

The Chicken and the Egg

by Aditi Sriram



For her eighth birthday, Kit's parents gave her a large purple box with holes in the top. Was there an animal inside the box that needed air to breathe? Was it a baby hamster, like the one in Mrs. Bernstein's classroom? She held the box carefully, but it didn't seem heavy enough. With her mother's help she cut the ribbon off the top of the box and removed the lid. Inside was a scrawny, golden chick!

"What are you going to name it?" Mom asked.

"Is it a boy chick or a girl chick?" Kit asked.

"We asked at the farm, and they told us it's a girl," Dad said.

Kit thought for a minute. The chick's feathers were yellow and bright, and reminded her of her best friend at school. "I'm going to name her Annabelle," she said, "because they have the same color hair."

Kit cradled Annabelle in her hands carefully, stroking the chick's soft, fluffy feathers with her fingers. "She's so soft," Kit said to Mom.

"Annabelle is covered with special feathers called down. They keep the chick warm."

Kit watched Annabelle grow week after week. She did not worry about letting Annabelle walk all over her hands and arms, because chicks do not have teeth. As Annabelle's little body became bigger, she grew larger feathers. She pointed out the new feathers to her father.

"Those are called contour feathers, and the long ones on her sides are flight feathers," Dad said.

It was becoming harder to play with Annabelle. She was 12 weeks old now and much faster on her feet. Annabelle would dart around the garden when Kit let her out of her coop and peck at everything on the ground in front of her. She was always clucking at everyone and would dip her head into the grass to grab a worm. Kit would run behind her and try to catch Annabelle with her hands, and it would take minutes to finally get ahold of her. Mom would watch Kit running around and laugh. Dad would make clucking sounds to distract Annabelle, and then Kit would catch her.

When Annabelle was 16 weeks old, Kit's once little chick was now five times as big, a strong, healthy hen, with all kinds of beautiful feathers and a much larger beak, and laying eggs. One day, a rooster, an adult version of a boy chick, who belonged to Kit's neighbor, went to Annabelle's coop. After a few days, Kit saw Annabelle sitting on some eggs. When Annabelle moved, she used her beak to turn the eggs around underneath her. Kit understood what was going to happen. Annabelle was going to become a mom! Kit made sure Annabelle's water and food were nearby, and she was excited.

Annabelle was a lot more patient than Kit. For 21 days she sat on her eggs, covering them with her feathers to keep them warm. Finally, Kit heard a *crack*. She looked closely. Annabelle had moved aside, and there was one of her eggs, white and grey, and a tiny, tiny beak poking through it. Kit wanted to watch the baby slowly poke its way out of the egg, but it was getting very late. Kit went to sleep and returned to watch the baby hatch the next day. By the time it came out, it looked very tired and wet. Kit watched Annabelle peck at her baby until the baby fell asleep.

Over dinner, Kit told her parents about Annabelle's baby hatching. Mom and Dad explained that this was the life cycle of a chicken, starting as a baby that comes out of an egg, growing bigger and fluffier, becoming a hen, and then laying eggs. Kit picked at the vegetables on her plate-carrots, beans, and cabbage-and wondered, "Do vegetables lay eggs, too?"

"No, they don't," Mom said, "but it's a good question. We plant seeds in the ground, where they stay warm and get water, and when they are ready to germinate, they begin growing out

of the ground where we can see them, and get bigger and stronger, with more leaves and thicker stems, and then they produce fruits and flowers. Plants, like animals, have a life cycle that repeats and repeats."

Kit nodded her head. The hamster in her classroom had gotten older and bigger; and now that Annabelle was a mother, she was excited to have a new baby chick to play with, all over again.

Name: _____ Date: _____

1. What do Kit's parents get her for her eighth birthday?

- A. a hamster
- B. a cat
- C. a chick
- D. an egg

2. What is the order of events in this story?

- A. a hen lays eggs, a chick grows into a hen, a baby chicken hatches from one of the eggs
- B. a hen lays eggs, a baby chicken hatches from one of the eggs, a chick grows into a hen
- C. a baby chicken hatches from an egg, a hen lays eggs, a chick grows into a hen
- D. a chick grows into a hen, the hen lays eggs, a baby chicken hatches from one of the eggs

3. The life cycles of chickens and vegetables are different.

What evidence from the passage supports this statement?

- A. Chickens lay eggs, but vegetables do not.
- B. Plants and animals have life cycles that repeat.
- C. Plants get bigger and stronger as they grow.
- D. Kit's parents talk to her about chickens and vegetables.

4. Annabelle has special feathers called "down" to keep her warm as a chick. Later on, she sits on her eggs to keep them warm.

What does this information from the story suggest?

- A. Kit's parents think it is important for Kit to understand the life cycle of a chicken.
- B. Warmth is important to the life cycle of a chicken.
- C. Annabelle likes to run around and peck at things when she is out of her coop.
- D. Plants need a lot of water to grow and produce flowers.

5. What is this story mainly about?

- A. the life cycle of a chicken being raised by a girl
- B. two parents who try to make their daughter happy by giving her a chicken
- C. how a plant goes from being a seed in the ground to producing fruits and flowers
- D. the differences between the hamster in Kit's classroom and the chicken in her home

6. Read the following sentence: "Annabelle would dart around the garden when Kit let her out of her **coop** and peck at everything on the ground in front of her."

What does the word **coop** mean?

- A. a classroom for young students
- B. the inside of a chicken's egg
- C. a garden where vegetables and flowers grow
- D. the place where a chicken lives

7. Choose the answer that best completes the sentence below.

A chick comes out of an egg _____ it grows into a hen.

- A. after
- B. although
- C. because
- D. before

8. Describe how a plant grows from a seed into a fruit or flower.

9. Based on the information in the passage, how are the life cycles of plants and animals similar?

10. What will likely happen to Annabelle's baby as it grows up? Use evidence from the story to explain your answer.
