

Third Grade

Who's More Important... Betsy or Todd?

By Dylan Adams

Northwood Elementary

Helen Reavis, Teacher

Napa County

One glorious spring day in Napa, there was a cow and a man on a farm. They had work to do in order to be fed.

The man, whose name was Todd, woke up early in the morning to go milk his favorite cow, Betsy. Todd walked a half mile to his barn and spent 30 minutes getting all of his milking equipment ready for the day.

Unfortunately, Betsy was still asleep. So, Todd rubbed Betsy gently on her shoulder to wake her up. Betsy woke up all right, but she was still very tired and a little grumpy. She wanted to sleep more, but Todd wanted to get his job done. So, he brought the milking equipment over to Betsy, who was still lying down.

Todd began to hook the plugs up to Betsy's udders. However, Betsy mooed "Stop tickling me, I'm trying to sleep!" Todd said, "But people need your healthy, delicious milk. People are more important than animals so please get up and let your udders start working!" This made Betsy upset because she knew that animals, especially cows, were more important than people. With a big "mooooooooooooooooo," she told Todd just that!

However, Todd disagreed with Betsy. He replied, "No, people are more important than animals because we respect the earth and other living things so both humans and cows can survive! So, how can cows be more important than people?"

"Well," mooed Betsy, "Let's make a bet. Whoever can prove they help each other and the earth more, wins." Todd said, "Okay, but what does that winner win?" Betsy mooed, "A day off of work." The bet was on!

Betsy mooed, "What I do to help people and Mother Earth is first, I get up early in the morning and let you take my milk to feed humans. In order to do this, I eat healthy, natural things in my environment, which helps me give you healthy, delicious milk. I also help you fertilize your lawn and your farm with what I digest. To do all of this, I don't even use any gas or electricity!"

Todd replied, "That is true. However, I am the one who provides the food you eat and the water that you drink. It takes water and seed to grow your food, gas and machines to harvest your food, and my energy to clean up your digestion so I can use it for fertilizer!"

"Hmmm," mooed Betsy. "Hmmm," said Todd.

They looked at each other and mooed/said at the same time, "We are both important to each other and to Mother Earth!" They both realized they need each other in order to survive.

Todd gently rubbed Betsy on the shoulder and said, "Come on girl."

Betsy stood up and Todd hooked up the milking machine. They both looked at each other with a wink in their eyes and a smile on their faces. They both knew they were very important to earth and to each other, and neither one wanted to take the day off. They were both winners!

Fourth Grade

The Great Veggie Championship
By Audrey Poole
Neil Cummins Elementary School
Linnea O'Brien, Teacher
Marin County

It was a sunny summer day when I was just a small little garlic bulb, that my farmers saw an article on "The Great Veggie Contest." My growers said, "This contest is not something to resist." We were so thrilled about being in this competition that we made banners to tell our garlic-loving town to come and cheer me on. This contest was something to look forward to for my owners and me.

We lived in the town of Gilroy and boy did people love me and my fellow garlic friends. Almost everybody ate it, grew it, and some people even entered it in the competitions. My growers were the kind of people who entered their veggies in competitions.

I was oozing with glee inside, but my stomach felt like a tornado of cotton candy. This was probably something all veggies get. Well, not my enemies, Bob Broccoli, Chris Cucumber, Caleb Carrot, Allison Asparagus, Sally Spinach, Al Avocado and Beck Bean. Oh no! That's everybody! They are what people think are real veggies. Even though I'm a true vegetable, some people don't think of me and other garlic as a healthy, good-looking vegetable.

I hope the judges in this competition research the incredible bulb, otherwise known as me (even if I do say so myself!). Research is very important when judging a white vegetable against a colorful vegetable. Color in veggies is good in a way, but my fellow garlic friends and I can help in many different and magnificent ways. I can wisely help cure heart problems, cancer, coughs, and many more sicknesses. Just don't forget, after you eat me to wash your mouth out with lemon or orange to get rid of the aroma, as most people think that I have a stinky smell.

Finally, the night before the contest came! I couldn't sleep one bit. I kept waking up my good friend, Tommy the Tomato, and the next day I felt bad for him. I didn't have time to apologize to him, because I had a contest to win. When I walked into the arena where the contest was held, I got a harsh greeting from my veggie enemies. They think that I'm not healthy, not pretty, and something that shouldn't have even been invented.

Then a dog bounded up to me. I hoped it didn't come any closer. Garlic can be highly toxic to dogs and cats. If it came any nearer and ate me, I wouldn't be able to go in the contest and the dog would probably get very sick. Thankfully, it raced back to its owners and skidded to a halt.

After the dog crossed my path, I was brought over to the judges' table.

As I was being critiqued I heard laughs from the crowd, and it was hurting my feelings. The only clapping I heard was the faintest cheer ever. Nobody from my town came, so there were only three people to cheer me on. They were my two growers and Tommy the Tomato. When Bob Broccoli was being examined, I heard loud roars and applause from the crowd.

It took a long time before the results were in. I heard my name being called repeatedly, and then I realized that I had won! Bob and Bob's people looked horrified. Every other vegetable was crying, and I, for once, felt like King of the World.

Even though your beauty and abilities may not show on the outside, you can still be a winner in whatever you choose to do.

Fifth Grade

Oliver's Family Tree
By Eric Harrelson
Our Lady of the Assumption School
Mary Pat Jones, Teacher
Sacramento County

Once there was a little olive named Oliver who lived in the City of Oroville, California. He had one big problem. He didn't know what he wanted to be when he grew up. There were lots of options for him because olives are used for so many things.

Oliver's parents, Oswald and Olga, are olive oil. His cousins Opie and Owen are olives you put into drinks. His grandma and grandpa, O.J. and Oprah, are olives that are put on salads. Odelia and Ophelia his friends are olives used in face creams.

He thought about every option. He wanted to be just the right thing because he is so nutritious and has so many vitamins. Oliver grows in a hot, dry climate and doesn't grow during the winter, which was the season he was in, so he had a lot of time to think about this.

One Monday morning Oliver woke up very excited because he knew that this was the day they were going to talk about career choices. He happily went into class and they got started.

Their teacher, Mrs. Odonald started with this, "How many of you know what you want to be when you grow up?" Fifteen of the thirty-two students raised their hands. "So how many of you want to be olive oil?" she added. Six raised their hands. "How many of you want to be olives on salad?" she continued. Seven raised their hands. Finally she asked, "How many of you want to be olives in drinks?" Two raised their hands.

The rest were undecided. Then they played a game to help the young olives decide. She had a survey and all the olives filled it out, except for Oliver. He couldn't think of one answer. The rest of the olives had their decisions. Oliver was the only one who didn't. After school Oliver sat on a park bench to think about it some more. Suddenly, a group of olives from his school came by. They made fun of Oliver for not being able to decide what to be. He ran back to his tree brokenhearted.

A few weeks passed and finally it was summer. Oliver was losing time to decide. Each day he kept growing until he was bigger than all the other olives. One Saturday morning Oliver set off on a voyage. He went to Mexico to visit his cousin Oberto and his wife Viola. They showed him around the restaurant where they worked. Oliver asked Oberto why he was olive oil instead of other things. Oberto said, "It just felt right, and because I have so much vitamin E, iron, and dietary fiber and the right amount of calories." Oliver said goodbye and headed for Sonoma Valley, California. He went there to visit his friend Odelia.

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When he got there she showed Oliver the salon she worked at. She told him how she was a facemask and how she can make people look younger. Next, Oliver got on a train and decided to head home. On the ride home he started to get hungry. He got off the train and went to a local restaurant. He sat at the table waiting for the waiter to take his order.

Clumsily, as the waiter was passing by to get to another table he tripped and the pizza he was holding flew from his hands. The waiter bumped Oliver and Oliver fell onto the pizza. Quickly Oliver jumped off. Then he realized that he had seen olives on pizza before. He got on the train and rushed back home to his tree in Oroville. He told everybody he wanted to be an olive on a pizza.

The truck arrived when it was time for Oliver to be transported. He got on the olive truck and was put in a crate. He went off to an Italian restaurant in California. Young Oliver had finally decided what he wanted to do. He was a topping on a pizza!

Sixth Grade

Summer Range
By Braden Whitehouse
Grenada Elementary School
Debbi Hoy, Teacher
Siskiyou County

"Wake up, buddy," I heard my dad saying. "Today is the day we're taking the cows into the mountains." Instantly I was awake. I had been looking forward to this day for a long time. I was finally old enough to go with the cowboys and take Emmitt Roberts' cows to summer range in the Trinity Alps Wilderness. I looked at the clock as I walked out the door--3 a.m.

"Perfect," I whispered so I wouldn't wake my mom.

Dad and I got into the pickup truck. Dad had already loaded the horses in the stock trailer. We met my grandpa at his ranch. After loading his horse quickly, we were off. We drove in the dark to the trailhead. There we met Emmitt Roberts and the rest of the cowboys who would be driving the cattle into the mountains. They had spent the night at the trailhead after hauling the cows up the day before. My family had been helping Emmitt take his cows to summer range in the mountains for many years. I was happy that I would be riding grandma's horse, Missy, today because she is very steady and has made the trip into the mountains many times.

The cows seemed restless to hit the trail as the men got everything ready to go. Many of the cows wore bells on their necks. The bells would help the cowboys find the cows when they came to check on them during the summer. As we started up the trail it was very noisy with cows bawling for their calves and the constant clanging of the cowbells. My job was to bring up the rear and push the stragglers along. The dust was so thick I could hardly see the trail. Fortunately for me, Missy seemed to know exactly where she was going.

After many hours of riding we finally reached Woolford's Cabin high in the Trinity Alps. The cabin is very old and small. There are even bear scratch marks on the door. At night when I tried to sleep I could hear rats and mice running around in the walls. Emmitt said the cabin was built in the 1800s.

The cowboys did the cooking. Everyone nodded in agreement when Grandpa said, "Food tastes better in the mountains." After dinner I went out with Grandpa to hobble the horses. Hobbles are used to keep the horses

from going astray. I thought they were probably too tired to go far anyway. Plus, the grass in the meadow was up to their chests. But Grandpa always tells the story of the year the horses went back down the trail at night leaving the cowboys stranded. The cows settled in the meadow for the night. Occasionally, a cow would call out to locate her calf.

After breakfast we saddled up for another day of riding. Grandpa told me that today we would be taking small groups of the herd in different directions to spread them out around the summer range. Emmitt's range was really large. I went with Emmitt and we took 25 pair of cows over to Fox Lake. Dad and Grandpa took cows to Telephone Lake. Emmitt told me along the way that he would come back every week to check on the cows and to move them around to new areas to feed.

He said, "You can come along any time."

"I can't wait." I replied excitedly.

In the fall we will come back with Emmitt to bring the cows out of the hills when the feed gets low and before the snow falls.

"One year," Emmitt said, "an early snow trapped some of my cows deep in the snow."

He even had to rent a helicopter to lift some of the cows out of the mountains.

"Usually the cows have a sense of when it's time to leave the hills and they will sometimes start down the trail without me."

It is common in the fall to see cows walking along the highway in Scott Valley when they feel like coming home early.

Late in the day everyone met up and we headed down the trail. That night when we got home, nobody had to tell me to go to bed. I was exhausted but still excited from the experience of the last two days. I felt like a man now as I drifted off to sleep.

Seventh Grade

The Apple of My Eye
By Sonalei Amador
Grace Academy
Jonna Stiff, Teacher
Riverside County

Once upon a time, on the small planet of Tread, in the land of Fugitopia, there lived the magical and enchanting talking apples. A glorious place it was, with billions of trees and all the different kinds of apples you could ever imagine. They also had a queen by the name of Queen Elizabeth (and no, silly, I do not mean the queen of England). Queen Elizabeth had complete dominion over the apple people and gave evil punishments when someone made the slightest mistake. For example, one time when the queen's crown was not polished to her liking, she threw it on the marble kingdom floor, BANG!

"What is THIS? This crown is not clean! Look at these spots!" the Queen thundered just like a bear when it is ready to attack.

"Y-y-y-your highness, I-I-I-I'm very sorry," stammered the meek crown cleaner as his knees shook below him.

"Off with his stem!" ordered the queen. Without a seconds delay, her people came bolting in and took the poor cleaner away for the de-stemming.

Now don't worry, this didn't physically hurt the apple but it did take away its pride. All apples take pride in their stem, and everyone who didn't have a stem was looked down upon.

Queen Elizabeth was extremely cruel, indeed! However, there was a time in her life when she was kind. Yes, this time, long forgotten, was when her handsome husband was still alive. He was the shiniest apple in all the land and had the most stunning stem any apple had ever seen. It was a time of ball room dancing and laughing throughout the entire kingdom. In fact, when the King and Queen would dance, he would lift her off the ground and twirl her around the room. But, this time was over now. Ever since her husband over ripened, the queen had just been a mess. He was the apple of her eye, and ever since he'd been gone she could claw you alive in a blink of an eye.

Well, anyway, because of the ghastly thing she did to that poor, innocent crown cleaner, the Big Apple reporters decided enough was enough. They put this news on the front page of *An Apple a Day* newspaper.

One family that read this disturbing article was outstandingly astonished.

"How could anyone do something like this? Why they oughta make a pie out of her!" angrily remarked Mrs. Smith. Now, you must understand that Mrs. Smith was one of the sweetest apples in all the land, but as you can see sometimes she could be a bit sour. Mrs. Smith lived with her charming husband, her two wonderful children, and her lovely mother.

"Well, deary, I think maybe we should move away," said Granny Smith to her daughter. This probably wasn't a bad idea, for Granny Smith was the wisest apple in Fugitopia. "Maybe we should move to Tree Tops."

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"Moving to Tree Tops is just out of the question!" exclaimed Mrs. Smith. "We have lived here for so long and I just couldn't imagine growing ripe on a different tree." So, that was that. The Smith family decided to stay.

As time went on, Queen Elizabeth became even crueler, and her punishments became even more severe. Even the leaves couldn't stand her anymore! Queen Elizabeth was banishing apples from the tree left and right. She had gone bananas! The poor apples didn't have a chance, and were soon going to be made into apple sauce. This course could go on no longer.

Then, just when things felt like they were never going to change, sure enough they did. Out of nowhere, a shiny ruby red apple appeared. His name was Macintosh. The first time Queen Elizabeth ever laid eyes on him, she was smitten. They ended up becoming fast friends, and Queen Elizabeth became sweeter by the day. As their friendship grew, so did their love. It grew and grew as did the tree. She loved Macintosh all the way to his core. The queen was finally happy and as her love grew for Macintosh, so it also grew for all the apples in the tree and they all lived happily ever after.

Eighth Grade

Peter's Journey
By Brook Jensen
Gratton Elementary School
Rexann Jensen, Teacher
Stanislaus County

Peter and his mom, Penny, were both pistachios on a mature pistachio tree on Eco Farm. Bud, the owner of the farm, was a very quiet man who worked very hard. He liked giving his pistachio trees extra fertilizer to make them happy and grow bigger and stronger. Bud was proud to grow his pistachios in California, which was the second largest pistachio producer in the world.

"Peter, are you turning red yet?" asked Peter's mom, Penny, who was very anxious to know. She didn't want to go through the humiliation of having a green son. In fact, all the other pistachios said if he didn't start turning red soon, he probably had a deadly disease that could kill the whole tree! Penny was definitely starting to believe the other pistachios that her son had Verticillium Wilt, which can quickly kill trees of all ages.

"Mom, would you please stop asking me silly questions every morning. If I was turning red I would've told you by now." Peter didn't know why it was so important that he turn red like everyone else. What if he didn't want to be red at all and wanted to stay green forever?

Peter didn't understand that if he didn't turn red before September, which was in one week, it could mean he was a rotten nut. Rotten nuts never made it to the pistachio factory, because Bud threw them away before they could infect any other nuts around them. Everyone who was a pistachio knew that except for Peter, the only pistachio who really needed to know.

That night, Penny broke the "rotten" news to Peter. Peter was devastated; he couldn't believe that all this time instead of growing, he was probably rotting!

The next week everyone was so excited for Peter. His hull had turned red the very day Bud came to begin harvest. Peter just took longer to turn red because of his age. He was the youngest pistachio on the tree, so Peter was actually an early nut.

"Peter, where are you?" asked Penny, "Bud is about to shake the tree. Now I want you to look your best, so let me wipe all the dust off your hull please." Penny wanted to make sure her little boy was the most handsome pistachio in the factory when they got there. "OK, all done. Now I love you, Good Luck!!!"

"Mom, it's only shaking. It's not like we're never going to see each other again."

"How do you know Peter? Almost every pistachio gets separated from their family during shaking time. It's pretty much a fact." Peter didn't believe his mom and only thought she was saying that so he would give her a kiss.

Out came Bud and his workers with the tarps. They laid down one long tarp in each row. Then they all got out "shakers," the same kind used on almond trees, and started shaking all the pistachios off the trees and onto the tarps.

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By this time Peter could no longer see his mom. He wasn't worried, because she was a very wise pistachio.

Pistachios are harvested on tarps because their hulls and their shells both slip open when they are ready for harvest. If dirt got into the open shell, it could contaminate the pistachio.

When they were finally done shaking, they swept up the nuts and put them in pistachio trucks and hauled them to the pistachio factory.

After the nuts were safely delivered to the factory, they were hulled, washed and dried. Then they were separated into several different groups like salt and pepper, chili lemon, garlic onion, toffee chocolate, and ginger soy pistachios. Peter was separated into "salt and pepper." First he was roasted, and then he was salted and peppered with his shell still on.

After going through many, many other machines that helped pack the pistachios very thoroughly Peter was finally sealed into a plastic bag and then loaded onto a truck. When the truck stopped, it unloaded all of its goods at a store.

Most of the pistachios were taken to a storage room behind the store, because they can stay fresh for several months, and some were put inside on the shelves for people to buy. Suddenly, Peter thought he heard a faint pistachio calling his name.

"Peter I found you!" said Penny with great excitement.

"Mom! Oh, I missed you so much! I can't believe you found me after going through that huge pistachio factory!" Peter said with extreme happiness and amazement.

They were put on a shelf in the store and were soon bought. The whole time he was being carried to his new home, Peter could not help dreaming of how he was going to be eaten.

Honorable Mention (Third-Grade Student)

We Love Our Alfalfa Farmer
By Brice Lore
Home Choice School
Pam Eshelman, Teacher
San Bernardino County

One starry night, two kit foxes (father and son) were enjoying a stroll through Mr. Alfalfa Farmer's alfalfa field. This was Kit Fox Junior's first time out exploring the field. "Look son, isn't it amazing that this big, beautiful, open, green field invites over 675 different types of wildlife?" Mr. Kit Fox explained. "All sorts of animals happily hang out here, including those that are threatened and endangered like you and me!"

"WOW!" exclaimed Junior.

WHOOSH... WHOOSH! A great sound came from the sky. It was a big, blue and grey bird swooping down to greet them. He was as tall as a child, with a wingspan of two children.

"Well hello there, little one!" Aaron the Great Blue Heron said in a deep, low voice. Junior scurried behind his dad in fear.

"Oh! Wonderful!" Mr. Heron exclaimed, "Mr. Farmer would love to meet you! He is such a kindhearted man. Boy, just the other day I saw him taking in some poor, abandoned, helpless, bird eggs. Would you believe that he actually took care of those little ones for a while then set them free? He has helped out all sorts of birds, and I am very grateful to him for this."

Suddenly, they heard, "BZZZ... BZZZ!" "Good evening, Honey Bee Bell!" Mr. Fox and Mr. Heron greeted her. Thinking she would sting him, Junior was too scared to move.

"I won't hurt you little fox. I've come to drink the delicious nectar from the beautiful purple alfalfa flowers."

"Does Mr. Farmer want bees around his field?" Junior wondered, because she looked SO scary!

"Why of course he does! I am a honeybee. Mr. Farmer thinks it is so important that we come. We produce about one third of the U.S. honey from these special flowers."

Ladybug Lucy came crawling by and said, "My! Farmer loves to have us here too. We get to eat as many pests as we can fit into our bellies. This wonderful insectary is home to over 1,000 different kinds of insects. We need this alfalfa field for its cover, food and moisture. It's a wonderful habitat for us!"

Mr. Fox and his son continued to walk through the field, when from up above they saw two huge eyes glaring down on them and a loud, "WOO...WOO!" sound. "What a glorious evening!" Billy Barn Owl hooted.

"What makes you so happy, Mr. Owl?" Junior wanted to know. "Is Mr. Farmer kind to you too?"

"Oh indeed!" Mr. Owl cried. "He is so giving! He built nest boxes for us to live in. His field is a perfect place for us to find food. We never have to fear going hungry here. Mr. Alfalfa Farmer and his field take good care of us."

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"He built us houses too!" eavesdropping, Buffy the Bat glided down and continued. "They are so comfy cozy! Also, his alfalfa field keeps us surviving with the millions of pests he invites our entire colony to feast on!"

Just then, a tall, slim, messy haired man came walking outside. It was Mr. Alfalfa Farmer! He had been sleeping on a bale of hay when Mr. Owl woke him up with all this hooting. He didn't mind though. He enjoyed visiting with the animals.

"Awe... what do we have here... a cute little kit fox. I've been waiting for you. I can see that your new friends have been telling you about the field." Mr. Farmer gently stroked his back. "Would you like to know some more interesting facts about this wonderful field?" The little fox wagged its tail, stared into the farmer's eyes and smiled.

"Well, it's one of the top three crops in the U.S. Without alfalfa, many farmers would fail. It has many good things that keep us healthy like protein, calcium, vitamins A, C, and K and more! Alfalfa has many benefits; we'll talk about them later. I know your father has been looking forward to taking you out tonight. Have fun little guy!"

The little fox was very happy to have met the farmer and the animals. He learned that the farmer's desire was to help make our environment a better place for all living things.