

Grade 7 - Narrative

Vegetarian Stew

Zach studied the multicolored vegetables stacked on the countertop. He was full of anticipation. Tonight would be the night to use the information he learned from his grandfather to prepare something special for his family.

Zach treasured the time he spent with his grandfather, who was a chef at a local restaurant. The two of them spent countless hours in the kitchen at Zach's house. Grandfather taught Zach how to make many different types of food and encouraged his interest in cooking.

This morning they had taken advantage of the bright summer weather to take a trip to the local farmer's market to gather the supplies that Zach would be using tonight. They gathered an array of vegetables that now filled the kitchen with bountiful color.

Today was the day that Zach would be tested. Later, he would be fixing dinner for his entire family—his parents, two brothers, sister, and grandfather. This would be the first time Zach prepared the meal independently, but his grandfather would still be there to supervise at times.

Zach's older brother, Don, entered the kitchen and headed straight to the refrigerator. He grabbed the orange juice and began to pour it into a glass while at the same time noticing the rainbow of vegetables. His expression after seeing the mound of vegetables was not enthusiastic.

"I hear you're fixing dinner tonight, Zach," he said uneasily. "So what are we going to have?"

"It's a surprise," replied Zach energetically, "but you'll like it."

"Sure thing, whatever you say," said Don hesitantly.

As Don left the kitchen he tousled Zach's hair, but Zach paid little attention. He wanted to be left alone in the kitchen so he could begin the preparations.

"Grandfather, if Don doesn't like what I fix, he won't pretend," said Zach nervously. "He just won't eat it."

"Zach you know that Don was just giving you a hard time," said Grandfather.

"I know, but why couldn't he be more like my sister Kaylee, she will eat everything and smile, even if she hates it."

"And what about your other brother, Jeffrey?" inquired his grandfather.

Zach shook his head. "If he doesn't like dinner, he'll make a big deal until he is given something he likes," responded Zach.

Jeffrey was younger than Zach, but he had very specific tastes.

"So, knowing how your siblings may react, are you certain that you still want to go ahead with your plans?" asked Grandfather.

Zach nodded decisively. "My family needs to be open to trying a wider variety of food, so maybe my plan will be the beginning."

Zach had expansive tastes when it came to trying new food. He would sample a little bit of every food available. The other members of his family, however, were much more conservative in their tastes. In fact, an ideal meal for them would be some type of meat, pasta, or potatoes, with the usual vegetables of green beans or peas.

Determined to widen his family's tastes in food, Zach had decided that tonight's meal would be entirely vegetarian; there would be no meat. Zach was not sharing this information with anyone but Grandfather, because Zach knew that even his mom and dad had reservations about an overabundance of vegetables.

Zach began to undertake the process of chopping vegetables and kneading the dough for bread. He knew that all of his family members craved freshly baked bread and thought this would be an appetizing addition to the meal.

Throughout the day, various members of Zach's family wandered through the kitchen to inspect the progress of dinner. Don returned several times, each time dismally surveying the growing mounds of chopped vegetables.

"The good news is Don hasn't asked about meat because I told him we're having stew," Zach remarked to his grandfather. "He's just assuming that there'll be meat in it, so I'm going to let him assume."

Zach returned to chopping vegetables. He still needed considerable practice before he was as skillful and quick as his grandfather was at the preparation of vegetables. Finally, Zach heaved a sigh of relief when the vegetables were all ready for the final stage. He arranged his handiwork on two foil-lined cookie sheets and put them into the oven to cook. He had learned that using a cookie sheet lined with foil added more flavor to the food.

After a short period of time in the oven, the vegetables were soft and tender. Zach now finished assembling the stew by combining the vegetables with broth and a few more ingredients to thicken it. He then placed the stew in a pot on the stove to finish. The bread was placed in the oven to bake.

Soon the fragrance of roasting onions, garlic, peppers, and other vegetables

drifted through the house captivating an audience that now stood at the doorway of the kitchen.

When everyone was seated at the table, Zach carefully ladled the stew into bowls and sliced the bread. He watched anxiously as his family sampled the stew.

Don looked at his bowl doubtfully and said, "Well, Zach, it smells great!" After taking a small taste, he added, "Never mind a spoon, just pass me the ladle."

Zach heaved a sigh of relief. He had passed the test.