

An Earful

By Dale-Marie Bryan

"Everyone who gets an 'earful' will get one of these."



"Your homework is to collect sounds," Mrs. Olson said. She handed out sheets of paper shaped like giant ears. Then she held up a shiny blue kazoo. "Everyone who gets an 'earful' will get one of these." The class laughed.

Later, Jacob glared out the school-bus window. Not fair, he thought. How could he collect enough sounds on his family's farm? There were plenty of noises in town. If only he lived where tires squealed and sirens wailed.

Jacob scrambled off the bus when it screeched to a stop at his mailbox. But he wasn't in the mood to wave as it drove away.

When he threw open the gate, it groaned like a ghost. That was how he felt about his homework.

On the porch, Jacob knelt beside the kittens curled on the rug. They sounded like tiny motors when they purred.

"I'm home!" Jacob called. He thumped his book bag down on a kitchen chair.

The rocker in the nursery stopped creaking.

"How was school?" his mother asked,

walking in with his baby brother on her shoulder. She was patting his little back.

"I've got homework," Jacob grumbled. The baby burped, and Jacob laughed. "That's what I think about it, too!"

"Have a snack before you do your chores," his mother said. She took the animal crackers down from the cupboard.

Jacob rattled the carton. Not many left. He crunched two tigers, three lions, and a seal, then gulped down some milk. *Grrrr, roar, ork!* If only animal crackers were real. He would have plenty of noises to list!

How could Jacob collect enough sounds on the farm?



Goldie, Jacob's collie, woofed as Jacob walked toward the barn. Her puppies were yipping in a straw-filled stall. Jacob plinked dog-food pellets into their pan, and the pups snuffled and crunched.

In the chicken house, Jacob shooed two cackling hens from their nests. He slipped their warm eggs into his jacket. Wouldn't it be funny if he forgot about the eggs and they hatched? He'd have a peeping pocket!

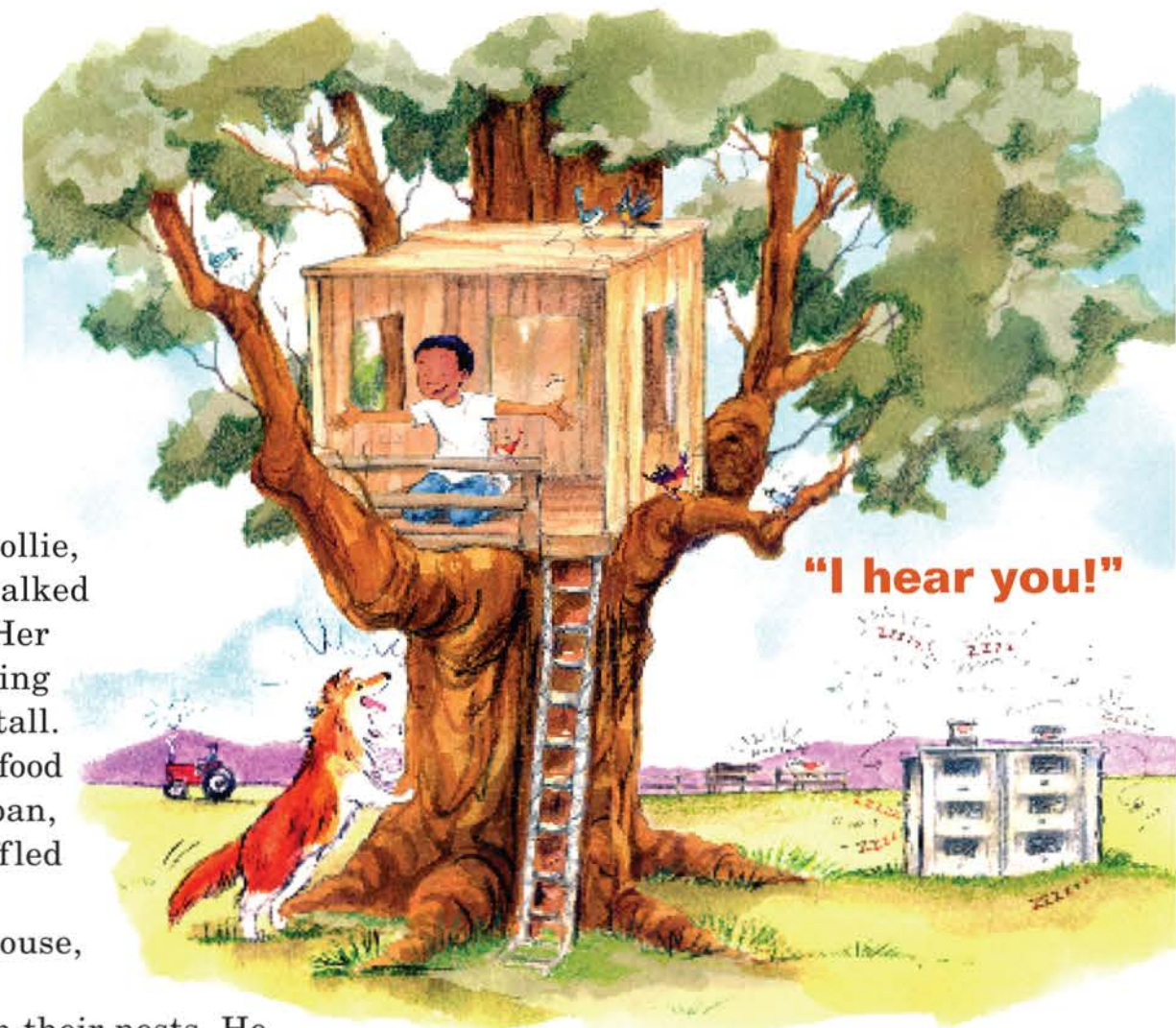
In the corral, a black cow napped in the sun. Jacob woke her when he poured corn into her pan. "Moo, thank you!" she seemed to say.

Tap, clatter, clink. Dad drove the tractor into the yard. The lid on the tractor's smokestack rattled when it chuffed and chugged to a stop.

"How was school?" Dad asked, stepping down from the cab.

Jacob shrugged. "OK, I guess," he said. "I have some homework."

Jacob put the eggs



"I hear you!"

in the kitchen, then climbed to his tree house. He could see Dad's beehives by the hay field. Six hives usually meant plenty of humming. But today he couldn't hear it over the scolding of the blue jays and the chattering of the sparrows. How could a person think?

"QUIET!" Jacob shouted.

Suddenly, he sat up straight. Cows moored and puppies yipped. Chickens cackled in their yard. When Goldie began barking below, Jacob grinned. There were plenty of noises on the

farm. "I hear you!" he called. He hurried down from the tree. He had an earful of homework to do.



What did Jacob hear? Head on over to HighlightsKids.com for your own "earful."