

Sunflowers



A sunflower is a very unique kind of plant. Its head looks like—you guessed it—the sun! A sunflower has one bright yellow flower with lots of seeds inside. It also has many special parts. These parts help the plant live and grow.

A sunflower is **mammoth** in size. It can grow taller than a person! This is because a sunflower has a strong **stem**. This tough stem helps hold up the heavy flower and its many seeds.

The stem helps the sunflower in other ways, too. A sunflower needs lots of sunlight to stay healthy. The stem can turn itself so the face of the plant is always looking toward the sun. Imagine a large field full of sunflowers. All the sunflowers can turn together. They can follow the sun across the sky.

When it first starts to grow, a sunflower's bud is covered. Rough, **wrinkled** leaves hide the flower. These leaves keep insects from eating the young flower before it can open. Finally, the flower opens and starts to bloom. For the rest of the summer, you can see the flowers waving and **fluttering** in the wind.

Once the flower blooms, the plant needs insects. Insects help the plant make seeds. Bees and other insects like the bright yellow flower. They also like nectar, the sweet juice the flower makes. Because insects like the flower, they land on it. The pollen from the sunflower sticks to the insects. When the insects land on a different sunflower, they bring pollen from other sunflowers. Pollen from one sunflower helps another sunflower make seeds. Soon, all the sunflowers will be full of seeds!

People have grown sunflowers for thousands of years. They can be used for many things. The seeds are used to eat and to make cooking oil. Many people give sunflowers as gifts. The big round **shape** and bright color of these flowers seem to make people happy!

COMPREHENSION Why are insects bad for a sunflower at first and then good for it? What words help you imagine what sunflowers look like?



The Lion and the Mouse

A lion was sleeping under his favorite tree when he felt a tiny mouse running across his belly. The lion woke up and took hold of the mouse in his huge paw.

"You woke me up," said the lion with an angry **growl**. "I'm going to eat you." The lion opened his mouth to eat the mouse.

"Oh please, Mr. Lion!" begged the mouse. "Let me go this time. I'm a **gentle**, quiet little mouse. I was only looking for seeds. I didn't mean to bother you. And if you're kind to me now, maybe someday I can do something to help you."

The huge lion **roared** with laughter. "What could you ever do to help me?" he asked. "I'm the king of the forest. When I roar, even the leaves get scared and shake. You're just a tiny mouse with a little **squealing**, squeaking voice. And you woke me up when you went **galloping** across my belly. That was not very nice. But you have made me laugh, so I'm going to let you go."

The lion opened his paw and the mouse ran away.

The next day, the lion was sleeping under his favorite tree again. As he slept, hunters came and threw a net over him. The lion woke up and roared and twisted. But he couldn't get free. The hunters tied the net tighter, and then they left the forest to get a truck to carry the lion in.

Just then, the mouse came and saw what was happening.

"Mr. Lion," said the mouse. "You said I couldn't help you. But if you stay still, I will chew the ropes of that net and set you free."

Before the hunters came back, the mouse had chewed through all the ropes and the lion was free.

The moral of this story is: Be nice to everyone. You never know whose help you might need.

COMPREHENSION What words tell you how the lion and the mouse act? In what ways are the lion and the mouse in this story different from real animals?

