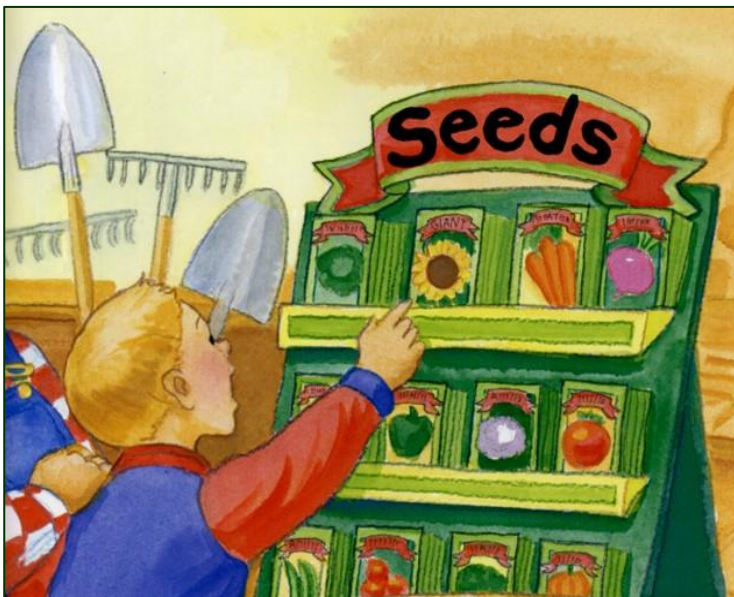


The Sunflowers

Logan whistled his way down the lane toward home. He was counting the days until the summer sun would shine on his very own corner of the garden.

The farmer promised him that he could plant anything he wanted. And Logan wanted something B-I-G, bigger than his brother's cornstalks or his sister's hollyhocks...

He wanted to grow great big sunflowers, so tall they would reach all the way to heaven!



After the warm sun of May chased the last frost away, Logan and the farmer chose the very best sunflower seeds.

“GIANT” declared the seed packet.

Logan was sure his sunflowers would touch the skies by August.



Logan and the farmer worked side by side. They hoed the hard soil. They cleared the heavy rocks. They yanked out the pesky weeds that might choke the plants.

The farmer added fertilizer. Logan pressed the tiny seeds down into the rich soil.

Then the waiting began.



The warmer summer rain brought fresh water. The sunflower seedlings poked their thirsty heads out of the soil.

“Drink! Drink!” Logan called from his window.

The hot summer sun brought warmth and light, which made the plants stretch taller.

“Grow! Grow!” Logan sang out.

How long until the flowers would bloom? How long until they reached heaven?



Soon everything in the garden was growing very tall indeed.

His brother's cornstalks soared up, up, up.

His sister's hollyhocks waved high above the fence.

But nothing grew taller than Logan's sunflowers...



Whenever a breeze blew through the garden, the sunflowers nodded their heads.

“Yes!” they seemed to say. “We have B-I-G plans this summer.”

July turned into August without making a sound.

The giant flowers turned their blossoms toward heaven.

They followed the sun with their own round, brown faces.

“Soon my sunflowers will stretch all the way to heaven,” Logan boasted.

He was very proud of his hard work.



But at summer’s end, the flowers suddenly stopped growing. Their faces, heavy with seeds, bent toward the ground. Hungry birds hopped around the stalks.

Logan grew very sad.

The tallest flowers would never make it to heaven now.

The tall corn would be cut down for harvest.

The hollyhocks would soon bloom no more.

All their work was good for nothing.

The farmer knew Logan was disappointed but the farmer also knew a secret or two...



The corn would provide food for many people. The hollyhocks would bloom again next summer. And the sunflowers...?

Well, the sunflowers were created with a gift inside: **SEEDS!**

Seeds to feed birds. Seeds to feed people. Seeds to be carried all over the world.



“Look, Logan,” the farmer said. “See what a good harvest your sunflowers have produced.”



Logan watched as birds of every kind lifted the seeds right out of the sunflowers. The birds flew up, up, over the fields, off toward the horizon until they disappeared from sight.

“The sunflowers reached heaven after all,” Logan shouted with joy. “Those seeds will go everywhere.”

The farmer nodded. “What can you do with the sunflower seeds that are left?”

Logan thought harder. “We can sprinkle our seeds with salt and share them with hungry friends! And we can save some seeds to plant next summer.” Logan said, pleased with himself for thinking such good thoughts. “Next year, let’s plant twice as many seeds!”

The farmer nodded once more and smiled.

“See how much good we can do when we work together in my garden?”

