

Third Grade

The Life of Charlie the Quail
By Jack Overholtzer
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Sheila Amaral, Teacher
Stanislaus County

In mid spring, on a farm in California, lived a man named Farmer Brown who was planting hay. As he drove his tractor through his field, he noticed movement in the tall grass at the side of the field. He stopped, jumped down to get a closer look... and there he saw a mother quail sitting on her nest in the grass. She won't be safe here, thought Farmer Brown, so he quickly caught her and put the quail and her nest in his cab.

When Farmer Brown got to the barn, he placed the nest among a pile of boards. During the night, Mama Quail heard many new noises. She heard shuffling, snorting, chewing, and scratching. This made her very nervous. In the morning, a rooster crowing woke her up. Mama Quail wandered out of the barn. There were so many new things to see. The farm was full of animals. Some ducks chased her, a pig nipped at her, and a horse almost stepped on her. She was frightened and ran quickly back to her nest, where she stayed for the rest of the day.

Later that week, Mama Quail began laying eggs. The eggs were small, with brown spots. She was worried because Daddy Quail had been out looking for food when Farmer Brown had brought her to the farm. Daddy Quail suddenly walked in the barn and Mama ran to greet him.

Mama Quail said, "Come look! I think we will be parents soon."

For the next two weeks Farmer Brown left the quail alone. The next time he checked on them, he discovered twelve baby quail. Farmer Brown took a liking to the littlest one and named him Charlie.

One day Mama Quail told her chicks to stay in the nest while she went looking for seeds and insects to eat. When Mama Quail returned, she noticed that Charlie was missing. She quickly went looking for him, but couldn't find him anywhere. She searched through the hay stacks, the pig pens, the cow stalls, and the horse pen. She looked down the rows of corn and through the garden, until she finally found him fast asleep on the grass under a big tree. She quickly woke him up and gave him a scolding as she hurried him back to the nest. "Don't you ever try that again," she scolded. "There could be predators like snakes or owls around that we have to watch out for."

"But I just love adventures," chirped Charlie.

As the baby quail grew they became quite energetic and noisy. With that many quail in one nest someone was usually getting squeezed out of the nest which caused lots of excited chirping. The baby quail would chirp long into the night. After a few nights of constant chirping, the farm animals started grumbling to each other.

"What happened to our nice, peaceful barn life?" they complained.

"Ever since all those quail were born it's been like a circus around here with all the noise and babies running around."

Little Charlie had snuck out of the nest once again and heard what the animals were saying. He was very sad since he liked living on the farm and didn't want Farmer Brown to send them away. That night he made sure

that everyone kept very quiet.

A few days later, Farmer Brown's neighbor, Jesse, stopped by. As they were walking through the barn he spotted the quail. "What breed are these quail?" he asked.

"Well, I'm just not sure," Farmer Brown replied. "There are 130 types of quail worldwide and sometimes it's just hard to tell," he said.

"What I do know, is that they're the friendly kind; and the little one, Charlie, even follows me around sometimes when his mother isn't watching."

"I would like some quail on my farm," said Jesse to Farmer Brown. "Would you sell me some?"

"I'll let you have six, but not Charlie," said Farmer Brown.

Daddy and Mama Quail thought about all their chicks as they tucked in the remaining six. They were happy that the others lived close by and they could go visit them often. Charlie was glad for several things. He was glad to snuggle in the warm nest. He was glad that the farm animals had changed their minds and wanted him there. Most of all, he was glad Farmer Brown had let him stay on the farm.

Fourth Grade

An Artichoke Adventure
By Kahlan Patel
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Stacy Patel, Teacher
San Diego County

A nine-year-old girl named Mary lived with her pet chicken, Sandy, and her father. They lived in Castroville California on an artichoke farm where they grew the biggest artichokes in the world. Every day after school, Mary loved to check the mail. One afternoon, Mary opened the mailbox and received an invitation. She and her father were invited to enter an artichoke contest for the biggest artichoke at the local agriculture fair.

Mary snuck into her room and wrote a reply accepting the invitation for the contest. She ran outside and told Sandy about the invitation, but told her to keep it a secret. Mary wanted to keep it a secret from her father because he loved surprises.

The morning of the contest, Mary and Sandy headed to the fields to search for the biggest artichoke. During the search, Sandy asked Mary about artichokes.

Mary answered her, "An artichoke is a vegetable, but it is also the flower of the artichoke plant. You have to pick the artichoke before the leaves open and flower. We make sure to let some open to attract bees for the other crops on the farm. Eating artichokes can keep your body healthy. You can even eat the baby ones, by stuffing them, boiling them, or grilling them."

Mary and Sandy searched for a long time and only found the regular large artichokes they normally grew. Just as they were about to give up, they came upon the most GIGANTIC artichoke they had ever seen in their lives! They cut the artichoke and stuffed it in Mary's backpack so her father would not see it.

"Mary, Sandy, it's time to go to the agriculture fair, come get in the car," Mary's father called. Mary and Sandy ran to the car and off they went to the fair.

As soon as they reached the fair, Mary went to take the backpack with the artichoke out of the car and found it was not there! In the rush to the car, they forgot it.

Since it was early in the morning and they had not eaten breakfast, Mary's father told them to meet him at the carousel and he would get some breakfast.

Mary turn to Sandy and said, "Sandy, quick, fly me to the farm so I can find the artichoke!"

Sandy said, "Grab onto my feet and I will fly you there."

Sandy had a very hard time doing this because Mary was 65 pounds and Sandy was only 10 pounds, but she managed the 20 miles. When they arrived, Mary let go of Sandy's feet and ran to find the artichoke while Sandy rested. Mary spotted her backpack at the edge of the field, grabbed it and ran back to Sandy. Sandy was already lifting off, so Mary vaulted into the air and managed to grab Sandy's feet.

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Back at the fair, Sandy landed at the carousel just as Mary's father walked up to them with artichoke quesadillas in his hands.

An announcement came from the speaker, just as they finished breakfast, calling for the artichoke contest to begin. Mary ran to the tent to enter her artichoke while Sandy began to hurriedly explain how Mary entered the contest as a surprise for him. Sandy and Mary's father ran to join Mary at the tent.

The judge began, "My name is Ronald and this is my friend Kate. We are the judges for the biggest artichoke contest. The artichoke originates from the **Mediterranean region** and we are proud to say that 99.9% of all artichokes in the USA are grown in California. And now, the contest begins to find the biggest artichoke in Castroville."

The judges weighed all of the artichokes as Mary, Sandy, and her father waited nervously to see who the winner was. As the last artichoke was weighed, the judges turned to look at the results. Nodding and smiling, they turned toward the audience to award the first place medal.

"The winner of this year's biggest artichoke contest is Mary," The judges announced!

Mary ran up to the stage to accept her medal and the party began. There was dancing and food galore, rides like roller coasters, water rides, and the carousel too. After a fun day at the fair Mary, Sandy, and her father went home feeling very happy indeed. Mary hugged Sandy and put the medal around her neck.

"You saved the day Sandy."

"Bock," Sandy replied.

Fifth Grade

The Story of Great Grandpa Grape
By Kayleigh Lugowski
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Susie Henriques, Teacher
Merced County

My name is Great Grandpa Grape. I'm going to tell you a story. People call me a raisin now, but when I was young I was the biggest, juiciest, grape you have ever seen.

It all started years ago, when I was just a baby grapevine. A farmer dug a hole and put me in the ground. It was dark cold in there. I couldn't move an inch. I think I even felt an earthworm bump me.

After a while I sprouted. I saw the sun and loved it. I also saw a whole field of other sprouts growing just like me. Each day I worked harder to grow tall. After many months my hard work paid off. I was part of the tallest vine in the field. Our vine was so tall that the farmer had to get his ladder just to water us.

Once the vine was as tall as it could get, it was time to join the bunch. The grapes I joined were all my brothers and sisters. It was pretty big and crowded. The bunch had all 116 of my brothers and 96 sisters; even my big uncle, Greg Grape, was in the bunch. Even though it was crowded, it was also fun because we did things together as a family.

Soon I was the biggest grape in the field, even bigger than Uncle Greg. I felt so proud. Every day the farmer came out to the field to check and water us. He would get his ladder, climb up, twirl the bunch a little bit, and then he would climb down, pick up his ladder and go back inside. Day after day he did the same thing. Then one day he looked at us and had trimmers in his hand. He snipped us and put us gently on a piece of paper under the sun. It was bright, but I got used to it.

We didn't know why we got snipped and laid in the sun but it was warm and comfortable. It was so relaxing looking up at the sky. I saw birds and clouds every day, and every night I slept under the starry sky. I thought it was great until one hot day I saw a little wrinkle and I got a little thirsty. As the days passed, I got thirstier and more wrinkled until I was no longer the biggest, juiciest grape of the bunch. I was a wrinkled old raisin.

One day, the farmer scooped us up in a wooden crate and put us on a truck. I had no idea what the truck was for. I was scared. I thought to myself, Where is this going to take me? And what's going to happen when I get there? It was a bumpy ride.

When we got there I saw a big factory. Inside, people cleaned us. It felt great! After the cleaning, we went on another adventure, up and down conveyor belts. It was just like a roller coaster. At the end, a machine put us in a red box that said raisins. I was proud to be a raisin, but it was crowded in the box.

Next, they put us on a much cleaner truck and took us to a grocery store. At the store, they put us on a shelf. My box was in the front, so it didn't take me long to get purchased. A nice lady put me in her cart with other things like eggs, flour, and milk. I had no idea where we were going, but I hoped it was as nice and as clean as the grocery store.

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Once we got to the lady's house she put us in the cupboard where there were other foods like cookies and cereal. It didn't take me long to make new friends. One afternoon the nice lady picked us up and put us on the counter by the window.

I was so glad to see the sun again, but then I saw the lady mixing up batter. She put in the eggs, flour, and milk. She picked us up and dumped us in the bowl. She mixed us then poured us in little holes and put us in the oven. It was hot in there. Suddenly the mixture I was in puffed up. I was stuck! Eventually, the lady took us out of the oven to cool off. Now, I'm stuck in a muffin.

Sixth Grade

Regal's Escapade
By Gargi Rao
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Stanislaus County

Not too long ago, and not too far away, there was a cucumber which was named Regal. Regal lived on a small, five-acre farm called Freshsprouts Farm. Regal had petite spines on her back. Spines are prickly spikes on a cucumber which protect it. She was growing on a plant which was growing on a trellis. Regal was in the cucurbit family; her relatives were pumpkins, squash, and melons.

When she grew older, she wanted to become a crisp, juicy, tart, mouth-watering pickle. Mama always told her bedtime stories about becoming a pickle. Every year cucumbers just the right size became pickles. A regal cucumber would have to be 2 to 5 inches for it to become a good pickle. If the cucumber was too big, it would be bitter. It seems easy for a cucumber to grow safely and become a pickle, but you will find out how difficult it is.

As the plant grew, a gigantic leaf blocked the sunlight from Regal. How was she ever going to become a pickle if she did not get enough sunlight? She swung gingerly towards the leaf to push it away. It was a risky job; if she swung too hard she could fall and break from the vine! Fortunately, the wind helped her; the wind blew Regal towards the leaf. Though the job was tough, she managed to accomplish it!

Later, a brown, slimy slug started crawling up one of her tendrils. Oh no, slugs could start eating her, and she would never become a pickle! The tendril started tilting from the slug's weight. The slug fell on the ground and did not come back up. Hooray, the slug was gone!

"Buzz." She saw a bee coming towards her. Were bees harmful? She was trying to remember. Then she remembered that bees did not harm cucumbers. The bee landed on a blossom beside her.

"What are you doing?" Regal questioned the bee.

"My name is Hive. While I am collecting nectar to make honey, I also collect pollen from flowers and I carry it to other flowers for them to make fruit. I pollinated you when you were a flower," Hive said.

"Thanks for pollinating my blossom and many others. I want to become a pickle and I would not be able to without you," Regal replied. Hive and Regal became best friends.

One scary night, she saw a pale yellow pickle worm, with dark bristly spots, inching towards her. Regal had been through so many experiences, but she did not know what to do in this situation. She was in another pickle. Suddenly, thankfully, it started to rain. She was glad to take a shower after such a long time. The pickle worm inched away because it was frightened by the rain. Once the rain stopped, a rainbow appeared.

Finally, it was harvest time! Regal saw a group of farmers arrive to pick the cucumbers. She felt an enormous, gloved hand reaching towards her. She said goodbye to her family and Hive. She was ecstatic because she was going to become a pickle, but she was in tears because she was leaving her family and her best friend. "Snip." Scissors cut her from her plant.

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"This is the first cucumber I have picked this season. I have been waiting to harvest the cucumbers because they are an excellent source of vitamin C, vitamin K, and potassium. My family and I love them," A farmer said to another, while Regal went on a journey to the kitchen.

She was taken into a gigantic kitchen where she was washed, pickled, and put in a jar. The hard-working chefs added salt, water, vinegar, dill, and garlic to marinate her. She became a cool, crunchy, sour pickle. Regal's dreams of becoming a pickle were finally fulfilled.

Seventh Grade

A Cat's Game
By Stephanie Temnyk
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Rexann Jensen, Teacher
Stanislaus County

"Keary! I want to talk to you."

Keary, a young male cat, came trotting toward the voice of Miss Buckelbaur, a cranky hen.

"Keary, I want to ask you something. What is your job?"

"My job? Well, I keep the animals company and....," Keary started.

"No Keary, what is your job on the farm?" Miss Buckelbaur inquired.

"Well..." Keary bit his lip in frustration. "I don't exactly know."

"Don't be lazy!" Miss Buckelbaur said. "Go get yourself a job. Maybe you can do Bess' job. Ask her what it is."

"Ok," Keary said. He wanted to be useful on the farm, even if that meant doing another animal's job.

Keary found Bess in the pasture munching on grass.

"Hey Bess!" Keary cried out.

"Keary, is that you? If you need something just come around here," the heifer called.

"Bess... What is your job on the farm?" Keary asked.

"I'm extremely important to the farmers. I provide milk for 'em," Bessie answer proudly.

"Wait. How?" Keary asked.

"Alright, I'll tell ya. It all starts with the food. We cows chew the grass and swallow. It goes down to the first two of our four stomachs. After resting, the unchewed food, called cud, comes back up. We chew it up real good this time. The food goes to our other stomachs, and then is made into milk. The farmers milk us through our udders. Then there you go! Milk." Bess finished.

"That can be my job on the farm!" Keary exclaimed.

"Well... sorry to burst your bubble Keary, but male cats can't make milk."

"Oh. Well then, that can't be my job," Keary said sadly.

"Don't worry, Keary! Talk to Cally. I'm sure you could do her job," Bess told Keary reassuringly.

“Cally the hen? Alright, I’ll talk to her,” Keary called out.

Cally was sitting on a nest in the barn.

“Cally? It’s Keary here,” Keary called out.

“Oh, Keary? Hello,” Cally said.

“Hold on. What are you doing?” Keary inquired, looking at Cally’s strange sitting position.

“I’m laying eggs, silly,” Cally laughed. “Yep, that’s my job. I get comfortable in my nest, and relax. Sometimes the farmer even shines light on me. Then I wait a little bit, and poof! I lay an egg. People eat eggs as an excellent source of **protein** and vitamin B12, which helps make them strong!” Cally said happily.

“That’s it!” Keary cried. “Laying eggs will be my job.”

Cally giggled. “Cats don’t lay eggs!”

“They-they don’t?” Keary stammered.

“Were you thinking that was your job? Go see Falco. He will give you a job. You are a cat, he is a dog. I’m sure you can do his job,” Cally said.

“Ok,” Keary agreed.

It took an hour for Keary to find Falco. Falco was always running around, but Keary didn’t know why.

“Keary? Is that you in the orange fur?” Falco asked roughly.

“Yes, it is,” Keary said, a little irritated. “I’ve come to ask what your job is on the farm.”

“I am a border collie that herds cattle,” Falco said shortly.

“That’s it? You **herd cattle**?” Keary asked.

“Yes. When the cattle get out of control, I help the farmers by herding the cattle back into the pasture,” Falco explained.

Keary ran up to the cows, stopped in the middle of their way and sat down.

“STOP!” Keary yelled with all his might.

The cattle merely dodged him. Keary ran away, crying, thinking he might never get a job.

Keary stopped to rest in the barn. “I have no job. I am unwanted. I...,”

Before he could think anything else, Keary heard a small squeaking.

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“A mouse!” Keary shouted, chasing it throughout the barn.

The mouse escaped through a hole in the barn, next to the lettuce crops. But when he looked closer, he realized something.

The lettuce crops were infested with gophers.

At first Keary thought it was a bad thing. But then he thought of something.

“All this time my job was under my nose. Catching these rodents is my job,” Keary realized as he started to chase the gophers.

“Not only is chasing rodents my job,” Keary said smiling at the rodents. “It’s very fun as well. It’s a cat’s game.”

Eighth Grade

The Raindrop's Great Courage
By Grace Reyes
St. Anthony School
William Mitchell, Teacher
Merced County

"What if I don't want to go? I'm afraid. Falling, falling, falling all the way down to the earth just to water some crops. Anyway, one little cloud filled with the raindrops that don't fall wouldn't hurt anything. Right?"

"Are you kidding?" said our cloud. Oh no. He must have heard me, I whispered to myself. "Do you know what would happen if we didn't come together and rain down on the earth?"

"Actually, I don't." I said quietly, as I tried to hide behind another raindrop a little bigger than myself.

"A **drought!** A drought would happen!" said our cloud and, "and if that happens that would mean that the farmers wouldn't be able to store and distribute water to grow their crops during the dry seasons. When farmers don't have enough water to grow their crops, it leads to crop failure, higher food prices, and even **famine!** So you see little raindrop, we need you and every other raindrop that we have collected to rain down and make sure that doesn't happen.

"Besides, there is no need to worry about it right now. It's still summer time and our job is to just float around lazily in the summer sun soaking up all of the water vapors that are stored in the land, rivers, lakes, and seas from last year's rainfall. You still have a lot of growing to do before we have enough

full-sized droplets to deliver a decent rain for this year's crops."

"But I'm still scared." I said.

"Why are you scared? There is nothing to be afraid of. You should be proud knowing that you are part of the water cycle that is a main source of sustaining the Earth's environment."

"Wow, I didn't know I was that important!"

"Yep, but you'll have to gain enough courage to fall with the rest of the raindrops when it comes time."

As the long days of summer passed by we were getting bigger and bigger and our cloud was getting heavier. I could feel the air around us beginning to cool and I knew the time was getting closer to when I was supposed to fall down to help water the crops. Courage, I began thinking to myself. I must find the courage. I have to do my part to help the farmers in California be able to store enough water to irrigate a portion of their almost 9 million acres of crops this year. Courage...

I awoke to a loud thundering roar. "Get ready everyone," our cloud yelled out in excitement! "We're about to rain down and water some thirsty soil." Here we go, I thought nervously.

"You can do this," said the cloud. "Just believe in yourself. Everyone report to your station because here we goooooo!"

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In an instant all of the raindrops around me began pouring out of the cloud. Courage, I thought, I have courage.

“Wheee!” I screamed as I began to fall. I fell faster and faster towards the crop our cloud was assigned to water. When I finally plopped onto the dry soil I could feel it soaking up all of the moisture the raindrops were supplying.

“Wow! That was great!” I squealed, “I wanna do that again!”

“You just might,” said the raindrop next to me. “**Vapors** from the water that isn't needed and is stored this year will be soaked up to form another cloud to be used for next year.”

“I can't believe I helped do all of this.” I said in amazement. “My cloud was right, I am proud to be a part of the cycle that helps to sustain California's agricultural environment.”

As I laid there looking up at the beautiful rainbow that covered the sky, I heard the farmer come by and say “Wow, this is going to be a great crop this year!”

I smiled as I thought to myself, RAIN. It's a good thing!

Honorable Mention (Sixth-Grade Student)

Sunflower Time!
By Kylie Merrihew
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Hannah Shickle, Teacher
Siskiyou County

“Yay! Yay! Yay!” yelled Sarah with enthusiasm.

She was the daughter of a young farmer named Jeff and his wife Katie. Sarah was so excited because today was going to be the best day ever. She raced into her parents’ room and started jumping on the bed.

“Wake up! Wake up! Wake up!” she yelled. “Today’s the day we plant sunflower seeds!”

You plant sunflower seeds in the spring because the seeds have a shell. While it’s underground the shell softens and begins to shoot roots out, like a spaceship taking off. As the ground gets warmer a sprout shoots towards the top of the soil and breaks through. This is the germination stage.

“Okay, okay, we’re up.” said Farmer Jeff. “Now go get dressed.”

“Okay!” said Sarah as she went skipping down the hall.

They all ate pancakes in the kitchen. Then they went out on the farm and started planting sunflower seeds. When they were all done they had planted about 1,000 sunflowers. A few short weeks later the seeds had sprouted.

The next stage is called the seedling stage. This stage begins when the sprout has small leaves. At this stage the sprout grows taller and starts to produce more leaves. The seedling stage only lasts about two weeks after the sprouts pop through the ground.

The next morning Farmer Jeff went outside and felt the cold air nipping at his nose. Oh no! There was a freeze. Almost all the sunflowers were frozen. Brrrr! That must have been very cold for the sunflowers. Farmer Jeff’s feet were glued to the ground as he walked back inside and told Katie.

“We can try again next year.” She said with a sad look on her face.

The stage that the sunflowers were in was the vegetative stage. The vegetative stage means the sunflower’s stalk has leaves that are longer than ½ inch. This is when the main growth occurs. The stalk starts thickening, growing taller, and producing more leaves.

Soon Sarah was up. When Farmer Jeff told her that a lot of the sunflowers had died she ran straight outside.

“There are still a lot of sunflowers alive!” Sarah said vibrating with excitement. “We can still get sunflower seeds.”

Soon the bud stage had begun. This is when a bud shows up on the top of the stalk. Once this happens the sunflower starts heliotropism, which means the leaves and buds follow the sun. Sarah sat in the field and pretended to be a flower.

A month had passed since the freeze and the sunflowers were just fine. There were just two stages left, the flowering stage and the ripening stage. The flowering stage starts once the bud begins to open. “The complete opening of the bud can take seven days and proceeds from the outside to the middle of the flower.

The last stage is the ripening stage. This final stage allows the seeds to fall and be planted in the ground. At this time, the back of the flower head turns yellow then brown.

Sarah, Katie, and Farmer Jeff didn’t have the best year but it wasn’t the worst either. The icing on the cake was the delicious sunflower seeds that reminded them of summer and made them excited about planting sunflowers again.

Honorable Mention (Eighth-Grade Student)

Phillip Pistachio Fighting Heart Disease

By Mason Liu

San Gabriel Christian School

Clarence Atwater, Teacher

Los Angeles County

“Ughh. Basking in the sun can be habit forming,” groaned Phillip.

Phillip was a pistachio nut. He was growing on a pistachio tree at a farm in Avenal, California. He was among fifty thousand nuts produced by the tree biannually. His life was slow, easy, and carefree. The tree he was growing on was a very prestigious one. It was known among the orchard to be very resistant to saline water. Pistachios are naturally resistant to salinity. He looked over his creamy, green pale shell and sighed indifferently.

Day after day he sat on the tree waiting to be harvested from August to as late as October. When it was harvest time he wanted to be consumed by a person with high risk of heart disease. Pistachios reduce harmful cholesterol and raise good cholesterol. He wanted to help reduce that risk so that they could live longer. But it was June and that would take a while.

So Phillip waited, talked to friends, and well, um... waited. His friend Peter decided to count the nuts on the opposite tree to pass the time. Phillip thought that was a good idea so he got counting. Every other year a pistachio tree has a heavy crop that alternated with a lighter crop. Apparently it was a heavy season for he saw about 30,000 nuts on the opposite tree!

July rolled around. The Californian summer was scorching and the heat made his shell dry. Pistachios groaned daily due to the heat. The heat was uncomfortable but Phillip did not complain. The localized irrigation in the orchard watered his tree daily at around 3 p.m. The pipes carried the life-giving water to the sprinkler head near the tree and distributed it. Phillip just bore the heat, enjoyed the water, and waited for August.

Finally August came. Phillip wanted to be harvested as soon as possible. Pistachios in surrounding trees were being harvested. Their once green shells were now yellow-brown. Their shells had split and their green-brown inside was visible through a thin slit.

Machines came and shook the tree branches sharply and many nuts fell down. They were collected and shipped off to a factory. Phillip wished he was in their shoes but his shell was still green. In fact, none of the seeds on his tree had fully ripened yet.

“Oh well, I guess I’ll just have to wait a while longer.” Phillip sighed.

September came. Still more nuts were harvested. Phillip was not. Day after day rolled by and still nothing happened. Then one day Phillip woke up feeling funny. The whole tree looked sickly. It seemed... unstable. The tree seemed like it would fall down soon. This wasn’t good. Farmers walked by the tree and stopped. They inspected it. There was something wrong. Phillip overheard them saying that it was infected by the Texas root rot, scientific name *Phymatotrichopsis omnivora*. It had infected trees in the orchard 50 years ago and had now

become active. The deadly fungus could lie for decades lurking feet beneath the tree. Only now had it been awakened.

Phillip worried about the tree. He had heard that the root rot caused the affected plant to die. He hoped it lasted long enough for him to be harvested. If it didn't, well, he didn't want to think about what could happen. The farmers left, leaving Phillip terrified for a while. Then they came back and dug up the soil surrounding the tree. They added compost and manure to the tree's soil. Hopefully they would kill the fungus.

Miraculously the tree survived! October rolled around and Phillip was overjoyed. He had survived the growing season! But still he was not ripe. The next day however, he noticed his shell was browner. He got excited and hoped he would ripen. Then a loud CRACK was heard and Phillip looked down on himself and saw a split in his shell. He cried with joy and heard a symphony of cracks follow. His tree's crop had ripened. The shaking machine collected him and his fellow nuts and they were shipped off to a factory. Machines peeled off his outer shell layer and he was loaded into a crate. Phillip, along with many other pistachios, was dried for four days. Phillip was then salted and roasted. They were shipped out to the market where a middle-aged man with high risk of heart disease bought the bag of pistachios he was in. His life's dream was fulfilled.