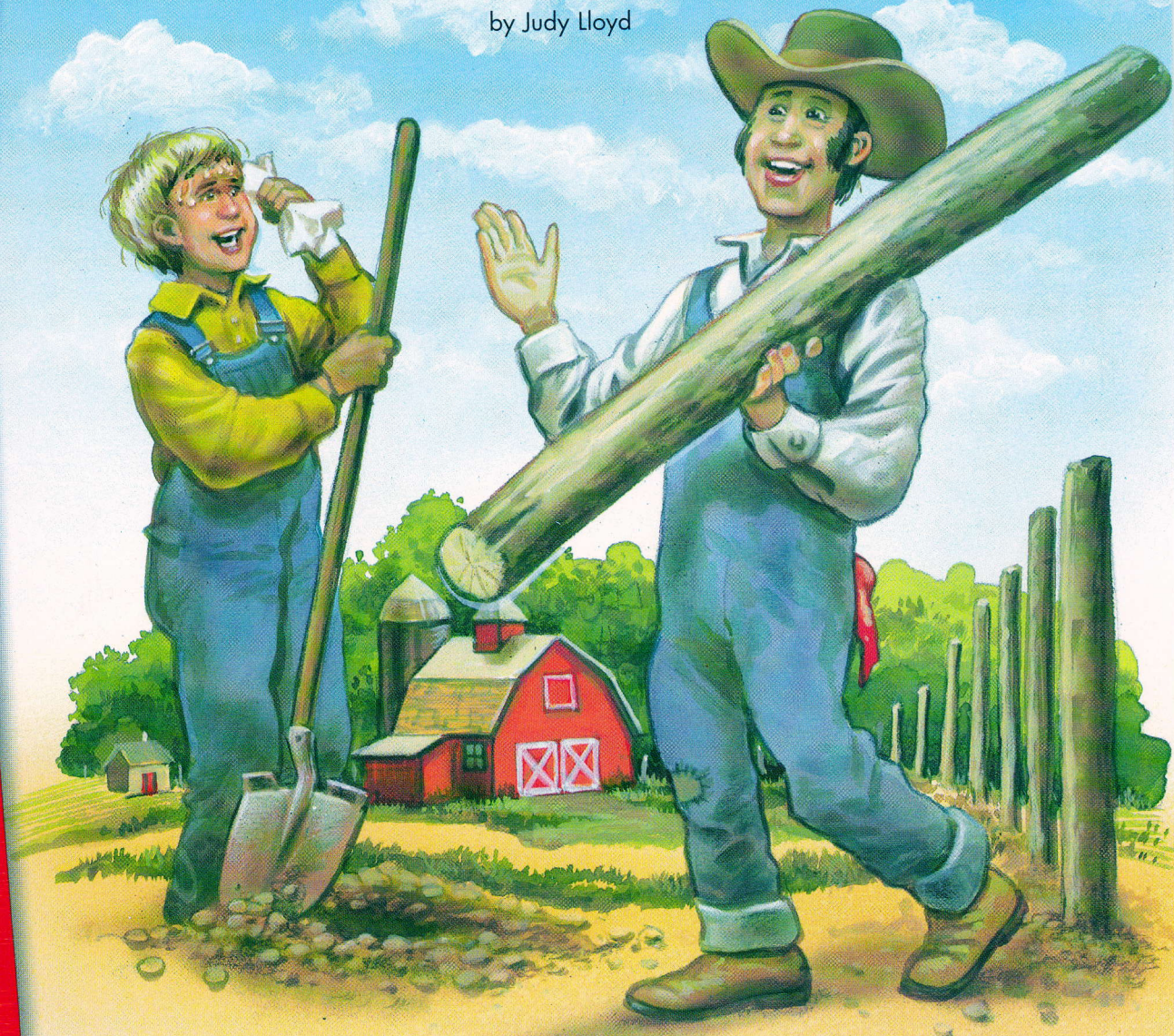


Horsefeathers

by Judy Lloyd



1 Peter Shaw's great-uncle Clyde owned a farm near where Peter lived. Peter never got tired of helping Uncle Clyde feed the cows and chickens, fix fences, and clean the barn. Sometimes Uncle Clyde even let Peter ride with him on the tractor.

2 Peter loved it when Uncle Clyde told stories about what he had done when he

was Peter's age. Uncle Clyde was a lot of fun to be around, but there was one thing that bothered Peter.

3 Peter was sitting at the kitchen table after supper one night. He'd spent the weekend with Uncle Clyde and was catching up on his homework. Peter's mom was washing the dishes.

- 4 "Mom, do you think Uncle Clyde talks funny sometimes?"
- 5 "No, Peter," responded his mom, "I can't say that I do. Why do you ask?"
- 6 Peter wasn't sure how to answer. The truth was that, occasionally, he just didn't know what Uncle Clyde was talking about. Sometimes what Uncle Clyde said didn't have anything to do with what he and Peter were doing.
- 7 Peter was afraid to ask Uncle Clyde what he meant because he didn't want to seem stupid. Maybe if he told his mom. . . .
- 8 "Sometimes Uncle Clyde says really weird things," began Peter.
- 9 "Like what, honey?" asked Mom.
- 10 "Well, on Saturday, Uncle Clyde wanted me to dig a hole for a new fence post. I told him that I wasn't sure I was strong enough to use the shovel, and he said, 'Horsefeathers!' But Mom, horses don't have feathers. Why would he say something like that?"
- 11 Peter's mom just smiled. "What else did he say that bothered you?"
- 12 "I asked him why we were replacing the fence post because the old one wasn't really broken. It just had a little crack in it. Uncle Clyde said, 'A stitch in time saves nine.' What do stitches have to do with fence posts, anyway?" Peter asked. He seemed mystified.
- 13 Peter continued, "And another time, Uncle Clyde and I were going out to the orchard to see whether any of the apples were ripe enough to pick. Aunt Martha and I were talking about baking a pie with the apples. Uncle Clyde said, 'Don't count your chickens before they hatch!' Aunt Martha just laughed, but we weren't talking about chickens! Is there something wrong with Uncle Clyde, Mom?"
- 14 "No, Peter," laughed Mom. "You've just run into a small problem that sometimes happens between people of different generations. Do you remember the other day when you said your friend Tony's bike was 'really cool'? Did you mean that the bike was cold?"
- 15 "Of course not," replied Peter. "That just means that it's a great bike."
- 16 Mom nodded. "And what about when you told me that you had 'chickened out' of taking trumpet lessons? Did that mean that you threw a chicken out—or that you ran around like a chicken?"
- 17 Peter was beginning to catch on. His mom continued, "The sayings people used when Uncle Clyde was young aren't used as much anymore. That's why you don't always understand what they mean."
- 18 "A horse would look foolish with feathers," Mom explained. "Uncle Clyde simply used the expression 'horsefeathers' to say that the idea that you weren't strong enough was silly." Mom went on, "If you have a tiny rip in your clothes, it's easy to fix—one stitch. But if you don't fix it, it will get bigger. Then it might take a lot more sewing to fix—maybe nine stitches where one would have done the job."
- 19 "I get it," said Peter. "You don't know how many chickens you'll have until they come out of the eggs. We won't know how many apples we have until we look at the trees. Uncle Clyde was telling Aunt Martha not to count on having enough apples for a pie."
- 20 Now Peter was sure he'd be able to figure out Uncle Clyde's sayings. And if he didn't, he'd just ask.
- 21 The next time Peter spent the weekend at the farm, he and Uncle Clyde had a great time. They rode around the farm on horses. Peter kept asking questions and commenting excitedly about one thing or another.
- 22 "You really like the farm, don't you, Peter?" asked Uncle Clyde.
- 23 "Oh, yes," said Peter. "I want to be a farmer when I grow up."
- 24 Uncle Clyde smiled. "You know, Aunt Martha and I don't have any children. Maybe you'd like to have this farm when you grow up. One of these days, I'll be as old as the hills. Then, I won't be able to do the work around here."
- 25 Peter's mouth dropped open in surprise. He would love to own this farm, but he just couldn't imagine Uncle Clyde not being strong and active. Suddenly, with his eyes full of mischief, Peter told Uncle Clyde how he felt.
- 26 "Horsefeathers!" Peter cried.

COMPREHENSION

A Choose the best ending for each sentence.
Write *a*, *b*, or *c*.

- 1 Another good title for this story is
 - a Generation Gap.
 - b Life on the Farm.
 - c Aunt Rose's Apple Orchard.
- 2 Peter often didn't know what Uncle Clyde was saying because
 - a Peter was hard of hearing.
 - b Uncle Clyde used expressions that were no longer popular.
 - c Uncle Clyde did not speak English.
- 3 Peter wanted to understand what Uncle Clyde was talking about because he
 - a liked to help Uncle Clyde on the farm.
 - b wanted to teach his mom new sayings.
 - c enjoyed building fences.

- 4 Most likely, Uncle Clyde talks the way he does because he
 - a wants to confuse Peter.
 - b enjoys riddles.
 - c forgets that Peter might not understand what he means.
- 5 In the future, Peter will probably
 - a do more of the work on the farm.
 - b make fewer visits to the farm.
 - c plant more trees in the apple orchard.

LEARN ABOUT WORDS

B Often you can find out the meaning of a word by seeing how it is used in a story. The other words in the story give you clues.

Find the word in the story that best fits each meaning. (A paragraph number tells you where to look.) Write the word.

- 1 replied; answered (5)
- 2 sometimes; once in a while (6)
- 3 odd; unusual (8)
- 4 puzzled; confused (12)
- 5 groups of people from different time periods (14)
- 6 phrase; saying (18)
- 7 talking about; remarking on (21)

C **too** = also

two = the number after *one*

Words that sound alike but have different spellings and meanings are called homophones. *Too* and *two* are homophones.

Look at each word in **bold type** below. Note the paragraph number. Look at the paragraph and find the homophone. Which of the two words fits in the blank in the sentence? Write the word.

8 **whole** (10)

"Dig a _____ for this fence post,"
Uncle Clyde said.

9 **their** (13)

They get apples from _____ orchard.

10 **road** (21)

Uncle Clyde drove the tractor along
the _____.

THINK ABOUT IT

- D** A simile is a figure of speech that makes a comparison using the word *like* or *as*.

Glenn is *as strong as an ox*.

Glenn is *like an ox*.

A metaphor compares two things without using the word *like* or *as*.

Glenn is *an ox*.

All three sentences mean the same thing. They all mean Glenn is very strong.

Read each of the following figures of speech. If it is a simile, write *S*. If it is a metaphor, write *M*.

- 1 The tractor sounded like a roaring lion.
- 2 The farm was a playground for Peter.
- 3 Uncle Clyde was a giant in Peter's eyes.
- 4 Peter's horse was as white as snow.
- 5 The barn was as clean as a whistle.

- E** The snake *hissed*.

The bird *chirped*.

Some words imitate the sounds they refer to. *Hissed* and *chirped* are two such words.

Read each sentence. Which word imitates a sound? Write the word.

- 6 "Horsefeathers!" croaked Uncle Clyde.
- 7 The wind whistled through the apple orchard.
- 8 The fly buzzed around the apple pie.
- 9 The horse whinnied when he saw Peter.
- 10 The chickens clucked loudly when Aunt Martha fed them.

- F** Homographs are two (or more) words that are spelled the same but have different meanings and origins. A word's meaning will depend on how it is used.

My dad is a football *fan*.

He keeps cool with an electric *fan*.

The two words in **bold type** are homographs. In this case, the homographs are pronounced the same. Sometimes they are not.

Read each pair of sentences. If the words in **bold type** mean the same thing in both sentences, write *Same*. If the words do not mean the same thing, write *Different*.

- 11 Uncle Clyde will **ring** the bell.
Uncle Clyde put a **ring** on his wife's finger.
- 12 Peter had to **scale** the fence to reach the chickens.
The cows will **scale** the hill to get home.
- 13 Peter tasted a **bit** of apple pie.
The horse **bit** into the apple.
- 14 The hens ran around the **yard**.
That small shovel is about a **yard** long.
- 15 Peter brought water from the **well**.
Uncle Clyde was happy that the **well** had not dried up.