



# FANTASTIC FOODS



## Talk About It

What is the most interesting fruit or vegetable that you have ever seen or tasted?



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[www.macmillanmh.com](http://www.macmillanmh.com)

## Vocabulary

shortage	strategy
bedlam	civilization
outcast	traditional
reflected	complex

## Dictionary

Use a dictionary when you want to check a **Word Origin**. The definition may include information about the word. For example, the dictionary entry for *bedlam* explains the word comes from a 16th century hospital in London that treated people with mental illness.

A colorful illustration of a young girl with a braid, wearing a white shirt and a red skirt, climbing a tall, green cornstalk. The stalk is thick and has large green leaves and yellow corn cobs. In the background, a small village with colorful houses and a dirt road is visible under a bright sun with rays and a few clouds. A small airplane is flying in the sky.

# Juanita and the Cornstalk

by Sandra Garcia

**L**ittle rain had fallen in the small Mexican village of Tula. Juanita and her mother had planted seeds in the spring. With a **shortage** of rain, nothing grew. “Take the donkey to the market and sell her,” Juanita’s mother said. “We need the money.” Juanita tied a rope to the donkey and led her toward the marketplace.

On the way Juanita met a sad merchant. “It would be a great kindness if you would sell that fine donkey to me,” said the merchant. “I need help carrying my goods to the market. Unfortunately, I have only these magic corn seeds to trade. Plant the seeds in the ground. They do not need any water. Soon you will have giant cornstalks in your field.” Juanita was happy to help the merchant. She made the trade and hurried home.

When Juanita’s mother heard her story, she became upset and **bedlam** broke out. “How could you have been so foolish?” she yelled. She tossed the corn seeds out the window and went to bed. Juanita felt like an **outcast** even though she was going to sleep in her own house.

The sun that **reflected** off the glass of the window the next morning woke Juanita. She was surprised to find a giant cornstalk outside her window. The stalk reached so high into the sky that Juanita could not see the top.

She decided to climb the stalk to see how high it grew. Soon she developed a **strategy** for climbing and her plan helped her reach the top.

Above the clouds Juanita spotted Quetzalcoatl, the Toltec god of **civilization**. This leader of cultured life was sitting in a **traditional** rocking chair that had been passed down from generation to generation.

Quetzalcoatl welcomed her with a warm smile. “Hello, Juanita. I’m happy to have a visitor after all these years. I’m lonely. I would like to visit Earth again.”

“I’ve got an idea, but it’s full of detail and quite **complex**,” Juanita said. “Why don’t you turn yourself into a small creature that I can put in my pocket?”

“Why, little one, that’s a brilliant thought! I’ll give myself wings so that I can fly back here when I get tired. Let me give you some gold coins for your kindness.”

After carrying Quetzalcoatl down to Earth, Juanita hurried home with the gold coins. Juanita hoped that this time her mother might understand how good things can happen when a kind act is repaid.



## Reread for Comprehension



### Make Inferences and Analyze Theme

A Theme Chart helps you make inferences and analyze information so you can determine the overall idea the author wants to tell in a story. Use your Theme Chart as you reread “Juanita and the Cornstalk” to identify the theme in the story.

