

Third Grade

Cow vs. Farmer
By Andrew Moss
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One day the farmer heard the cows whispering in the field. He thought maybe they were having a secret cow meeting, but then he thought that seemed so silly so he got back to work. The very next morning there was a knock on the door. He was surprised to open the door and see Alyssa, one of his favorite cows. She needed to talk to him so he invited her inside. They sat down facing each other and began their talk.

Cow: "The other cows and I have been talking and we think a few things need to change around here."

Farmer: "Okay, I'm listening."

Cow: "Every day we cows do the same thing. We get up, walk to the pasture, graze on the grass, and give you 6 or 7 gallons of milk. We decided we want to have more fun around the farm. We want a party every Friday night with "Moosic" and "Moovies." We also want video games in the barn and a swingset and trampoline in the field."

Farmer: "Are you cows crazy? I already do everything for you! I make sure you have lots of food in the silo to eat, lots of water to drink, I help take care of your babies, and give you a place to live. I even cut back your hooves when they get too big and you can't walk."

Cow: "We love the food and the water and we thank you for helping our babies and for our home and for taking care of us, but we deserve more. Our milk helps to make cheese, ice cream, sour cream, butter, cottage cheese, yogurt, and lots of other things. How would you like to eat your cereal with water? Is it too much to ask you to warm up the machines before you put them on our udders? Those are cold!"

Farmer: "Oh brother. Do I have to remind you that you are cows!! I will not do any of those things."

Cow: " Then you leave us no choice Mr. Farmer. We will see you in court!"

With that, Alyssa stomped her hooves out the door. The farmer was left sitting there in shock. Two weeks later they won and he was in the barn and in the pasture installing everything. The cows were happy.

Fourth Grade

The Best Buffet Ever
By Brenna Gittins
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One dark night a silent spaceship glided over California. After it landed in a big hay field, two strangers walked out. They wiped their brow with their fingers, which looked surprisingly like forks, knives, spoons, and napkins.

"We have finally arrived in Cal-i-forn-i-a!"

"Yes, Marsy. It was a long and hard trip from our home planet Tummyummy."

"Well Barsy, it is now time to explore and EAT! We came to Cal-i-forn-i-a because there are over 350 agricultural products made in this state. We should be able to go and find lots of things to eat."

"Let's go and search out the top commodities of Cal-i-forn-i-a and eat our way through the state!"

So the two aliens set off on their feasting adventure.

The first place they stopped was Merced. Many milk cows live in that part of the state producing lots of dairy products. While the average Californian drinks 22 gallons of milk and eats almost 30 pounds of cheese in a year, the aliens managed to eat all of this in one hour! Wiping their mouths with their napkin "fingers" they turned to each other and Marsy said, "I'm still hungry and thirsty, Barsy."

"Marsy, let's keep on going. How about we try some grapes in the beautiful Napa Valley? Cal-i-forn-i-a grows over 300,000 tons of grapes each year. There should be enough grapes for us."

"Okay Barsy, I know they use the grapes to make grape juice, table grapes and wine. Grapes sound juicy and good to eat."

"Let's go!"

The aliens turned on their rocket boots and soared northwest to the valley. The minute they got there they began to pop down eight pounds of grapes, which is the amount that one person eats in a year. But, they still weren't full.

"I am still starving, Barsy. Let's go to Stockton and munch on some tomatoes."

"Okay Marsy. I know that Cal-i-forn-i-a provides over half of the worlds canned tomato products. I am not sure I can eat that much."

"Well, I think we can fit it in our stomachs if we only eat the tomatoes and not the cans."

"Ha-ha. Good one Barsy!"

Powering up their boots, they traveled east and filled up on red, juicy, healthy tomatoes.

Marsy patted his round belly. "I am starting to fill up, but there is still room for some more red items."

Barsy licked the tomato seed off her spoon "finger" and replied, " Well, Marsy, how about some San Diego strawberries. Fire up those boots, that's a long fly south!"

When they arrived in San Diego, a warm breeze blew across the sandy soil of the strawberry field. The buddies began to eat and eat and eat! They managed to eat 126 pounds of strawberries. Most Californians take a year to eat that much fruit. The aliens were beginning to get full, their bellies wobbled and they turned their boots towards the Sacramento Valley.

"We came to Sacramento because there are some fresh, crunchy almonds here," said Marsy.

"Yes, almonds are the largest food export in Sacramento. I can't wait to eat them!" said Barsy.

After they were all done eating the almonds, they realized that they were hungry for more protein. "I think we should have some beef and chicken to round out our feast, Marsy. Let's head to the San Joaquin Valley for some delicious meat."

The two friends were so happy to sample the meat that they ended up eating 184 pounds of chicken and beef. That is how much an average person eats in a year.

As the aliens dragged themselves away from the beef, they turned towards each other and smiled. "Barsy, eating our way across Cal-i-forn-i-a was the BEST idea we ever had!"

"Yes, Marsy, this state is like a fantastic all-you-can-eat buffet, and I think we have eaten all we can eat!"

"Me too!"

As the sun began to peek over the land, Marsy and Barsy headed for their space ship. Bellies dragging on the ground, they climbed aboard their ship.

Then Marsy fastened the door, and the spacecraft slowly lifted off the ground taking the contented aliens back to Tummyummy. Looking out the window, they checked to make sure they had left two giant circles in the hay field to say thank you to all the Californians for the nutritious and delicious food.

Fifth Grade

The Journey of Wallace Waterdrop
By Bo Cherry
Arbuckle Elementary School
Debra Scott, Teacher
Colusa County

Hey! Wallace the Waterdrop here, coming to you from beautiful California... wait a minute. I'm getting ahead of myself. I don't want to tell you where I'm at until I tell you the story of how I came to be here. Sit back, enjoy your favorite beverage (maybe it's a glass of ice water), and listen to the tale of my life!

You'll never guess where I started this journey. I was water vapor, hanging around the atmosphere, just minding my own business. Suddenly, I felt myself becoming heavier and colder, and I began falling from the sky! I thought, "Hey! What's going on here?" But before I knew it, I had landed in a stream that carried me to the Sacramento River in northern California. It was a pretty cool place to be. There were a bazillion other waterdrops to visit with. I saw rainbow trout splashing around, aquatic insects zipping on the river's surface, and lots of waterfowl. There was nothing much for a drop of water to do, except float around. That is, until gravity pulled me downstream!

I found myself floating through a huge lake called Lake Shasta. If I had landed here 100 years ago, the lake wouldn't have been here, and I would have just been carried into the Bay of San Francisco where my journey would have ended. But in 1937, a dam was commissioned that allowed Lake Shasta to be formed. The purposes of Lake Shasta's dam were flood control, power generation, and irrigation. Not to mention, recreation! There were lots of people swimming, boating, and fishing on the huge lake. It seemed like a good place to hang out, but I wanted to do something more meaningful than be recreational water. I definitely didn't want to end up in somebody's swimming pool! I wanted to be used to raise crops! So, I let myself go over the spillway.

I found myself in a bigger version of the Sacramento River. This one was headed towards farming country in the Sacramento Valley, right where I wanted to go!

While I was floating downstream I thought about what crop I wanted to help produce. I knew I needed to keep watch for the perfect crop. One day while I was bobbing along I found myself being diverted into an irrigation canal. I knew the time was coming close.

While in the canal, I flowed past all sorts of interesting farms and crops. I saw orchards of all sorts. Rice fields were everywhere. But none of those interested me. I had my sights on finding a tomato field.

One day, I felt myself being pulled from the canal by a pump. I realized it was finally time to help produce a crop. I just hoped it would be my dream: tomatoes! Sure enough, I caught a glimpse of the green leaves and small red fruits of the tomato plants. I had arrived, and not a moment too soon! Those tomatoes needed me!

So here I am, the water needed to help produce an important crop in the sunny state of California. I am so excited to help produce such a healthy fruit! Did you know that tomatoes have lots of vitamins A and C? They have high potassium, and they are very good for people. Some things in tomatoes have been found to help fight cancer! That's why I am so proud to have helped produce some of the over 10 million tons of tomatoes in California. One day I even noticed some of the field workers were eating their lunch, and they had a bottle of ketchup! I couldn't help feeling proud that maybe it came from some of my tomatoes!

Imagine this... Story Writing Contest – 2006 State Winning Stories

So, in the future, when you are enjoying your favorite spaghetti sauce, think of me, Wallace the Waterdrop, and remember my amazing journey to the California tomato fields.

Sixth Grade

A Scarecrow's Diary
By Samantha Coombs
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Colusa County

"Hi, Mr. Scarecrow here! I was wondering if you wanted to be in on a little secret? Yesterday, I looked into my pocket and there laid a notebook that said "diary". I read a couple pages and it seems to be about the vegetable called "corn." If you get yourself seated, I won't mind reading for a while. Perhaps that's why farmer Bill put his diary in my pocket, because there's something really important he wants me to read. So, it all starts on one cold morning on!

The 26th of April

It started out as I chose a spot in the full sun and enough humas so the ground will not dry out in hot weather. Then I checked to make sure the topsoil was deep and very fertile. I was careful not to bring the clay to the surface and also a good grade of compost into the soil. For my best results, I planted the corn in a rectangle shape of at least four rows. This might help me not only to insure pollination, but also provide some wind protection to the crop. Then I sowed the seeds directly into the ground. While I was doing the next process, which was protecting your seedlings, I discovered scarecrows would protect my corn from crows.

"No wonder I've been standing here for about six months!" said Mr. Scarecrow. "It's my job to protect the corn from the crows. I see now. I have been letting my friend Mr. Crow borrow my corn. Farmer Bill might have seen this, so he put his diary in my pocket so I could learn what I was meant for."

"Hi there, Mr. Scarecrow, I couldn't help over hearing about this diary and wanted to know if I may join in?"

"Well why not! Just, take a seat here."

"First, I have a question," said Mr. Crow. "How do you harvest corn?"

"Good question, OK let's see here... It all depends on what kind of corn, but here the yellow sweet (which is the regular corn we eat off cobs) is usually harvested from about early August to mid-October. Each plant will produce several harvestable cobs. If a watery liquid squirts out from the kernel the ear is unripe. If the discharge is creamy the ear is prime for harvesting. Whereas if the liquid is thick and somewhat solid, I'm sorry, you have waited too long to harvest. Carefully twist the ripe ear from the plants stem, being careful not to injure the plant. Harvest just before you intend to cook the corn." "Speaking of corn," said Mr. Crow, "may I borrow a few cobs?"

"I'm sorry Mr. Crow but I can't. I'm protecting the corn from crows or other birds. That's what I'm meant for."

"Oh. OK I've got to go, see you tomorrow."

"OK," said Mr. Scarecrow.

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Last, storage is necessary for the corn to stay fresh. Corn can stay in your refrigerator for up to three days, but can also be frozen in freezer bags. I had a nice time but now it is time to go: see you soon.

Seventh Grade

Rice Ready
By Cheyenne Rogers
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Colusa County

There was a farmer named Bo, and there was a lot of chaos down at the farm. Every worker was fighting about who had the most important job.

The chaos started on a bright Monday morning. All of the workers were waiting for farmer Bo to tell them where to go. While they were waiting, the ground workers got together and began to talk. Felix and Roberto started to talk and Felix, the chiseler, said, "I have the most important job because I chisel up all of the ground."

Then Roberto, the discer, said, "No, I have the most important job because I break up all the big chunks of dirt."

Then, Nelson, the tri-plane operator, came up and said, "You may have to chisel and disc but I have to make all the ground smooth so I have the most important job."

After that Ray came up and said, "No, I have the most important job because I have to fertilize the checks so there aren't any weeds in the rice."

The irrigator, Jorge, came up and said, "I have the most important job because I have to measure how much water goes into each check."

Then Frankie M., the planter, came up and said, "Just because you have to fertilize or watch how much water? I have to fly a plane and plant the seed!"

Then with everybody else complaining, Nacho, the harvest driver, came up and said, "I have the most important job because I have to carefully cut the rice."

Next Amanda, the bank out driver, came up and said, "No, I have the most important job because I have to unload the harvester then load it into the trailers."

Then the truck driver, Ronnie, came up and said, "I have the most important job because I have to take the trailers to the mill and bring the trailers back."

Then on top of everything else, Jim who runs the chopper came up and said, "I have the most important job because I have to cut all the leftover straw and weeds."

Then the burner, Pedro, came up and said, "No, I have the most important job because I have to burn all the leftover straw from the chopper."

Finally farmer Bo showed up and Amanda asked who has the most important job in getting rice ready?" Farmer Bo replied, "You all have to work together to get the job done." Then all the workers realized that they have to work together to get the rice ready to make it to the grocery store.

Eighth Grade

Honey Bzzz
By Amelia Clyatt
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I wake up, the wax feeling warm about me. Unwilling to leave my cuddly nest, I curl up again. My attempt is in vain, for just as I close my eyes, the Queen's voice rings out strong and clear.

"Wake up my workers, time to get busy!!!"

When I was first born, I used to think the Queen's voice was beautiful and comforting. I was a larva and spent my days sleeping in my bed dreaming of being a worker.

Now, I climb out of my waxy bed and peer out of the yellowish hive into the meadow beyond. One day soon I will fly there. For now, I am surrounded by buzzing and the slow familiar whirl of sleepy wings.

My name is Jafina and I am a three week old house bee. My job is to do all the work around the hive. First, I have to feed the worker larvae their "Royal Jelly," which is a mix of pollen and honey made by the younger house bees. I only feed them for the first 24 hours of their lives. Then the younger bees take over. Today I'm also feeding a young drone who will grow up much bigger than the workers so I feed him a special mixture that has almost no pollen and looks milky. He will eventually mate with the Queen.

As I am working I notice a larva is being born! I can see her egg case rippling and break open. I hover there, watching as she crawls, looking indistinctly around. She is smooth white and sausage shaped. I think she is beautiful.

After feeding, I am off to make the combs. My wax-glands work super-fast. I shape the combs and expand the hive by making tons of new six-sided cells.

My next job is to meet the field bees who bring the nectar to the hive. I relieve them of the nectar, remove the moisture by fanning it really fast with my wings "whoosh, whoosh," then seal it up in a cell with a thin layer of wax. This mixture turns into delectable honey! Now my day is done and tomorrow I become a FIELD BEE!

"Good morning, good morning!" I hear the Queen calling. "Today my daughter Jafina becomes a field bee!" She smiles and taps me with her antenna.

"Th...thank you," I mutter shyly. My moment is interrupted by a tap by the main field bee named Gloria. Gloria is larger, stronger and smarter than any of the other field bees.

"Welcome to the crew, Jafina! For your first five trips, bring pollen. For your last five, bring nectar. Each trip should take about an hour. Watch the sun to gauge the time."

Suddenly, another bee flies up, "Scout Fiona reporting! Permission to proceed dancing?"

Captain Gloria nods. Scout Fiona starts the "Round Dance." She circles one way, then the other. This dance means the flowers are close to the hive, somewhere within 100 meters.

We follow Scout Fiona, but soon spread out once we know where the flowers are. I turn my mind to the task ahead. I look for a heavily pollinated flower, like a tulip. I fly down into it, the yellow powder sticking to my pollen sacks on my back legs. Once this flower is harvested, I am off to the next.

It has been five hours of collecting pollen, and I drop off my last pollen load. During break, Fiona shows me the "Tail Wagging" dance. Fiona flies in a half circle one direction, then turns and flies forward in a line while wagging her tail and then does another half circle. The tail-wagging part is to show what direction the flowers are. The number of times she wags her tail in those fifteen seconds shows how far away the flowers are. Pretty cool!

Now I have to find nectar. Nectar can be found in flowers like daffodils and geraniums. The nectar is as easy to get as the pollen: I just suck it up. I mix it with saliva and store it in my honey sacks. Once my honey sacks are full, I go back to the hive and transfer the nectar tongue-to-tongue with a house bee. Then I'm off again. Well, I better leave you now. A field bee's life is BZZZZZZY!