



No News Is Bad News

by Pat Hansen

Jill pushed the kernel of corn into the moist soil with her finger. Her mouth watered as she thought about a big ear of sweet corn dripping with butter.

This was the first year Jill had her own corner of the garden to plant whatever she wanted. She loved sweet corn, so she planted three rows of it. When the first tiny leaves broke through the ground, Jill pulled Dad by the hand all the way across the yard to see them.

When July came, the weather turned hot and humid. "Great corn growing weather!" Dad exclaimed.

Indeed it was. Every day the corn seemed to grow another inch taller. Jill worked hard, watering and weeding her garden. She smiled as she thought about sinking her teeth into a hot, buttery ear of corn.

By August, the corn stalks towered far above her head. "When will the corn be ready?" she asked.

"Soon," Dad said. "In a few days we can pick some."

The next morning, Jill went out to check on her corn. In the dirt she saw strange animal tracks with five pointy toes. They led right to the corn stalks. Several ears of corn had been ripped off, and the husks and silks were scattered all over the ground. Just the cobs remained. Most of the kernels of corn had been eaten off.

Crying, Jill ran to tell her dad.

"It must have been raccoons," he said. "They love sweet corn. If there are enough of them, they can clean out a whole corn patch in one night."

Go On



"When we were young, we used to put newspapers all the way around the patch. We weighed them down with clods of dirt. It worked for us."

Jill didn't see what good the papers would do, but she didn't have any better ideas. That evening she carefully laid out newspapers. They crunched as she piled on lumps of dirt to hold them down.

The next morning, she found no tracks and no empty cobs. Somehow, the newspapers had worked!

"You will have to change the newspapers every day," said Dad. He tried to hold back a smile. "The raccoons have read yesterday's news. They will need new news to keep them busy so they don't have time to go after your corn."

Jill laughed. Raccoons couldn't read. Besides, it had taken her a long time to get the papers laid out last night. She didn't know how, but they had worked. There was no reason to change something that worked.

But the next morning, the raccoons had struck again. Jill sat down on the soggy papers and cried. She wouldn't get even one mouthful of sweet corn at this rate!

Maybe her dad wasn't teasing. Maybe raccoons really could read. What else could explain it?

The dew from the papers started seeping through her shorts.

The dew? Of course, the papers weren't crunchy! When the raccoons walked on the papers the first night, the noise must have scared them away. By the second night, the papers had soaked up so much dew that they weren't crunchy anymore.

That evening, Jill carefully laid out fresh newspapers for the raccoons. The next day, she and Dad picked corn for dinner. As she bit into a juicy ear, she was glad the raccoons hadn't realized she had put out last week's news!

Go On



1 How does the author show the reader that Jill “loved sweet corn”? Support your answer with details from the story.

2 Why is Jill having trouble growing corn? What does she do to solve this problem? Support your answer with details from the story.

3 Circle one of the words below that you think BEST describes Jill in the story.

excited

frustrated

Explain why you chose this word. Support your answer with details from the story.

Go On

