

Third Grade

The Best Orange Tree Ever
By Hanna Bopp
Kerman-Floyd Elementary
Margaret Nichols and Michelle Karagozian, Teachers
Fresno County

Long ago, a small town named Kermanas had a gathering for everyone who lived there. The mayor had an idea: it was to grow one big orange tree. He believed this would make the town's people happy.

The adults and children of the small town worked on planting the orange tree. They were hot and tired and the children had to take breaks to cool off. The people decided to make orange juice for everyone. They realized they would use all the oranges they grew to make the juice, so they cut their oranges open and saved the seeds.

They squeezed their oranges into huge jugs. That's how they made orange juice for everyone. The town's people loved the fresh orange juice!

The mayor heard about this and he was thrilled. He thought of another good idea. He explained to the people of Kermanas, "We will make orange juice for everyone!"

The town's people searched for the best place to grow their orange grove. They found a great spot with good soil, water, and sunlight. All the people who had orange seeds grabbed their bags of seeds and started to plant them. They waited for many seasons to go by. That's when they saw for the very first time a beautiful white blossom on an orange tree.

Green fruit appeared on the trees. The town's people said, "Those are not the color of oranges." The mayor replied, "We will wait until the oranges grow bigger." The town's people waited anxiously for the fruits to ripen.

One morning the children awakened to find big, juicy fruit on the trees. They looked big, orange, and juicy. The children went to find the mayor to tell him that the oranges were ready.

The people of Kermanas picked the big, round, juicy oranges. They were so happy they had something with fiber, vitamins, and minerals. They had a grand festival in their town. People from other towns came and celebrated, too.

All the different mayors from all the other towns talked about buying Kermanas oranges. Kermanas sold its oranges to the other towns, but they kept their seeds. The empty fields soon became large orange groves.

Kermanas is like California. It grows fruit and vegetables. These foods keep us strong and healthy. We rely on the fruits and vegetables to help California grow and keep us working.

Fourth Grade

Farmer's Pride in Feeding America
By Mckenzie Carvalho
Maxwell Elementary
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Colusa County

Yum, when I bite into a scrumptious watermelon on a hot summer day, I can't wait until I get another slice! I need a juicy, watery snack in the summer and watermelons are perfect! Watermelons are more than 90 percent water. In ancient times, travelers used them as transportable water. That's the secret behind the watermelon's name.

One of my chores at home is to help Mom unload groceries from the car. I can never unload the watermelons because they are too heavy. The good thing is my mom or dad can carry them in.

By weight, watermelons are the most eaten melon in the United States, followed by the cantaloupe and honeydew. There are many watermelons grown in the world, so we'll never run out of those scrumptious, juicy melons.

So, Farmer Justin, don't forget: plant, plant, plant those watermelons!

Farmer Justin is a friend of mine and he lives just down the street. One of the crops he plants is watermelons, so I know he's the perfect person to help me plant a watermelon garden.

"Farmer Justin," I shouted with joy. "Maybe we can go buy some watermelon seeds and plant them in my backyard."

"OK," said Farmer Justin.

So we got in his truck and off we went to buy some watermelon seeds.

I was so excited when we got to the store. I immediately began searching and searching for the seeds. Finally I found them! I was on my way to pay for them when Farmer Justin suggested that I buy a garden hose to water the seeds after they're planted. I quickly found a hose and then ran to pay for my stuff.

Farmer Justin and I then drove back to my house to plant my watermelon seeds. While we were planting the seeds, Farmer Justin asked me, "Do you know what food group the watermelon is in?"

"The fruit group," I said.

"No, that's not right. The watermelon is in the vegetable group. It is a member of the cucumber family and also a member of the gourd family," he said.

"I can't believe it!" I replied. "I can't wait to tell my mom. She thinks I don't eat enough vegetables!"

When we finished planting the seeds, I hooked up my new hose and watered them. I couldn't wait for them to start growing!

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Day by day, I watched them grow. First, they sprouted and vines started to grow.

Before I knew it, small flowers began to bloom on the vines. Then, presto! Baby watermelons began to grow. I watched them get bigger and bigger every day.

After three to four months of growing, the watermelons were about ready to pick, so I called Farmer Justin.

"The watermelons are ready to pick," I shouted.

"I'm on my way," he replied.

When we were finished picking them, Farmer Justin and I shared a slice of watermelon. I was so proud to have grown my own watermelons and could now eat them and share them with my family and friends. No wonder farmers have so much pride in feeding America!

Fifth Grade

The Swap
By Chance Holley
Chatom Elementary
Nancy Harris, Teacher
Stanislaus County

Once there were two villages on an island named Paoala. One village was a fishing village and the other was a farming village. For over 100 years, the villages had been feuding. Each village felt that they were better than the other. Once a week the villages would swap fresh vegetables and fruit for fish.

The fishing town was called Ocean View. They believed that fishing was more important. The farming town was called Croppingdale. They believed that farming was more important.

Ocean View's mayor, Mr. Thomas, had a young son named James. His job was to take fresh fish to a remote road every week.

Croppingdale's mayor, Mr. Bernard, had a young son named John. His job was to take fresh fruit and vegetables to the same remote road every week.

At this meeting, the two boys would swap produce and fish. This went on for many years. The boys had become best friends even though it was against their father's wishes. Each time they met, they would visit and have lunch together.

One year, terrible storms came to the island. Fish was scarce and crops were destroyed. Each week when the two boys met, they had less and less to swap. Both towns were starving. Neither of the mayors would agree to a meeting to discuss the situation. Both the boys looked forward to their meetings and shared with each other the devastation both towns were experiencing.

On one meeting day, the boys were sitting visiting with each other. James brought a fish and John brought a tomato. They gobbled up the fish and the tomato and then threw the bones and seeds on the side of the road.

The following week there was a steady rain. Upon their return the next week, the boys noticed that plants were starting to grow alongside their meeting place. Once again, the boys sat down for lunch. James once again brought a fish and John brought an ear of corn. Once again, they gobbled up their lunch and threw the bones and the cob on the side of the road.

With each week, the two boys had less food to bring to the swap. Yet, they both noticed that their meeting place had plants growing where they were throwing their scraps. The boys realized that if you plant fish and seeds together, the plants grew well.

The boys started putting the pieces together: The fish had minerals that nourished the seeds. The boys began purposely planting seeds and fish bone together. They both agreed to speak to their fathers and convince them to come to the meeting place. This was the boys' chance to break the long feud between the villages!

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When the boys each approached their fathers, both fathers were angry. Neither could believe that the two boys were friends. As punishment, they were no longer allowed to make the food swap. Each father decided to make the swap on his own.

When the two mayors met for the weekly swap at the spot where the boys had been planting seeds and fish, they were shocked. The tomatoes were big and plump. The corn was tall and sweet. While nothing else could survive, the two boys had worked together using their resources to create wonderful fruits and vegetables. The two mayors looked down in shame. Instead of working together, they had been stubborn and their villages were paying the price for this mistake.

The two mayors agreed to put their differences aside and work together. From then on, the villagers never got hungry, no matter how bad the season. The boys also

Sixth Grade

It's Not Easy Being a Green Teen Drama Queen

By Mackenzie Morton

Yolo Middle School

Sheila Kendall, Teacher

Stanislaus County

Tammy Tomato is excited! This is her first year at Ketchup Junior High. She can't wait to show her friends from last season the leaves she sprouted. This season is going to be her juiciest!

When her mom, Tarrie, dropped her off, she said, "remember, the kids might be different this season. They may have changed on the outside, but it's their tangy insides that matter."

Tammy rolled her eyes. "MAAAWWMM!!!! Please stop worrying!"

Tammy turned on her green bottom and bounced toward school.

Her mother shouted, "Tam Tam! Don't forget! If the temperature goes above eighty, you are to roll yourself into the shade! The last thing you need is to get scalded! An early blight would be awful!"

Tammy yelled back, "MAAAWWMMMM!! I told you not to call me that anymore! GO HOME NOW!"

"I'll leave! SOOORRRYYY!" With a worried look on her face, Tammy's mom finally left.

Tammy shook her stem in frustration. "Thank goodness I'm not like that branch of the family. They are all drama queens! With the way she freaks, you'd think I was going to school with horn worms!"

As she rolled toward class, Tammy noticed every tomato around her looked different. She was shocked, she didn't recognize anyone! The students appeared red, round, and ripe. They looked mature and like the plants in the movies!

Tammy felt like a freak. Panicking, she bounced toward the bathroom. She wasn't going to let anyone see her yellowish-green skin. Everyone seemed to have grown so much, and she had stayed the same.

Tammy thought about all the soil tricks she had used trying to become plump and juicy. She had soaked her roots in straw and grass clippings. She even rolled around in fresh fertilizer and slept with leaf dew on her skin like the Little Miss Tomato magazine had said. It had promised six to eight inches of growth and a thick, stocky stem. She had followed the directions all during vacation! The smell made her sick, and her brother kept calling her Stinky Stems.

Tammy couldn't believe she had spent the first day of middle school hiding in a bathroom stall. It was so boring. She wanted to spend time with her friends, but what if they were ripe and she was the only green tomato left? She couldn't risk the humiliation.

She couldn't wait to get home. Tammy slowly scooted home, trying to figure out what was wrong. She must be the only green tomato left. Tammy thought everyone was supposed to grow the same way. Oh, no, Tammy said to herself. What if she was sick? What if she had ANTHRACNOSE! Her parents had always warned her about the

disease. Oh, gosh! That had to be it! She must have the fungus! Or maybe it was those darn FLEA BEETLES? Could it be BLOSSOM END ROT?

As Tammy reached her patch, she saw her mom waiting by the front vine. Tammy began to sob. "It was awful!" she cried. "Everyone was ripe except for ME! Also, I'm pretty sure I've got the rot or fleas or BOTH!!! And I didn't get to see any of my friends because I spent the whole day hiding in the bathroom!"

Her mother sighed deeply. "And you call ME a drama queen!" she smiled. "First, dear, you are not sick! When you didn't show up for class, the principal called. She said this happens with a lot of junior high tomatoes on the first day."

"Tammy, if you hadn't rolled for the first bathroom when you saw the older tomatoes, you would've noticed that a lot of your friends are still green. They are scared, too! Yes, some of your friends will be ripening and turning red soon as well! It is that time, and one day soon it will be your time. If they are your friends, they won't care what you look like. Give them a chance before hiding in the bathroom. That's just silly, Tam Tam.

"Yeah, not to mention BOOOORING!!!" Tammy agreed. Mom, if I go to class and promise never to hide in the bathroom again, will you stop calling me Tam Tam?"

"Sure!" laughed Tarrie. "Also, if you have a question about ripening, please ask or at least check your father's Farmer's Almanac."

"Sure, Mom!" Tammy giggled. "WOW! Being a green teen, drama queen ain't all that easy!"

Seventh Grade

Marvelous Missy
By Preston Munson
Scott Valley Junior High School
Tracy Dickinson, Teacher
Siskiyou County

Bang! The trailer door slams shut and the shiny aluminum gooseneck trailer starts down the dusty driveway.

I'm Missy, a registered Angus heifer, on my way to the Cow Palace with my brother, Pete. The Cow Palace is a big building in San Francisco, California, and the show is the Grand National. That cattle show is one of the biggest in the western United States and cattle people bring their animals from all over the country to compete.

I am sure you have learned about ranches and cattle before, but I am a little different than your average cow. I have a fancy pedigree and a registration paper to prove it. My paper records have many generations of my family much like a family tree does for humans. Not only do I have a registration paper, my owner, Robbie, says that I am the most beautiful heifer on the ranch.

Robbie has a good eye and evaluates livestock for conformation as a project in the local 4-H club. He tells me I am perfect, but we shall see.

Robbie has worked hard for the last three months to get me ready for my first show. Learning to lead on a halter, daily rinsing of my hair, brushing and showmanship practice has built a lot of trust between us. Yea, I kicked the show stick a few times until I finally got used to Robbie poking me to get my feet set where he wanted them. But, he calls me a pet now, like that silly blue healer dog that follows him everywhere.

After seven hours in the trailer, I'm ready to get to the show. A sharp left turn and the engine on the truck begins to idle. I hear the footsteps coming, the trailer door swings wide open, and Robbie unties and pulls on my lead rope, wanting me to follow.

I look back and see Pete, the reigning Angus bull calf champion at the Palace. He gives me a nod for confidence and off I go.

I saw things on that walk I have never seen before, like sky scrapers and people of every size, shape and color. There are not only people, but other cattle of every size, shape, and color, too—red ones, black and white ones, plain white ones. As we headed to the stalls, I saw to my left a shorthorn that was red and white all over, simply the most colorful heifer I have ever seen in my life, on my right was pure white cattle called Charolais.

When Pete finally got in the stall next to me, I found out that this is a big all-breeds show. Yep, there's more variety than a box of chocolates. If an animal has a registration paper from their breed association, they are eligible to show at the Grand National.

Tied next to me was a Maine Anjou heifer. I commented on her beautiful black and white coat and introduced myself.

"I'm Missy," I said. "This is my first show."

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She giggled, said her name was Rosy, and that she had been to quite a few shows before, but never the Cow Palace. She told me that there were over 50 different breeds of cattle and that 25 of those breeds were at this show. She said the Cow Palace show is so big that it will take a week for all the classes to be shown and the supreme grand champion selected.

Robbie unloaded all the tack—you know, the feed pans, brushes, leather show halters, and such—needed to prepare Pete and me for the show. He mentioned that we would be showing tomorrow.

I will enjoy the nice, soft bed and change of scenery for a few days while we wait for the whole show to finish. I am usually happy as long as Robbie feeds me twice a day. You know, cattle eat about three percent of their body weight in feed a day. For a heifer like me, that is about 15 pounds of food. I also need around 25 gallons of water to stay healthy. That is only about half of what a full grown cow or bull like Pete needs to drink in a day.

It has been a long day and tomorrow is show day. I am so excited. I will have trouble sleeping tonight. Perhaps if I just dream about that purple champion ribbon that Robbie seems to think I will win!

Eighth Grade

Water Flowing Keeps Crops Growing
By Russell Sweet
Grenada Elementary School
Debbi Hoy, Teacher
Siskiyou County

Drip, drop, drip, drop, plop. The leaky faucet was disturbing one member of a sleepover.

"Gee, that's getting really annoying," said Tim, turning over in bed.

"Huh? What's getting annoying?" asked Tuck, sleepily.

"The faucet dripping. Can't you hear that?" Tim answered.

"Oh, that. It always drips. Guess I must be used to the sound. It doesn't bother me. Just put the pillow over your head and go back to sleep," said Tuck.

"I can't," said Tim. "Don't you know how much good water a dripping faucet wastes?"

"No, not really, but it can't be very much," replied Tuck. "If you feel it's that important, get up and turn off the faucet. I'm not getting out of this warm bed for anything but an earthquake or breakfast."

"Important!" Tim said. "You bet it is. Not only do we drink and wash with it, water also puts food on our table. Over time, small drips can add up. At 60 drops per minute, one leaky faucet loses seven gallons a day, or 2,777 gallons a year. That's 55 baths! Try to imagine how much water could be wasted if thousands of houses didn't fix their dripping faucets? Wasting such a great natural resource is criminal!"

"No way," Tuck responded. "Who cares? Doesn't that water just go down the drain and back into the water supply?"

"Well, I suppose that it does get back into the system eventually," said Tim. "But we don't have an endless supply of good water. Think about it. Even though the oceans are filled with water, we can't drink it or use it for irrigation unless we take the salt out of it. We really have to think about how far we have to stretch the good water we have."

"Like how?" Tuck asked.

"In California, it doesn't rain as much as it does in other parts of the United States. We have to depend on rain, melt water, and ground water to irrigate the crops we eat and the crops we sell all over the world. That's a pretty big order because California grows tons and tons of crops, such as lettuce, tomatoes, asparagus, garlic, oranges, grapes, rice, and hay."

"Veggies? I hate veggies. I'm a meat eater. You won't catch me eating a hay salad," Tuck retorted.

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"Ha," Tim laughed. "What do you think cows eat and drink? Hay and water. Without hay and good water, cows couldn't live. That means no steak or milk for you, pal. And, by the way, we use water to produce electricity for homes and industry as well. California uses about 20,000 to 52,000 million gallons of water per day.

"Okay, you made your point," said Tuck. "But I still don't see how leaky faucets affect irrigation water."

"Well," Tim answered, "that wasted water gets taken out of the cycle for a while. In cities, it would have to go to a treatment plant before it could be used again. In the country, it would eventually percolate back down into ground water."

Tim continued, "We need water to be available all the time. A drought causes serious problems because the water supply doesn't get replenished. When we run out of good water, we are in trouble."

"So, are you going to get up and shut off that leaky faucet?" asked Tim.

"I guess so, but I'm pretty sure I wouldn't miss a few of those 55 baths a year," said Tuck with a yawn.

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Honorable Mention (Third-Grade Student)

Title

By

Gratton Elementary School

Sheila Amaral, Teacher

Stanislaus County

Honorable Mention (Third-Grade Student)

Title

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Gratton Elementary School

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