

Third Grade

Farmer Ben's Sheep
By Emily Swann
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Sue Swann, Teacher
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Once a farmer named Ben bought a huge ewe. A ewe is a female sheep. That ewe, he realized, was a real troublemaker. That sheep ate a lot. She ate seven hours each day. She ate before dawn, at midday, and in the evening. She ate clover, soybeans, corn, grass, and forbs. Even with the amount she was eating, that was not enough!

So, one evening, she crept over to a neighboring farmer's field. When the sheep got there, she stood with her mouth open. There lay two fields. One was a corn field and the other a soybean field. The sheep ate all of the crops in both fields. Then, she went to the next farmer's field, eating all his crops. The next night, Farmer Ben found out. He was mad at the sheep, yes sir!

When the farmer's neighbors found out about their crops, they were also steaming mad! All the farmers called Farmer Ben. One farmer said, "I was planning to use the soybean field to feed my own sheep herd, thank you very much!"

The other farmer told him, "that sheep will have to go!"

He protested, but they didn't listen.

That night, when the farmer went home to watch TV, he saw a commercial for landscape management. This is when sheep work as lawn mowers to eat unwanted plants. He didn't know when he drifted off to sleep, but soon enough, he was in a dream. He was a child and it was World War I. He was on a trip to meet the president. When he saw the president, the president was making the sheep eat the grass at the White House. Then he woke up and he raced to the phone. He called a company to come get his sheep and use her to eat the grass on the White House lawn!

Now, Farmer Ben had only one worry... his angry neighbors! So, he decided to sell his sheep's wool. Sheep wool is fire resistant, durable, keeps you warm, doesn't wrinkle, and is water resistant. It is good for use in sweaters, blankets, and rugs. He knew that with an average sheep you would get approximately thirty pounds of wool. With his big sheep, he hoped to get seventy pounds of wool. He would give the money he made selling the wool to his neighbors to pay for the damaged crops.

Finally Farmer Ben could rest without worries.

Fourth Grade

Farm Fun
By Morgan Gravatt
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There once was a girl named Morgan who lived in a big city and knew very little about farming. One day, Morgan overheard her parents talking about going on a cruise. She was so excited to be going on a big boat, but then she soon found out she would not be going. The disappointed little girl then asked her parents, "Where will I be going?" They told her she was going to stay with her grandparents on their farm in Oakdale in Stanislaus County. Sadly, Morgan complained about why she couldn't go on the cruise. Morgan's mom told her it was for grown-ups only. The way Morgan saw it, she would miss all the fun!

A week later, Morgan was on her way to the farm. She watched out the car window as the big buildings got small and the city seemed to disappear. Finally, after what seemed like hours, she arrived at the farm. As Morgan got out of the car, her grandparents came from the barn to greet her. They were so excited to see Morgan. Her grandpa told her she showed up at the perfect time. Morgan wondered what the excitement could be at the farm.

Grandpa told her to put down her luggage and come straight to the barn. Morgan grinned as her new adventure was beginning right there. She turned back to her parents, waved goodbye, and then ran after her grandpa. He led her out to the barn where in a small pen he pointed to the newborn baby lambs.

At the sight of the lambs Morgan's questions began flowing, "Are more sheep going to have babies? How do you know when they will have them?"

Grandpa just smiled at the interest his little granddaughter was showing. Grandpa explained that all thirty ewes were bred and would soon have baby lambs, and that the ewes ate hay and grain to make milk for their lambs. Then with a proud smile on his face Grandpa began to explain that for thousands of years man has relied on sheep for that furry stuff called wool. Some cultures hold sheep sacred for their wool.

"Speaking of wool let me introduce you to Sasquatch, one of our Dorset rams over here." Morgan began scratching the ram's back and noticed her hands becoming all oily. Grandpa then explained that the oil was called lanolin and is widely used in the cosmetic industry. It is in tanning lotion as well as her mother's makeup!

As the sun set on her first day, Morgan crawled into bed exhausted from running around on the farm and all that she had learned that day.

The next morning, Morgan awoke and noticed that Grandpa was already outside. She got dressed and ran out the door to find him. Morgan came around the corner of the barn to see a little girl named Madison watching Grandpa trimming hooves. Grandpa smiled and told the girls that they should have s'mores after dinner. Then Grandpa explained that marshmallows are made from hooves. The girls gasped, but decided they would still like to have s'mores. The two girls became instant friends that evening.

Morgan and Madison spent the rest of the week helping Grandpa around the farm. The highlight of the week came when the sheep shearers showed up to shear all the sheep. They watched as the wool piled up. Grandpa

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told them that it would be sold for fabric and oil purposes. The day was so busy around the farm that she lost track of time. Morgan was in the barn when she heard her parents' car horn honk. She looked out and realized her week was up and that the farm had to have been more fun than the cruise!

As she ran to the car she couldn't wait to tell her parents about her fun-filled week. She was sad to say goodbye to her grandparents and her new friend Madison. She told her grandparents that she loved them and that she wanted to come back next summer and stay longer! Morgan watched out the car window as the farms became smaller and the buildings got bigger. She told her parents all the amazing facts about lanolin and wool that she learned. She couldn't believe that the lanolin from sheep wool was used in makeup! As she walked up the steps to her home, she told her parents she had had a farm fun vacation that was for kids only!

Fifth Grade

Guacamole in Paris
By Abigail Patel
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Once in Paris, France there were three chefs. Their names were Monsieur Pain, Monsieur Vin and Monsieur Escargot. They worked in a famous restaurant in Paris. One day, a man walked in.

"Are you able to make guacamole? I have just moved to Paris and I can't find it anywhere. I'm sure if you tried you could make the best guacamole in the world."

"Excusez-moi? What is guacamole?" asked Monsieur Pain.

"It is a dish made with avocados," said the man. "I will come back on Monday. I'm excited for the results." Then he was gone with a smile.

"We will make the best guacamole in the world!" exclaimed all three.

They looked up a recipe for guacamole. One thing Parisians know is that there are no avocados in Paris.

"Well," said Monsieur Escargot, "I think we are out of luck."

"It says in the encyclopedia that Fallbrook, California is the avocado capital of the world! Let's go there!" said Monsieur Vin. "Stacy's farm is said to have the best avocados in the world!"

"C'est bon!" said Monsieur Escargot. "That solves our problem."

So they packed their bags and went to bed. The next morning they woke up and hurried to the airport. They were excited. They each were thinking separate thoughts.

Monsieur Pain was thinking, "I think that I will have such a good time, I am so excited I could burst."

Monsieur Vin was thinking, "I wonder what an avocado tastes like?"

Monsieur Escargot was thinking, "I wonder how big these avocados are going to be? I heard they weigh 8 pounds each!"

Then they were in Fallbrook. They looked out of the window and stared in awe. Past the airport, there were acres and acres of avocado trees. There were so many that you could not see past them. "Well," said Monsieur Escargot, "You would never think that there were so many avocado trees."

Then they got off the plane and called a cab and drove to Stacy's farm.

"Bonjour, we are Messieurs Pain, Vin and Escargot. We heard that you grow the best avocados in the world and we must buy some!"

"Of course, I have a few that are ready to be eaten," said Stacy.

"Great, let's go pick them," they said.

Stacy said, "You have to pick them a few weeks early and then they will ripen off the tree. I happened to have a few ready to eat. Please be my guest and stay at my farm tonight and I will show you my secret, world-famous guacamole recipe."

"Magnifique!" they replied. They had a very cozy night. The next day, they said goodbye. But Monsieur Pain had forgotten to put the avocados in a bag for the airplane! He did not notice. Neither did the other chefs. Soon, they were on the plane to Paris.

"Au revoir Fallbrook, we had fun," they said sadly. When they arrived at their kitchen, to their horror the avocados were missing!

"Sacrebleu!" They exclaimed. Just then, someone rushed into the restaurant. It was Stacy!

"You forgot the avocados, and how can you make my secret recipe without them?"

"Merci beaucoup!" they yelled. "A special guest is expecting the guacamole tonight. We insist you stay for dinner as our guest of honor."

"Merci," said Stacy.

The chefs began their guacamole creation. They had a messy time doing it. But they got it into a bowl. Just then, the man who wanted the guacamole arrived. He immediately tasted it and gasped.

"This is the best guacamole in the world!" he said. "It is true, you are also the three best chefs in the world!"

"Without my Fallbrook avocados, the guacamole would not be perfect," said Stacy.

With one look at her, the man fell instantly in love, and told her he was a farmer, too. Would she marry him and start an avocado farm in Paris with him?

"I always wanted to live in France," said Stacy.

While all the mushy avocado love was going on in the dining room, the chefs tasted their creation and although they had never tasted guacamole, they knew it must be the best in the world. And they lived avocadoly ever after! La fin.

Sixth Grade

Trucking on a Tractor
By Wyatt Black
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"Wyatt, wake up!" my dad said and he walked back into his room. I reluctantly crawl out of bed. I yawn, groan and remember I had to wake up early to go drive the tractor. It's not that bad, you have a lot of alone time. I slip into some clothes and knot up my boots, and walk out of my room. I open the door and feel the cold surround me. I walk to the shed, pull the dirt bike out, and start it up. I drive into the field where my work begins.

I park the dirt bike next to the old 1965 green tractor. Its metal is cold in the autumn morning breeze. "Good thing I didn't forget to pour antifreeze in the radiator or the engine could have been cracked and ruined by the cold," I think to myself. I stumble into the old machine and sit myself down on the torn seat. With the push of a clutch and a turn of a key, it comes to life. I let it warm up for a second and then rev the motor up to 2,000 rpm (rotations per minute) and start to drag the disc across the field my dad had just plowed. My dad pays close attention to the soil when he plows, he always tells me to make sure the soil is not too dry. If it is too dry, it could wear out our plow. I snap back to reality and start to pull the disc behind me as it tills the dirt. Tilling is important because if you don't till then the seeds will be on top of the soil and they won't grow. When you till after plowing, it leaves little rows in soft tilled soil so the seeds can sink in and grow. I have this eerie feeling that I forgot to do something, but I can't name it so I continue.

On the start of the second-to-last row I hear a faint "screech" sound, but I think it's just the old tractor speaking to me so I ignore it. At the end of the row it is now really loud so I slowly ease the tractor to a stop, lower the rpm, and shut it off. I hop out hoping that I didn't do any serious damage to the disc. I will get in big trouble if I have. I inspect the disc very carefully, after a few minutes I remember, I forgot to grease the disc.

I hop back on the dirt bike and start to ride back up to the house. When I'm back home, I put the dirt bike in neutral, and hop off to start to look for one of the grease guns that we keep in the back of each of our trucks. Finally, I find one. I jump back on the dirt bike and take off back to the field.

When I'm back down in the field I stop the dirt bike, and start greasing the disc so everything runs smoothly. Then, I get back into the tractor and finish up the last row. I shut off the tractor once more, before I start the dirt bike and head up to the house.

When I reach the house I run inside to tell my dad all about it. When I explain the problem he looks a little disappointed, but not mad. He tells me strictly not to do it again. I nod as if I were saying OK. "You still have a lot of tractor driving left, and a lot more next spring," he tells me.

"Yup, a lot of time alone I guess," I reply. "Just don't let your mind get away from you—there is still a job to do," my father explains. "I still have tomorrow to prove myself," I say. "Just don't forget the steps to trucking on a tractor," he says and we both laugh.

Seventh Grade

The Importance of Harold the Owl
By Mary Bunn
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Rexann Jensen, Teacher
Stanislaus County

Harold was a very curious baby barn owl. Every day, he would look outside and wonder why barn owls were important. One day, while Harold was looking outside, he fell out of the nest. At the same time, Heather, the farmer's daughter, was feeding her pigs. She saw little Harold fall and ran to get him. Heather gently picked up the fluffy, white baby owl and whispered, "Hello, my name is Heather." She smiled and slowly walked out of the barn. "It's OK, I won't hurt you."

Harold didn't know what to do. All he remembered was looking out at the farm animals. As Heather was walking, she noticed that the wing was misshapen. "Oh my, your wing is broken! Are you OK? Here I'll take you to my papa. He'll know what to do," Heather said. She carefully ran into the house.

"Heather. Remember what I told you? Don't run in the house," Papa said. Before he could finish, he noticed little Harold. "Um, Heather, who is your little friend?"

"My little friend? Oh, you mean my baby bird. I found him in the barn," she quickly said. "Papa he needs help. Can you help him? Look at his wing!"

"Heather, one question at a time. Let me see the poor thing." He examined Harold closely. "Well, look what we got here. You have a fledgling. A baby owl is called a fledgling. I believe this little one is a barn owl." He smiled and looked at Heather. Her expression changed from worried to curious.

Heather was relieved that Papa wasn't disturbed by her owl. "Papa, he doesn't look like a barn owl. I've read about them. I thought they had a white heart-shaped face and a white chest with brown spots. Don't they have a tawny back with black and white spots?" she asked.

"It's a barn owl all right. Barn owl fledglings have puffy white feathers. But, as they get older, those feathers molt. This little creature is very important, Heather," Papa said. "He could save us a lot of money." As soon as Harold heard that, he knew he would find out why he was important. Harold silently listened.

Suddenly, Heather remembered the wing. "Papa, his wing, what are we going to do? Is he going to be OK?" Heather asked.

"He'll be fine. We'll help him, but remember, he's wild and we can't touch him too much. If we interact with him too much, he would rely on humans and won't be afraid." Papa said. He went upstairs and got a soft blanket and some gauze tape.

Papa folded the blanket and placed Harold on top. He wrapped the gauze tape around Harold's body to hold his wing in place and keep it still. Every day they fed him little mice, worms, centipedes, crickets, and other little bugs, and gave him water.

That night, Heather and Harold were sitting on the carpet by the fire. Papa was sitting on his rocking chair.

"Hey Papa," Heather said, "remember when we found the baby owl. You said that he was important and he can save us money. How is that possible? He's just an owl."

When Harold heard that question he thought, "This might be it! I will learn why I am important."

"Well, barn owls eat rodents like rats and mice. They protect our fields. If we have a barn owl then we don't have to pay for pest management. And that could save us a lot of money," said Papa, "Also, barn owls can prevent diseases caused by rodents, such as Hantavirus and Tularemia. One barn owl can eat up to six rodents a day. So can you imagine how many one owl can eat in a year?" Papa said.

"Whoa, that's a lot." Heather said. She thought for a few seconds and responded, "Isn't it around like 2,200 rodents a year?"

"I think so. Well, it's getting late and you have to start getting ready for bed," Papa said.

"OK, good night."

A few weeks later, Harold's wing seemed much better, and he could move, stretch, and flap it. Heather and Papa set Harold free. It took a while for Harold to start flying. He would run and try to jump off things. Finally after the fourth try he flew away. Harold landed on a tree near the barn and thought, I am going to stay here at this farm and I finally know why I am important!

Eighth Grade

The Tomato's Charade
By Sarah Truxton
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Judee Sani, Teacher
Stanislaus County

Once upon a time, in a faraway land, there was a town called Veggie Ville. Everyone who lived there loved vegetables; all they ate were vegetables! They loved rutabagas, Brussels sprouts, watercress, celery, and leeks. In fact, no one in Veggie Ville had ever tasted fruit before. But little did they know that all of that was about to change.

One early morning, Farmer Inthedell found some small seeds scattered around his yard. Out of curiosity, he planted them. One hundred days later, little green balls started growing on the vines. A few days later, they turned into red shiny globes. Farmer Inthedell popped one into his mouth and was surprised by an explosion of flavor. It was bright, sweet, and tangy. He had never before tasted such a vegetable. Farmer Inthedell ran to town proclaiming his new discovery. The people of Veggie Ville went crazy over it and they named it "tomato," in honor of their beloved mayor, Thomas Tomato III.

The tomato inspired the Veggie Ville's chefs to create new dishes with tomatoes. They made soup, ketchup, sauce, and BLTs. They learned to sun-dry, puree, stew, roast, sauté and grill tomatoes.

"This vegetable is the best! It is full of antioxidants and it goes great in salads!" cried Savanna.

"And it is low calorie, and is bursting with vitamins!" added Charles.

"The tomato is even rich with potassium when it is fresh!" exclaimed Lizzy.

News spread quickly about the tomato all through Veggie Ville. The news even reached Dr. Eggspert, who lived in a dark mansion a mile out of town. No one ever talked to Dr. Eggspert. They did not want to disturb his science experiments. Dr. Eggspert was the smartest man in Veggie Ville. He knew everything there was to know about agriculture. When Dr. Eggspert heard about the tomato, he left for town to see this new discovery with his own eyes.

When Dr. Eggspert arrived, everyone grew silent. He went to Farmer Inthedell and asked for a tomato. Dr. Eggspert looked at the tomato, cut it, and inspected the inside. Then he examined the tomato plant and said in a rough voice,

"This is no vegetable, this is a fruit!"

Veggie Ville went into uproar, they could not believe their ears! They demanded an explanation.

"Well, you see," exclaimed Dr. Eggspert, "a fruit is the seed-bearing part of the plant, which is called the ripened ovary. The tomato is the seed-bearing part of the plant, therefore your tomato is a fruit."

The citizens of Veggie Ville were shocked—they had actually eaten a fruit! They debated whether or not to keep the tomato. In the end, Veggie Ville could not bear to part with their new precious tomato, so they reconsidered

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fruits. The mayor brought back strawberries, oranges, bananas, and apples. Surprisingly, everyone loved them as much as they loved vegetables. Since Veggie Ville was now a town of fruits and vegetables, the mayor changed the city's name to Garden Grove. Everyone in Garden Grove enjoyed the delights of fruits and vegetables, and they all lived healthfully and happily ever after.

Honorable Mention (Sixth-Grade Student)

The Humble Seed
By Josiah Groot
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"Strike three, you're out!" Disappointed, Josh sulked back to the bench.

"Nice job, squirt," the team's star batter, Mike, said slow and jeeringly.

As Mike walked past him up to bat, he flipped Josh's hat onto the ground. "You dropped your hat," he growled, "Make sure to hold on to it next time."

Josh's face burned red with embarrassment as he brushed the dust from his cap and skittered back to the bench. Even without looking, he knew the entire team was flashing him sideways glances.

"All that I will ever be good at is sitting on the bench spitting sunflower seeds," he thought, "and everyone knows it." Slumping over, he put his head in his hands, feeling like all the world was against him.

Josh awoke with a start. "*How long have I been asleep?*" he wondered aloud. He looked down and gasped in great amazement! He had been transformed into a bright, yellow flower! "*This is definitely not normal,*" Josh uttered as he gazed at his unfamiliar surroundings. "*What's going on?*" he asked himself. He appeared to be standing in some kind of valley, filled with tall, vividly colored flowers surrounding him. "*Where am I?*"

"You, Sprout, are where you have always been rooted, in the Sacramento Valley." Josh was surprised to see that the speaker was another brightly colored flower.

"Who are you?" Josh inquired, confused.

"Me? Why, I'm called Pop. You and I both are California's popular seed snack, the sunflower. Our family's been here forever, and because of the climate, it's been the best home that any sunflower could hope to have. We're standing on part of the 37,200 acres of land that sunflowers are grown on in California," Pop declared proudly. Josh was impressed and speechless. "Ninety-five percent of the nation's sunflowers are grown in California," the flower proudly affirmed, "And did you know sunflowers are prized around the world, and that we are the number one snack in Europe?"

"I thought that I was the only one who liked sunflower seeds!" Josh exclaimed in surprise.

"That's where you're wrong Sprout," Pop said with a chuckle, "Many people eat sunflower seeds for taste, while others eat them for nutritional value. We're chock full of Vitamin E and many other minerals that help memory function and lower the risk of heart disease and cancer."

"I didn't know that sunflower seeds were so important," Josh marveled.

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"We're important all right," Pop trumpeted, "our seeds aren't just eaten as a tasty snack; we have a lot of other uses, too. Our stalks are used for fabric, and in some places, our buds are considered a delicacy when they're pickled.

"That's really neat!" Josh declared with a large smile.

"It makes me proud to know that we're so important," Pop said with a giant smile, "but there's something you need to know, little Sprout. Even with all the amazing things that we can do, we're still technically considered to be a weed by scientists, and most people think of weeds as useless.

"But we're not useless," Josh interjected. Pop nodded his head in agreement.

"We're not. Sometimes someone's extraordinary abilities may not be obvious at first glance, whether you're a weed or a ball player. Can you promise me that every time you spit out a shell, you'll remember that?"

"I promise" Josh replied.

Suddenly, Josh's stalk began shaking wildly and the next thing he knew he heard a voice call out over the loudspeaker, "Two batters down in the ninth inning."

Josh was himself again and he was standing out in his usual place in right field with other team batting.

"*Wow, that was really weird,*" Josh thought, "*I can't believe sunflowers are so important.*" He put a sunflower seed into his mouth.

Suddenly, a loud crack split the air. Josh saw the ball hurtling toward him. He spat out the shell and lifted his glove. He seemed to be viewing the world in slow motion as he felt the ball crash into his glove with a thump.

"You're out!" the umpire called.

"Lucky catch," Mike hollered.

The center fielder called out, "You just won the game for us, Josh!"

The team cheered wildly at their win. Through the noise, Josh thought he heard Pop say, "*Way to go, Sprout!*"

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Honorable Mention (Third-Grade Student)

A Sweet Potato Water Fix
By Drew Ramirez
Gratton Elementary School
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