



Storytelling

EVALUATION SHEET

INSTRUCTIONS

Please review the instructions for evaluating the performances of the storytelling contestants. The following criteria are of equal importance to evaluating contestants. Terminology used is only intended to help the judge identify criteria for determining a winner. Please make your comments using language understandable to the contestant. Students and instructors appreciate constructive narrative comments. Please do not confer with other judges before ranking students. Judges' decisions are an individual responsibility.

Speaker Number _____

Speaker Name _____

Round Prelims

Section _____

Finals

Yes No **Did the contestant communicate effectively with the audience?**

Yes No **Did the contestant command attention?**

Yes No **Did the contestant tell the story with ease?**

Yes No **Did the contestant exhibit enthusiasm?**

Yes No **Did the contestant utilize facial expressions, vocal variety and characterization?**

Yes No **Did the contestant make good eye contact?**

Yes No **Did the contestant use good posture?**

Yes No **Did the contestant speak clearly?**

Yes No **Did the contestant use gestures effectively?**

CONSTRUCTIVE COMMENTS FOR THE CONTESTANT:

Judge's signature _____



Storytelling Contest

Invitational Meet 2023-24

“Day at the Park”

Grades 2 and 3

by Kathryn Gonzales

Directions to Contest Directors: Give a copy of this sheet to each judge before the contest begins.

Directions to Judges: Each speaker must include at least one of the following elements from the story in his or her presentation. Words may vary. It is up to the judge to decide if the speaker has included one of the elements.

1. Judy and Oliver run over to the park to begin their big day out.
2. Oliver is a little scared to go on the biggest slide, but Judy encourages him. They play on the slide until spots on the swing set open up.
3. Judy and Oliver take a break from playing to eat lunch. Judy finds bubbles in her lunch box and the kids play with them until they spot the monkey bars.
4. Judy and Oliver go over to play on the monkey bars and have a lot of fun.
5. The kids head home after a long and fun day at the park.



Storytelling Contest

Invitational Meet 2023-24

“Day at the Park”

Grades 2 and 3

by Kathryn Gonzales

Judy walks out of her home and down the street to pick up her friend Oliver. They have a big day of playing ahead of them. Oliver is waiting outside his house and yells “Hurry up, I’m ready!” Judy quickens the pace and grabs Oliver’s hand as they run into the park laughing.

Judy pulls Oliver towards the biggest slide and tells him to go first. Oliver hesitates because of how far up it is but musters up the courage to climb up the ladder rungs one by one until reaching the top.

Oliver looks down at Judy who isn’t far behind and she smiles at him. Oliver takes a deep breath, positioning himself at the edge, and moves forward. He glides right down to the bottom with Judy right behind him.

“See, that wasn’t so scary,” Judy said. Oliver agreed and said they should do it again. Up and down they went but instead of nerves, it was excitement and squeals of joy while they slid down.

In the distance, Judy noticed that spots on the swing set finally opened up. “Look! Let’s go!” She exclaimed and both children took off towards the swings. The kids made it in time to grab the last two spots. They sat down

and started swinging. They swing higher and higher, reaching for the sky as their legs kicked. Oliver encourages Judy to jump off the swing set. Judy leaps off her swing landing safely in the soft sand. Oliver follows and they head back to their swings taking turns pushing each other to get higher and higher.

Lunchtime was approaching so Judy and Oliver decide to find a grassy spot in the shade and spread out their picnic blanket. The kids unpack the delicious snacks their parents packed, and they share while laughing and talking.

“I forgot my mom packed this!” Judy says as she pulls out a bottle of bubble solution. She blows a stream of bubbles and Oliver tries to catch and pop them as they float away.

“Let’s do the monkey bars before we leave” Oliver looks over, excited and says, “Those are my favorite.”

The kids clean up and gather their belongings before heading over to the monkey bars across the park.

“Last one there is a rotten egg!” Oliver yells just before he takes off running. Judy gasps and picks up speed, she passes Oliver saying, “Looks like it’s you!” as she places her hands on the Monkey bars.

They laugh and start climbing up and down pretending to be monkeys, making silly faces and monkey noises. They navigate their way across the

top of the monkey bars, alternating their hands as they swing from one bar to another. Oliver tells Judy to watch him as he is holding on to the bars when suddenly he gains momentum and kicks his legs up. Oliver wraps his legs around the bar and releases his hands.

Judy is watching in amazement as Oliver hangs upside down. They both start laughing at how silly Oliver looks until he reaches his hands back up to grab the bar and makes his way back down to the ground. Judy tells Oliver that it looks like it's time to head home.

They gathered their belongings their faces beaming with contentment and joy. Oliver told Judy "I had the best day, I'm glad we came to the park together".

Judy nodded in agreement "Me too! I loved playing on the swings, going down the slide, and pretending to be monkeys".

They both laughed as they took one look around before walking away from the park. As they headed home Judy and Oliver looked forward to the next chapter of their park adventures.



Storytelling Contest

Invitational Meet 2023-24

“A Very Strange Birthday”

Grades 2 and 3

by Sherri Maret

Directions to Contest Directors: Give a copy of this sheet to each judge before the contest begins.

Directions to Judges: Each speaker must include at least one of the following elements from the story in his or her presentation. Words may vary. It is up to the judge to decide if the speaker has included one of the elements.

1. It is the narrator’s birthday. For their birthday, the narrator’s parents have given them a robot.
2. The narrator sees a book with a robot on the cover and assumes it is instructions to control the robot.
3. The narrator goes to school and tells their friends about the robot. The other kids think the narrator is lying.
4. When the narrator arrives back at home, the robot is gone.
5. The narrator feels their mother shaking them awake. They are still in their pajamas in bed. The robot was a dream. Or was it?



Storytelling Contest

Invitational Meet 2023-24

“A Very Strange Birthday”

Grades 2 and 3

by Sherri Maret

The strangest thing happened to me. I had to tell someone about it so it might as well be you.

It was my birthday and I woke up like normal except for one thing. I got up and got dressed and ready for school. When I went to eat breakfast, sitting in my spot was a robot.

Yep. You heard me right. There was a robot sitting in my chair. It was as big as me. Around the robot’s neck was a sign. On it was written ‘Happy Birthday!’

“Happy Birthday, kiddo!” my mom said as she put bowls and cereal boxes on the table. I got the milk.

I didn’t know what to say. No one I know has a robot. Not even any grownups I know.

“Where did the robot come from?” I asked. Of course I told her thank you.

Mom said that they had entered a contest and won it. They had it stored in the closet for a month and it had been tough to keep it a secret. Mom and Dad decided it would be a great birthday gift.

“What does it do?” I asked her.

“Well, we haven’t turned it on yet. We were waiting for you to do that,” mom said.

Okaaaaaaaay. I thought to myself. I have no idea what the robot was supposed to do but I did want to find out.

Mom said “Eat up. I’m going to let the dog out to run in the back yard.”

I heard the door from the garage open and Dad came in.

“Are you done working on the car?” Mom asked Dad.

“Done. We need to talk about what we’re doing to celebrate today,” Dad replied.

“Is grandma and grandpa coming over?” I asked them.

“Yes. They will be eating dinner with us,” Mom said as she went out the door with our dog.

I saw a thick book with a robot on the cover laying next to the cereal.

Maybe these were directions? I picked it up and started to read.

I heard a shout from the backyard. It was my mom. “Don’t miss the school bus!”

This robot had to wait. I brushed my teeth in a hurry and grabbed my backpack.

My dad said, “Have a great day. We will talk about birthday plans when you get home.”

I almost asked if I could stay home so I could play with my robot but I knew they wouldn’t let me.

I heard the bus pull up next to my friend's house and shouted, "Bye Mom and Dad! Thanks again for the robot!" I sprinted to the bus. Whew! I made it.

This was going to be a hard day at school. How was I supposed to learn anything when all I wanted to do was turn on my robot and find out what it does?

Lessons were hard to follow since my mind was on what was sitting at my kitchen table.

I got a nudge from my friend during math class.

I told my teacher, "I'm sorry. I'm a little lost."

"We're working on the fifth question. I asked you how you would figure that answer out."

I decided I better forget about that robot because I didn't want to get in trouble.

At lunch I got to share that I got a robot for my birthday.

"Haha. There is no such thing as a robot that big that a kid can have. You're making it up," said a boy in another class.

No one believed me and thought I was pranking them. A few of my friends asked to come to my house after school so they could see it with their own eyes.

Of course I said yes. I guess I wouldn't believe it either if someone told me they got a robot for their birthday.

The bell rang for us all to go home. The bus ride home seemed to take forever.

Everyone who lived close by told me they would be at my house in a few minutes.

When I arrived home, the robot was gone!

I put my head down on the table and took a deep breath.

I needed that robot now. My friends would be knocking at my door in a few minutes!

I felt someone shaking my shoulder. It was my mom.

“Where is my robot I got for my birthday?” I asked her.

She said, “What robot?”

Are you kidding me? I thought. Then I realized I was in bed and still in my pajamas.

Was it all a dream? I thought so until I saw a book with a robot on it laying on my bookcase next to my bed.

What do you think? Was the robot real or not.



Storytelling Contest

Fall/Winter District 2023-24

“Talent Show”

Grades 2 and 3

by Sherri Maret

Directions to Contest Directors: Give a copy of this sheet to each judge before the contest begins.

Directions to Judges: Each speaker must include at least one of the following elements from the story in his or her presentation. Words may vary. It is up to the judge to decide if the speaker has included one of the elements.

1. The narrator’s school is having a talent show. The narrator’s grandmother, encourages the narrator to sing at the talent show. The narrator is nervous to sing in front of people that aren’t their family.
2. The narrator’s friends, Taylor and Jaime, are going to sing a song together, but they want the someone to play the guitar. The narrator refuses, even though they can play the guitar.
3. Two nights before the talent show, the narrator finds out Jaime had a family emergency and won’t be able to make the talent show. Taylor doesn’t want to perform alone and considers dropping out of the show.
4. The narrator considers taking Jaime’s spot and performing with Taylor. The narrator’s mom encourages them to push past their fear and try to perform.
5. The narrator decides to sing in the talent show with Taylor. They didn’t win, but the narrator feels good about overcoming their fear.



Storytelling Contest

Fall/Winter District 2023-24

“Talent Show”

Grades 2 and 3

by Sherri Maret

When my grandmother heard that there was a talent show at my school, she asked me if I was going to sing. I told her no.

“Why not?” she asked me.

She knows I love to sing because we sing all the time when I visit her. You see, my grandmother knows how to play the piano, the guitar, and the drums. Yep, you heard me right. She is a really good musician. When she was younger, she played in a band. Oh right, she can sing too.

So when I’m with granny, she teaches me new things on all those instruments plus we sing. A lot.

“I guess I’m surprised you’re not entering this talent show,” she told me. “You are a really good singer.”

My parents tell me the same thing all the time. The problem is that I don’t like to sing in front of people that aren’t my family.

Granny then said, “Maybe you’ll change your mind.”

I didn’t think so.

Two of my friends are signing up to do it. They are going to sing a song with each of them taking a part that they would sing alone. Those are called solos in case you didn’t know.

“Our song would be better if we had someone to play the song on a guitar,” Taylor said to us.

“I thought so too,” Jaime said.

Then they both looked at me. They knew I played.

“Don’t look at me,” I told them.

So my friends practiced and practiced. It was acapella. That means to sing without any backup from instruments or a music recording. They will do just fine without my help. I think they could win!

A week later I tagged along to go to the talent show meeting. The teacher in charge talked about what order people were in and to let her know how much time each act would need to set up. My friends decided on a name. It was Two Singers and a Song. I thought it was a good name.

Two nights before the talent show, I showed up to watch my friends practice.

“Where is Jaime?” Taylor grumbled. I think everyone was getting a little nervous about performing. I was and I wasn’t even in the show.

Taylor’s mom poked her head into the room and said, “I got some bad news.”

“What?” asked Taylor.

“Jaime’s grandfather got really sick. He was taken to the hospital. Jaime and her family had to leave town suddenly. Jaime won’t be back for a few days. I’m so sorry,” she explained.

“Oh no!” cried Taylor. “I’m sorry about her grandfather being in the hospital but I am pretty sad about the talent show too.” I could see Taylor was really upset.

Taylor’s mom said that maybe Taylor could perform alone.

“I don’t think I could do that by myself,” Taylor told her.

Inside me I had butterflies. I wanted to say I could sing with Taylor but I also didn’t want to say anything. My stomach started to hurt a little bit.

“I guess I’m dropping out of the show,” Taylor said. “I’ll tell the teacher tomorrow.”

I could see that Taylor didn’t want me to hang around so I walked home. All I could think about was if I had it in me to get up with Taylor in front of all those people to help her out.

I told my mom what had happened. I also told her how I was feeling.

“I know I could do Jaime’s part and it would make Taylor so happy,” I told her. “I just get really scared about doing it.”

My mom got me a glass of milk and a couple of cookies and sat down at our kitchen table.

“Look. You need to do what you want to do. No pressure. I will tell you that sometimes the fear of doing things holds people back from doing things they really want to do,” Mom said.

“My stomach is hurting so much,” I grumbled.

“How long is the song?” Mom asked.

“Around three minutes,” I told her.

“I support your decision either way. To help Taylor or not,” she said. “I also think three minutes would go fast doing something that you love. Especially if you just sing like you are singing for your family at home.”

I thought about that for quite a while. Three minutes. Maybe I should do it because it isn’t anything near like what my grandmother did. She sang song after song for a couple of hours back when she was younger...hmmmm.

The next day I told Taylor, “I’ll sing with you and play my guitar. Having my guitar will make me feel better.”

Taylor said, “Really! Thank you so much! You are a such a good friend! Thank you! Thank you! Thank you!”

So that night Taylor and I practiced. The Talent Show was the next day so we worked hard that night. You know what? The practice gave me confidence and having Taylor’s mom listen and help us out was great.

We didn’t win the Talent Show, but I think I did win because I overcame a big fear. My parents and grandmother gave us a standing ovation. I felt really good about it.



Storytelling Contest

Fall/Winter District 2023-24

“Summer Camp Won’t be Fun AT ALL!”

Grades 2 and 3

by Sherri Maret

Directions to Contest Directors: Give a copy of this sheet to each judge before the contest begins.

Directions to Judges: Each speaker must include at least one of the following elements from the story in his or her presentation. Words may vary. It is up to the judge to decide if the speaker has included one of the elements.

1. The narrator and their best friend Terri usually go to summer camp together, but this year, Terri can’t go. The narrator is very upset about this.
2. Upon arriving at the camp, the narrator meets their camp counselor and joins their group—the Bobcats. The narrator’s parents try to encourage the narrator to have fun, even if Terri isn’t there.
3. At the camp this summer, there is a new kayak race for the campers to participate in. The narrator and their tent neighbor Taylor decide to sign up to learn to kayak for the race.
4. The narrator learns they are good at paddling the kayak, while Taylor is not. The narrator has a lot of fun learning to kayak.
5. On the last day of camp, the narrator’s parents come to pick them up. They ask if the narrator had fun, and the narrator replies they had a lot of fun and they were going to tell Terri all about it.



Storytelling Contest

Fall/Winter District 2023-24

“Summer Camp Won’t be Fun AT ALL!”

Grades 2 and 3

by Sherri Maret

I don’t know what to do. Me and my best friend were going to summer camp together for a week. We talked about swimming in the lake, fishing, sleeping in tents, and all those other fun things.

“I want to learn how to hit those big bullseye targets with an arrow,” Terri said to me.

“That would be fun! I think we can sign up for horse-backing riding, too” I said.

After the last day of school, Terri told me that summer camp was off.

“What do you mean?” I asked.

“My dad got a new job. I can’t go,” Terri replied.

“You’re moving!?” I thought I was going to start crying which would have been embarrassing.

“No. My dad has to go do some training for his new job and mom wants to take me and my little sister, too,” Terri explained. “So we are staying in a hotel on the beach while dad works. It’s kind of a family vacation but dad will be working during the day.”

I walked home and kicked every rock along the way. I was mad and I was sad. If Terri didn't go to summer camp, then I didn't want to go either. Camp would not be fun.

At supper I told my parents, "Terri can't go to summer camp so I don't want to go either."

My dad said, "I know there are other kids from school going. Just because Terri can't go, doesn't mean you have to cancel."

"We were sharing a tent. We were doing all the fun things together," I told them. "It won't be any fun without my best friend!"

"I'm just glad Terri's family isn't moving. That's the bright side, right?" Mom told me.

"Don't forget your mom is helping Aunt Rosa after her surgery while you're gone. I think you would have a lot more fun at camp than being here with a sitter," Dad said as he patted me on the back.

I didn't eat much supper because I was in a grumpy mood.

A few days later, my mom showed me the list of camping stuff I needed. "I have everything but your clothes checked off the list. You're going to have fun if you let yourself," my mom told me.

How could I have any fun without Terri? I felt myself getting into a grumpy mood again.

My parents took me to the camp.

My camp counselor seemed like a fun person and said, "Hey there! You're in my group called the Bobcats. Once you have said your goodbyes to your parents, I'll take you bobcats to your tents."

I hugged my parents and said goodbye.

“Try to have fun,” my mom said before they left.

I just muttered, “Yeah, right.”

Me and the other campers followed our counselor down a trail to our campsite. We put up our tents and got our equipment sorted. As I lay in my sleeping bag that night, I thought the first day at camp wasn't terrible.

The next day we had stations of different things to do. They had something new this summer.

The camp leader announced, “So campers, you may have noticed we have kayaks in the lake that are perfect for your size. Those who want to try them out can sign up. On your final day here we are going to have a kayak race for those who are up to the challenge.”

“Are you going to sign up?” asked Taylor who was in the tent next to mine. “I want to try. What about you?” I asked.

Taylor and I both signed up. The next day we learned the basics and then the counselor let us paddle around. Taylor was getting frustrated, but I loved it.

The next day we were asked who wanted to sign up for the race. If you signed up for it, you were able to get more practice time in the lake.

I asked Taylor, “Are you going to race?”

“No, I keep getting turned around. I hope you are. You are really good,” Taylor told me.

“I think I will,” I decided.

You know I was pretty good at it and got better and better. There were a couple of other campers that would probably beat me but I didn't care. I was having a fun time in the kayak.

The day of the race came which was the last day of camp. All of the parents were there to pick up us kids but some came to watch our kayak race.

"You signed up?" my dad asked.

"Yep!," I told them.

"Are you saying you actually had some fun?" my mom asked.

"No. I had a lot of fun," I told them.

I had a lot to tell Terri when I got home.



Storytelling Contest

Spring District 2023-24

“Pirates”

Grades 2 and 3

by Kathryn Gonzales

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1. The pirate ship, led by Captain Eli, departs from shore to take on a new adventure.
2. The crew swabs the decks before getting into their hammocks to sleep for the night.
3. In the morning, Captain Eli shouts “Land, ho!”, alerting the crew that they’ve made it to their destination. The crew prepare to get into smaller boats to paddle to shore.
4. Once on the island, the crew begins to trek through the jungle following Captain Eli’s map.
5. The crew finds a cave and begins to dig, eventually finding a treasure chest.



Storytelling Contest

Spring District 2023-24

“Pirates”

Grades 2 and 3

by Kathryn Gonzales

The sun was just starting to rise as the crew marched across the gangway onto the ship. Once everyone was accounted for in the manifest, they were ready for their voyage.

“Weigh Anchor you scallywags!” ordered Captain Eli. Members of the crew swiftly took their places at the turnstile and with all their force, pushed their individual bars simultaneously taking them in a circle to lift the anchor.

Captain Eli yelled “Hoist the sails! Hoist the colors!” and members of the pirate crew leaped into action. They worked together pulling the ropes in unison while chanting “heave-ho, heave-ho” until the white cloth was so high it resembled clouds.

Once the sails caught wind and the ship was moving, the Captain took his place at the helm steering them towards their destination.

As the ship was steady on its course, the Captain gave the crew orders to swab the decks. Members of the crew threw over empty buckets attached to a rope to collect the water from the ocean. Once everyone was armed with their mop and buckets, they set out to work.

Each person dunked their mop into the water-filled bucket and slapped the mop down on the filthy deck pushing it back and forth, scrubbing until time for the captain's inspection.

Captain Eli marched across the deck observing the crew's work. "Argh! Fine job me hearties!" the captain proclaimed before ending the day. Crew members headed down the steps one by one to the below-deck sleeping quarters. Each individual hung their hammocks up from the beams in the ceiling making sure to knot the rope securely so they wouldn't come crashing down in the middle of the night.

The morning was quiet when the crew heard the captain shouting "Land, ho!" pointing to the island in front of them. They prepared the small boats that would bring them to the island and filled them with members of the crew along with the captain. The crew grabbed hold of their oars and moved them back and forth in unison through the water pushing the boats closer and closer to the shore.

As the edges of their boats hit the sand the pirates jumped out and pulled their boats ashore. The captain unfolded his map out in front of him and used his compass to calculate their direction.

"This way!" Captain Eli yelled as he started trudging through the damp sand into the jungle.

A few crew members walked in front of the captain clearing the way and cutting down vines and brush. Exhausted from the heat they stopped at a freshwater stream to rest and collect water for drinking.

“It’s not much farther,” The captain said. The crew groaned that they wanted to go back to the ship, but the captain told them it would be worth it. Reluctantly they got up and continued their journey until, to their surprise they came upon some caves.

“It’s here!” Captain Eli hollered “I knew we would find it”. The cave opening was tall and ominous, but as they entered, the light of the lantern caused the rock to sparkle. Captain Eli slowly approached a large boulder in the back of the cave and told the crew “Dig here”. The pirates wearily dug their shovels into the ground, scooping dirt until they tired and switched. *Thunk*

“I think we’ve hit something!” one member shouts.

Captain Eli rushes over pushing the people aside. “We found it!” The chest was heavy and took almost every man to push out of the hole. The pirates urged the captain to open it and take a look so he obliged. They pried the chest open to reveal more gold and silver than they ever could have imagined.

“You’re right. It was worth it” a crew member sighed. After dividing the treasure, the crew headed off into the sunset to spend their riches.



Storytelling Contest

Spring District 2023-24

“Moving in the Summer Stinks”

Grades 2 and 3

by Sherri Maret

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1. The narrator has moved houses during the summer. They miss their old neighborhood. Last night, the narrator and their family were playing a board game when they heard an owl in the backyard.
2. The next day, the narrator was playing in the yard with their dog, Cotton, when the next door neighbor introduced herself. Her name is Lily, but most people call her Auntie.
3. Auntie invites the narrator and their mother over to her house, which has a massive garden. Auntie tells them about her garden helpers, Michael and Maria.
4. The narrator goes to help in Auntie’s garden with Michael and Maria and learns they both go to the narrator’s school.
5. While at Auntie’s garden, the kids learn about caterpillars, butterflies, and owls. The narrator gets to take a plant home to make their own garden at home. The narrator feels more comfortable in their new neighborhood.



Storytelling Contest

Spring District 2023-24

“Moving in the Summer Stinks”

Grades 2 and 3

by Sherri Maret

My new house and neighborhood are great. The only problem was summer. At my old house I would be playing at my friend’s house all the time. She and the other kids in the neighborhood would swim and play there, too. I miss Tamara and her pool! Moving during the summer stinks.

I don’t know anyone here. I’ve ridden my bike around the block a few times but haven’t seen anyone my age playing yet. My mom tells me I should be patient. It is hard to be patient.

Last night my mom and dad played a board game with me at the kitchen table. Our back door was open.

Whooooooooooooooooooooo whooooooooooooooooooooo. I stopped to listen to the owl.

“Did you hear that?” I asked my parents.

“Yes, let’s listen,” my dad said.

An owl hooted again.

“This neighborhood has quite a bit of wildlife,” my mom said.

I did like that there were a lot of big trees around us and we had a nice climbing tree in the front yard. Can't say that I had seen a lot of wildlife. Hmmmmm.

The next morning, I played with Cotton. He is a white fluffy mix of a lot of dogs. He is friendly and right now my best friend and only friend.

"Sit, Cotton!" He sat.

"Shake, Cotton!" He shook.

"Roll over, Cotton!" He doesn't. Well maybe tomorrow he will.

I heard someone in the backyard next to mine. I was curious, so I peeked through the crack in the fence. The older lady next door was planting some flowers.

Cotton barked. He was peeking at her too.

"Hello there," The lady called out.

"Um. Hi." I replied.

The lady asked me if I liked our new house and some other things.

"Yes, ma'am." My mother always told me to use good manners. Please and thank you along with calling a lady ma'am or a man sir was something I did without thinking about it too much. Habit I guess.

The lady asked, "I just made lemon-blueberry bread and some ice tea. Would you and your mother like to join me?"

"Let me check with my mom," I told her. My mom liked the idea so we headed over to her house.

“Nice to meet you,” she said. “I’m Lily. People in the neighborhood call me Auntie, too.” She said that she never had children, so she considered everyone around her as family. I thought that was nice.

My mom thanked her for inviting us.

“I’m so glad you could join me,” she replied.

I asked if I could look around. This wasn’t like any backyard I had ever seen. It has paths running through gardens with flowers everywhere. It was almost magical.

I heard my mom say, “Oh my! Your yard is like a giant garden! It’s beautiful!” Auntie said it was a lot of work, but she had a gardener visit once a week to do things she couldn’t. She also had little helpers, too.

“What kind of little helpers?” I asked.

She told me, “Well Maria and Michael help me today and then other helpers come on other days. Would you like to meet them?”

I said yes and she asked my mother if I could come back when her helpers showed up.

My mom said of course. We headed home.

An hour later, there was a knock at the door.

“Hi! I’m Michael. Auntie said you were going to come over to her house?” he asked.

So I told my mom I was leaving and left with Michael.

I found out he goes to the school that I will be going to when school started. His sister was a year younger than I was and Michael was a year older. I was so happy.

“This is Maria,” Auntie said when I walked into the garden.

“Come look! We found black swallowtail caterpillars!” Maria was really excited about this.

I wasn’t sure what to say and followed her down a path.

She explained that Auntie loved butterflies and bees and that is why her garden was so amazing.

“We see all kinds of butterflies, caterpillars, bees, and birds here. I’ve learned so much from her,” Maria told me.

I crouched down to get a look at a plump green caterpillar with some yellow and black on it.”

Maria told me that sometimes they would find a chrysalis too. Last summer they saw a butterfly that was coming out of the chrysalis. I thought this was fun learning stuff in Auntie’s garden.

“Have you heard the owl, Auntie?” Maria asked.

“Oh yes, we were chatting last night,” Auntie said.

“You talk to owls?” I asked.

She laughed and said she tried to talk to all animals. Owls just sometimes answered back. I was liking Auntie more and more.

We did some weeding for Auntie and then she asked if we wanted to take some flowers that needed to be planted to put in pots or in our own garden.

I thought that was a great idea and so did my mom.

So that is how I met my first great friends. That includes Auntie who helped my mother and I create a garden in our own yard so we could have wonderful wildlife like she did.

The summer didn't turn out stinky at all.