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The Mile-a-Minute Vine

by Nancy Day • illustrated by Victor Kennedy



Genre	Comprehension Skills and Strategy
Fantasy	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Plot• Main Idea• Visualize

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Jake lived with his mother on a farm. It hadn't rained in months. Their peanut crop dried up. They needed money.

"We will have to sell our cow," said Jake's mother.

Jake sighed. "I'll take Bessie into town tomorrow."



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Illustrations by Victor Kennedy

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 On the way to town, Jake met an old gardener.

"I am going to sell our cow," Jake told the man.

"Why not trade her for these magic beans?" the gardener suggested. "They will grow and grow, rain or not."

Jake made the trade.



 "You traded Bessie for beans?" shouted Jake's mother.

"They are magic beans," Jake replied. "You'll see." He had heard a story about a boy who traded a cow for beans and did very well in the end.

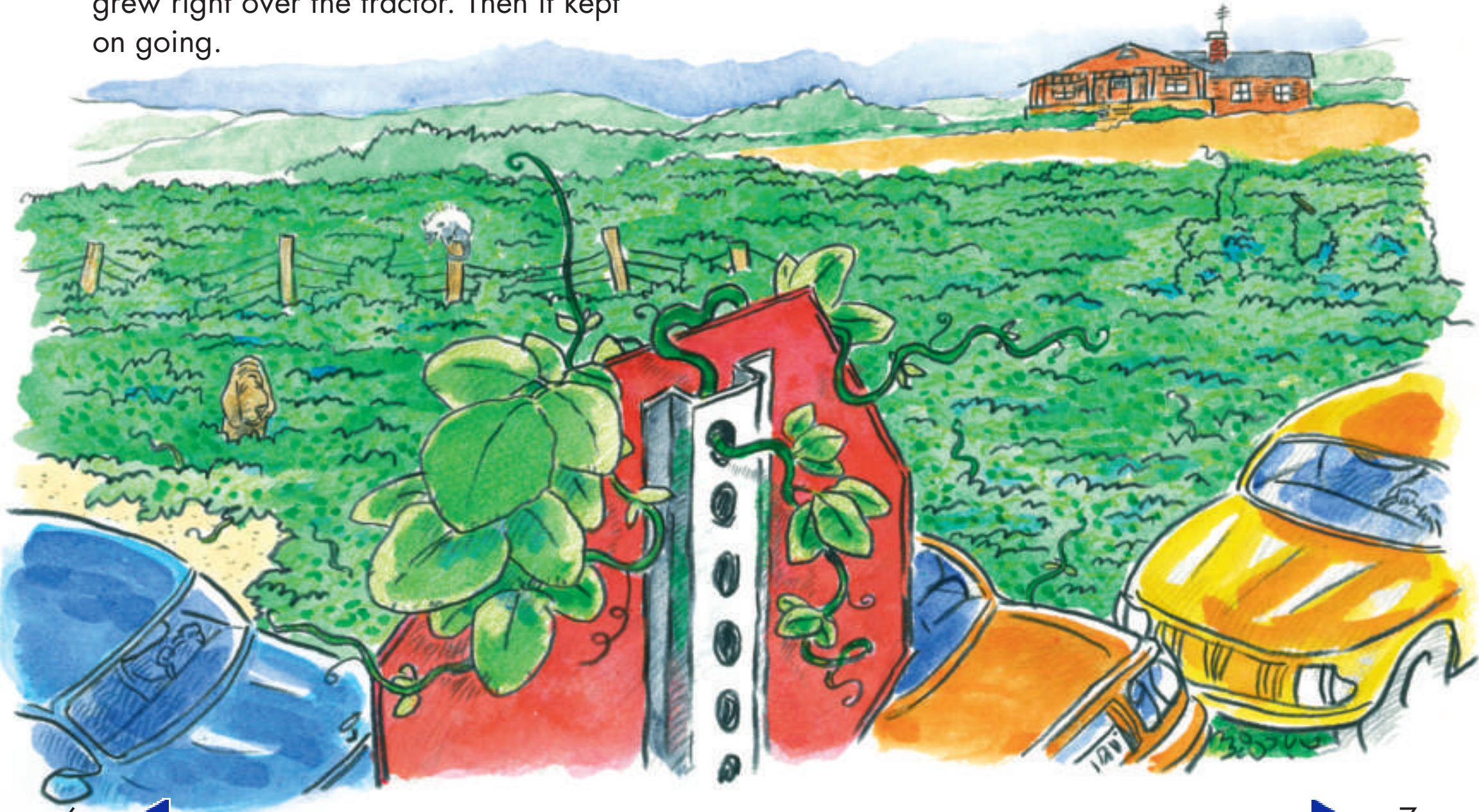
Jake planted the beans. Then he sat on the porch to wait.




Soon, a sprout sprang up. It did not grow up into the sky, like the beanstalk in the story Jake had read. It grew out.

The vine grew across the field. It grew right over the tractor. Then it kept on going.

The vine grew over everything! It grew up and over some trees. It grew over a stop sign. It even grew over a possum in the field and a sleeping dog!



 The vine grew over Jake's porch. Then it grew quickly over the windows and the roof.

"Why is it so dark?" his mother called. She came outside. Her mouth made a round O. "That vine is growing a mile a minute! Go warn the neighbors!"

 But the neighbors were already running toward Jake's house.

"Good thing we slammed our windows shut," a woman shouted. "Otherwise, that vine would have wrapped us up inside!"





Then, the mayor rushed up to Jake. "Any plant that grows a mile a minute is against nature," he said. "Do something!"

"I'll do what I can, sir," Jake replied.




First, Jake tried to pull the root of the vine out of the ground. But the vine just kept growing!

"I have an idea," said Jake. "But I need a cow and Bessie is gone."

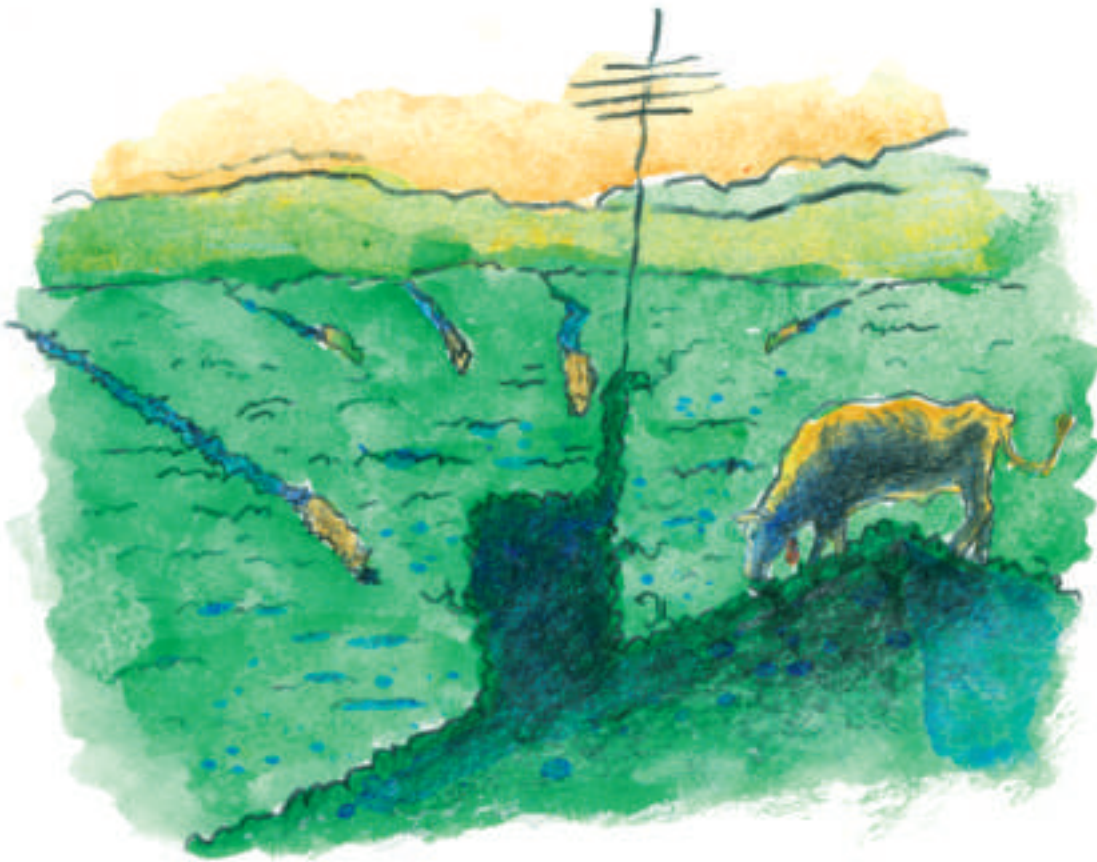
"We have cows," said the neighbors.


"Bring them all here," said Jake.



 Cows came from near and far. The old gardener even brought Bessie back. They lifted her up onto Jake's roof!

All the cows chewed up the vine as fast as they could. Among them, they ate more than a mile a minute! Houses covered in green went back to normal.



 But the mile-a-minute vine still covered the field. What could Jake do with it all?

He started experimenting. He made mile-a-minute vine jelly, syrup, and tea. He even made baskets out of the vine!



🔊 Jake sold them at a stand by the side of the road. He and the cows kept the vine under control all summer and into the fall.

When the first frost struck, the vine turned brown and dried up. Jake and his mother took a nice vacation.



🔊 Next spring, though, the vine turned green and sprang back to life.

Jake kept busy. He and his mother did very well in the end!





Kudzu

Mile-a-minute vine is a nickname for the kudzu (KUD-zoo) plant. Kudzu sprouts from a bean. The bean is the seed. It needs some soil, water, and sunlight to grow. Kudzu doesn't grow a mile a minute, but it does grow very fast!

Too much kudzu growing too fast can cause problems. Just like in the story, people have found ways to use this fast-growing and plentiful plant!



Kudzu is growing over this house.



Think and Share

1. Tell what happened in the beginning, in the middle, and at the end of this story. Use a chart like the one below to write your answer.

Beginning



Middle



End

2. What phrase on page 8 helps you make a picture in your mind of what Jake's mother looks like when she sees the vine growing?
3. Write at least three words in the book that end in *-ed*.
4. Jake had a problem to solve. How would you have solved his problem?

