sixth Grade

No Agriculture
By Eva Healy
Joaquin Moraga School
Ellen Georgi, Teacher
Contra Costa County

The scent of dinner wafted through the air into my bedroom.

"Dinner, Billy," a soft, sweet voice called.

"I'm coming," I yelled.

The TV was shut off and my feet went pitter-pat as I walked into the dining room. A delicious plate of steaming hot chicken was placed in front of me and I was suddenly aware that I was very hungry. I stabbed a piece of chicken and I chewed. Quickly, I was aware that something green was on my fork. I eyed it suspiciously. Oh No! A vegetable! I slammed the fork down. My mother lifted her head and gave me that 'don't you ever do that again' look.

"Mom, I'm not expected to eat that, right?"

"Yes, you are," she stated very clearly.

I slowly and cautiously lifted the fork to my mouth. Now, I'm not normally supposed to make faces at the dinner table, but my eyes were squinted anyway and my mouth looked like I'd just swallowed something sour.

"Drum role!!!! Wow! Tough crowd!"

My jaw dropped and my eyes bulged. The green vegetable was dancing in front of me as if it were on a stage.

"So, I hear you," he pointed directly at me, "don't like vegetables."

"That's me," I replied.

"Well, vegetable hater, I'll show you a life with no vegetables. Actually, I'll show you a life with no agriculture."

"Sure! That'd be great," I replied.

"Okay," said the vegetable.

I felt a sudden spinning sensation, and everything was a blur. When I could finally see, I realized that my house looked exactly the same.

"Hey, vegetable your spell didn't work!"

There was no reply.

"Vegetable?"

So, his spell really worked after all. Cool! I looked around my house and everything was the same. Except for the fact that there was nothing but a vast wilderness surrounding my house, there were no streets or houses. It was like my house had been cut out of the modern world and placed in an ancient time period. Surrounding my home there were small huts made of mammoth bones and skins. I decided to have a snack when my mother emerged. She was carrying a basket and was dressed in skins. My dad followed right behind her carrying a piece of wood tipped with a bone that was carved so that it formed a point.

"Where are you going?" I asked.

"To collect and hunt food," they said in unison.

"Couldn't you just go to the supermarket?" I asked them.

They both looked extremely puzzled.

"You know where we get our food."

They just didn't comprehend. So, they just went on with their day.

"Bye!" they shouted as they walked out the front door. My parents never left me alone, this was sweet! I decided to play a video game and watch TV for a while. Then a couple of hours later my mom came back with a couple of roots, wild fruits, and nuts. My dad was gone for a couple of days though and I was beginning to get worried. Finally, he came back with nothing to eat. He said that the men had come very close to catching a bison but it had escaped. The next morning my dad said that late last night there had been a meeting and since food was scarce three of the strongest hunters would go in search of food. He was one of those men so he left the house very abruptly. He was gone for many, many more days. Finally the other two hunters came back. They told my mother that hunting was very dangerous.

"So," I said.

"Well, your father was trampled by a bison when we were hunting. But, we still didn't get the meat."

They said that they had buried my father and marked his grave with a stone. My mother squeezed me against her chest and hot tears slid down my neck. The next day everyone wore grim faces. My father was greatly missed by the whole village.

More men were sent out to hunt. The village was starving and everyone was pale and thin. I tried to work as hard as I could without enough food, but my eyelids were drooping. While the men were hunting, I remembered how full I had been back at home, and how I had complained because I didn't like how something tasted. Now I'd give anything to eat something. I returned to my work and started to chip bones into sharp points like the one on my father's old spear. Finally, the men returned with a couple of fish, but it was not enough to feed the whole village and I only got a small piece. For another week this continued. The men went hunting and brought back nothing or next to nothing.

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Then I remembered the green vegetable and my stupid wish, I decided that the next day I would beg the green vegetable to take it back. When bright orange and red light filled the sky, I begged and pleaded for the vegetable to turn things back to normal. Finally he agreed. I became nauseous and I had the spinning sensation again and everything was a blur. When I opened my eyes, everything was back to normal. Streets and other houses, not huts, surrounded my house. Also, my dad was back and my parents were dressed normally. I ran up, hugged them both, and I said, "I love you very much."

Smiles filled their faces and we all hugged. I was so glad that we were all together again; things just weren't the same without a father. Then I told them that I was going to Jack's house, but before I did I ate the entire remains of the snacks in the snack cabinet. I ate the little bags of chips and fruit gummies, granola bars and pretzels until I was moderately full. Then I went over to Jack's house and told him the whole story of my adventures. I told him about starving and my dad being gone and about carving tools, but he thought I was nuts. I said good-bye and I left because it was time for dinner. When my family had dinner I secretly thanked God that there was enough food on the table. I then gobbled up my food so fast (even the vegetables) I spilled peas on the floor and my parents thought that I had been starved. Obviously they didn't remember our adventure and I wasn't about to explain. And to this day I eat all the food that's put on my plate.

Seventh Grade

Pig Pride
By Tyler Sweet
Grenada Elementary School
Deb Hoy, Teacher
Siskiyou County

By the time I finished reading my English homework, Homer's *Odyssey*, the fall wind was rattling the kitchen windows. Yikes! It was already getting dark, and I still had chores to do. I zipped up my sweatshirt and headed out the door, double-time, to feed pigs. On my way to the pen, I thought about Homer and some of the amazing things that happened in his stories. Now that author had some imagination: one-eyed giants and a woman named Circe magically turning men into pigs. Yuck! The last thing I'd ever want to be is a pig, rooting around in mud until it came time to be turned into bacon.

I filled three cans with grain and yelled into the wind, "Sui, sui, pig, piggy!" A second later, Yorkshire Fred, Ethel, Aretha, and Bert trotted, snorting, up to the fence. I leaned over the rail and started pouring their dinner into the trough when I heard a loud crack above me. The sound came from a humongous limb snapping off the old oak tree right over my head. I moved away fast, but not far enough to escape the falling branch. Wham! Suddenly I was seeing stars, and then everything went black.

When I woke up, it was daylight, and I was still in the pigpen. My head hurt, so I reached up to rub it with my hoof. My hoof? Whoa! I blinked and checked myself out. Somehow I had a short tail, a potbelly, and four pink stubby legs instead of hands and feet. No doubt about it; I was all pig. "Somebody call 9-1-1," I screamed, but only squeals came out of my snout. Fred, Ethel, Aretha, and Bert surrounded me.

"What's the matter with you, boy?" asked Bert.

"I'm not really a dumb, dirty animal, I'm a kid," I answered, "and this is my worst nightmare ever. Get someone to change me back!"

"Well, I never," huffed a disgruntled Aretha. "Dumb, dirty animals, indeed. We pigs are some of the cleanest and most intelligent animals on the planet!"

"You tell him about pig pride, girl!" said Ethel. "Don't let him get away with thinking we're just the other white meat."

"First of all," continued Aretha, "we pigs have no sweat glands, so we use mud to keep cool. We are as clean as our surroundings allow us to be. You humans think you are all of that and a bowl of corn, but who needs to use deodorant? Not us! You just don't appreciate all we pigs do for you. Why, we have been serving humans for ten thousand years! We even traveled with Christopher Columbus to the New World. Our skins have been used to help heal severe wounds, especially deep burns, for hundreds of years! Because our anatomy is like yours, students dissect our cardiovascular system to learn how it works, and our heart valves have been transplanted to humans. Our sensitive noses are used to find special mushrooms. We bond with humans, and we learn to pose on command at county fairs to please you, but do we get credit for that?"

"No way, Aretha," Bert interrupted. "Most people only think of our sweet meat: port chops, loin roasts, holiday hams, bacon and sausage, but our feet and snouts are also pickled and served every day. Special dishes made

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from pork are world famous: Sweet and Sour pork in China, Hungarian Goulash, chitlin's and barbequed ribs in the deep South. And what would a Hawaiian luau be without roast suckling pig?"

"Right on, Bert!" snorted Ethel. "Almost every part of a pig is used for some kind of human or animal food, other products such as fine leather wallets, and medicines."

"We pigs do so much for you humans. All we ask for in return is clean fresh water, food, enough living space, and a little R-E-S-P-E-C-T," sniffled Aretha. We are sensitive creatures!"

"Tyler, wake up, son!"

I looked up at my dad and then at myself. "Dad, I'm human again!"

"Um, okay son. That's a nasty bump on your head. Let's check it out at the hospital."

As dad picked me up and put me into the pickup, I tried telling him about our talking pigs, but he didn't seem to get it. Anyway, I was never going to look at pigs without thinking about what they said. As we pulled away, I looked back at the pen, and I swear Aretha winked at me.

Eighth Grade

Doggie Duties
By Brianna Edlund
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Christie Curtis, Teacher
Los Angeles County

"What did you bring, Jasper?"

"I brought my favorite squeaky toy. Here, try it." Squeak! Squeak!

"This is fun! How about you Cassie, what did you bring?"

"I managed to snag a few table scraps. Sierra, they're for later!"

"Who cares?"

"All right you pigs; scoot over."

A few minutes later found the three, two-year-old dogs sprawled out on the floor, full and content.

"Who has a story to tell?"

"I do."

"Go for it, Cassie."

"Ok, before I start, you have to know that California produces half of the nation's fruit."

"Why do we have to know that?"

"I'm getting there, Sierra! As I was saying, a beagle named Angel was donated to a group called APHIS (Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service). She had to take a temperament test, which she passed, to allow her to go to a special training school. At the school, she was taught how to sniff for illegal items."

"For what kind of illegal items did she sniff?"

"Good question Jasper. She was taught to sniff for fruit, vegetables, and meat."

"Why?"

"Remember when I told you that California produces half of the United States' fruit? Well, if pests get into foreign fruit and lay eggs, and if that fruit is taken onto a plane and carried to California, the pest is spread."

"How does it spread?"

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"You know how eating buggy fruit repulses humans. If a tourist brings a bug-filled apple onto the plane without knowing it, when he does bite into it and discovers the bugs, he'll throw it away. Some of the bugs might survive, and before we know it, they're all over the place."

"Go on with the story, Cassie."

"When she graduated from the training school, she was matched up with a partner right here in Los Angeles."

"Where did she work?"

"I'm getting there, Sierra. She and her partner worked at the international terminal of Los Angeles International Airport, searching people's baggage for illegal agricultural products. For the next few years everything went well and she helped her partner confiscate hundreds of fruit. But then, she realized that work wasn't fun anymore. Her partner immediately noticed and decided to retire her. She was adopted by a family that already had a beagle. The minute she was brought to her new home, my dad ran out to greet her. They've been close ever since."

"Your dad is friends with her! What does your mom think?"

"Angel is my mom."

"Cool."

"I'll second that, Sierra. But, if they use small dogs at the airport, what about the rest of us dogs who aren't exactly beagle-sized. Can we still sniff at the airport?"

"Unfortunately, I think you're too big. If they started using big dogs, some people would be too scared, but you could work in the post office."

"Doing what?"

"They use big dogs to climb on the conveyer belts."

"Why would they want us on the conveyer belts?"

"To do the same thing I'm doing. You sniff for agricultural products that people are sending in the mail."

"That sounds interesting."

"Cassie, what about the dogs that are medium sized?"

"Well, you could work at the border, Sierra."

"Which border, and why do they need sniffers at the border sniffing for agricultural products?"

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"The United States/Mexican border; and, they need sniffers because people bring agricultural products with them to eat while they're driving across the border. Or sometimes, people try to purposely sneak fruit into California to cause diseases and pests to spread."

"What are you talking about, kids?"

"Hi, Mom!"

"Hi, Cassie, Jasper, Sierra."

"Angel, is it true you used to be a search dog at LAX?"

"Yes, Sierra, a very long time ago."

"What was it like? Are you sorry you were retired early?"

"I'm not sorry about my retirement, but sometimes, when I'm bored, I think about what I would have been doing if I was still working. It was a fun job. And people seemed to really enjoy having us around the airport, even if we were sniffing their luggage."

"How did your partner know when you found an agricultural product?"

"I was trained to sit as close as possible to the piece of baggage. When my partner saw me doing that, she would inspect the luggage, and then confiscate whatever agricultural product was in it."

"Oh! Cassie, I almost forgot why I came down. You were accepted into the training school. You begin training next month."