

Grade 6 - Narrative

Daisy and Jake

Jake Harrison watched the proud strut of the approaching turkey, chuckling at its stately step. Its full-throated gobble was brazen. This was a wild turkey untroubled by fear of human neighbors. In fact, it looked like a guest calling on Jake and his family, certain of a welcome. Jake had named the turkey Daisy.

Everything was quiet at the stagecoach depot in west Texas—of course, things were usually pretty quiet there except when a stagecoach came through. Jake's dad and his older brother, Thomas, were hitching up fresh horses to the stagecoach while Jake led the tired horses to the corral. Jake's mother hurriedly served a meal to the passengers before they continued their journey on the Overland Trail, which carried travelers and mail from Missouri all the way to California.

Jake watched westbound stagecoaches roll onto the ferry to cross the Pecos River and eastbound ones pull away in a cloud of dust. Once the stagecoach was completely out of sight, everyone returned to their quiet routines. Whenever a stagecoach left, Jake wished he were on it, riding off to find a new life.

Daisy watched Jake with interest, her gaze fixed firmly on Jake's hand, which clutched a few precious grains of dried corn. The turkey paced closer and gave a brief but commanding gobble.

"Oh, all right," Jake conceded, scattering the grains in front of Daisy. He had been feeding the turkey for weeks, tempting it to come closer and closer each time. Now Jake could have reached out and touched the bird's feathers.

Daisy, having disposed of the corn, turned and paced back toward the brush in a stately manner. The turkey haughtily ignored the hens scratching in the dust like frustrated gardeners. When the bird reached the edge of the clearing, it disappeared, blending with the low bushes.

The Harrisons had lived at the stagecoach depot for three years, but Jake was beginning to wonder just how much longer they would be there. Rumbly about the outbreak of a war between the states had reached them, and they all understood that the future was uncertain.

After Jake and Thomas had gone to bed, the adults sat up discussing the situation. The murmur of their voices was disturbing to Jake. With the possibility of a pending move, Jake wasn't so certain that he really wanted to leave. The first thing he planned to do the next morning was to spend some time with Daisy. To his dismay, however, the turkey seemed to be avoiding him.

As the weeks passed, it became clear to Jake's father that the mail routes would

be changing, and their stagecoach depot would no longer be needed. The family began packing a wagon with their belongings and preparing to travel across the state to Uncle Roy's farm. Jake was eager to make friends and to go to a new school. Still, the thought of leaving Daisy behind was painful, and he pushed it away each time it surfaced.

"Maybe we could crate Daisy up to take with us, just like you're taking the hens," suggested Jake to his mother.

She shook her head. "I'm afraid that would make Daisy very unhappy," she responded. "This is Daisy's home."