

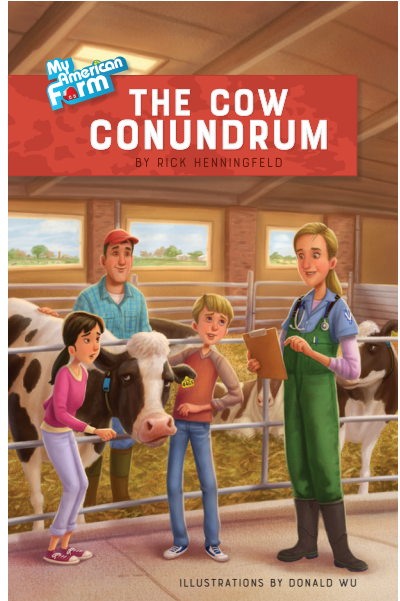
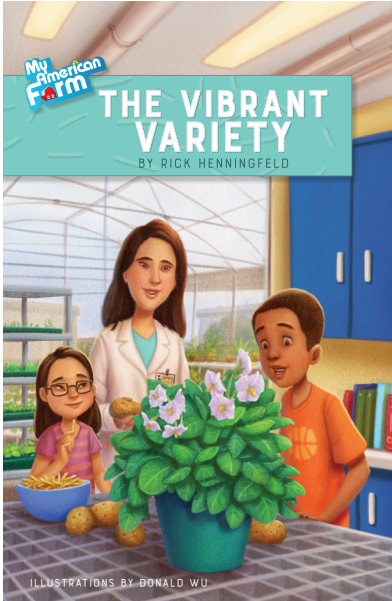


THE ARTISTIC ARRANGEMENT

BY RICK HENNINGFELD



ILLUSTRATIONS BY DONALD WU





THE MY LITTLE AG ME BOOK SERIES is designed to introduce agricultural careers to youth. Our hope is the stories create curiosity around the highlighted careers and thought processes professionals use to complete their work.

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To those Ag Science Teachers positively influencing young people across this nation, your work is honorable.

For those who made my career as an Ag Science Teacher fulfilling, thank you.

To all who teach others about agriculture in any capacity, keep up the great work!

R.D.H.

BOOK TITLE VOCABULARY:

ARTISTIC [adjective]: being good at things related to art

ARRANGEMENT [noun]: the order in which things are put to make something

HIGHLIGHTED CAREERS:

FLORIST: A person who arranges and sells plants and flowers

AGRICULTURE TEACHER: A person who teaches agricultural processes

CHAPTER 1: PLANNING FOR THE BIG EVENT

“Mom, what’s our next stop?” I asked excitedly.

I had spent the day so far trying on a suit, taste-testing some food, and, to top it off, eating cake! This was a great Saturday, and it was only two weeks until the BIG event! We had been planning for a year and a half, and everyone was excited for the actual day to come.

Hi, I’m Jayce, and in two weeks my older sister is getting married! Today, I am running errands with my mom to finalize some of the details for the wedding.

“Mom, what’s our next stop?” I asked again, hoping it would be eating more cake or maybe ice cream.

“We have one more stop at the flower shop,” she said.

Aww man, I thought. Flowers were not really my thing. Probably because I usually get in trouble when I am around flowers. Like the time I knocked over the roses my dad got my mom on Valentine’s Day. Or when I ride over them with my bike in the yard. Or when I tried to make a bouquet for my mom’s birthday and pulled them out of the ground instead of cutting them. That bouquet had roots and all! I was pretty proud; Mom was not impressed.

“What are we doing there?” I whined.

“We are going to look at a few arrangements for the wedding and give any last directions to the florist so he can make final arrangements for the wedding,” Mom said.

“What’s an arrangement?” I asked. I had heard of a musical arrangement in my band class but never anything to do with flowers.

Mom just said, “You will see when we get to the flower shop.”



CHAPTER 2: THE FLOWER SHOP

We pulled into the flower shop, and I realized I had ridden past this place hundreds of times and wondered what it was. The front windows and porch were always decorated beautifully, especially on holidays. And anytime the weather was nice, the front door was open with a sign that said, “Come on in and smell the roses!” We got out of the car and walked into the shop. It smelled so good, not like anything I had smelled before. Is that the smell of roses, I thought? The shop was filled with flowers, pictures of flowers, and pictures of weddings. Everything in the shop seemed so exciting and joyful.

My mom said, “Jayce, give the bell a ring on the counter.”

I rang the bell, and two little dogs came running from behind the counter and began sniffing my shoes as a voice shouted, “I will be right out!” from a back room. There was a pause and then, “Don’t mind Gerber and Daisy, they are harmless.”

CHAPTER 3: MEET THE FLORIST

A moment later, a tall man walked out from where the voice was and said, “Ms. Brooke!” (Brooke is my mom’s first name.) “So nice to see you! We are just finishing up the final arrangement samples for the wedding! Come on back and let’s take a look.”

He noticed that I was petting the dogs and said, “I see you met Gerber and Daisy. I am Elijah. What’s your name?”

I told him I was Jayce, and he asked if I was going to be in the wedding.

I said, “Sure am! I am the ring bearer!”

Elijah responded, “That is a very important job, and we have something extra special in mind for you! Follow me and let’s take a look at what we are thinking for the wedding!”

We followed Elijah into the back room. Green leaves and stems of flowers were all over the floor. Buckets filled with vibrant colors and different looking flowers were all over the place. We walked past a few tables with bundles of flowers laying on them.

Elijah stopped and said, “Over here, these arrangements are for you!”

On the table in front of us were the flowers for my sister’s wedding.

My mom gasped and said, “They are all so beautiful!”

Even though flowers are not my thing, I would agree with Mom, the flowers looked beautiful.

Looking around the room, there were beautiful arrangements on all the tables.

I asked Elijah, "What are all these other flowers for?"

He said, "Some are for other weddings, a couple are for special parties or occasions like someone's birthday, a few are heading to hospitals with cards that say, "Get well soon," and some we make and keep in our cooler out front to sell as customers come in."

"How do you know what to make?" I asked.

That is when Mom jumped in and said, "Elijah listens to his customers and then arranges flowers in a way that he thinks the customer wants. That is why they are called "arrangements." Remember, you asked what those were in the car. Well, each of these is an arrangement."

Elijah followed up, "That's right, Ms. Brooke. I also took some classes to learn how to create these arrangements."

Just then, we heard the bell ring on the front counter. Gerber and Daisy left my side for the front room and I said, "I think you have another customer."

Elijah said, "Ms. Brooke and Jayce, please look these over and let me know what you think. I will be right back!"

My mom began turning the arrangements around examining them from all sides. She kept muttering, "Beautiful, absolutely beautiful!"



CHAPTER 4: MEET THE AG TEACHER

Elijah returned back to the room and said, “Jayce, I would like you to meet the person who first taught me how to make a flower arrangement. This is Mr. Evan, and he was my high school Ag Science Teacher.”

Mr. Evan reached out his hand to shake mine.

When I shook his hand, he said, “Nice to meet you Jayce! What brings you to the flower shop?”

“I am here with my mom checking out the arrangements for my sister’s wedding!” I felt pretty cool using the word “arrangement” correctly.

“What is an Ag Science Teacher?” I asked. I have heard of Science Teachers but not Ag Science Teachers.

Elijah chimed in, “Mr. Evan, Jayce just asked me how to make a flower arrangement. Would you mind showing him while I meet with Ms. Brooke?”

“Absolutely,” chuckled Mr. Evan.

“Great, you can use any of the flowers on this table. Whatever is left you can take back and use in your class,” Elijah said as he walked away to meet with my mom.

Mr. Evan looked at me and said, “To answer your question, an Ag Science Teacher is a person that works with students in a classroom to learn about the science and processes used in the agriculture industry.”

“I am not sure I know what you mean by agriculture industry,” I said.

Mr. Evan replied, “Think of it this way, you probably have not lived a single day without agriculture!”

“What!” I exclaimed.

Mr. Evan asked, “Do you eat every day? Drink water each day? Use a vehicle to get around?”

I nodded my head yes to each question.

“Then you have benefited from agriculture!” Mr. Evan said excitedly. “Anything that has to do with raising plants or animals and making the food you eat and many of the materials you use each day, like your t-shirt, came from agriculture. So, I teach people about how to raise plants and animals, how their food is made, and where their energy and many other resources they use each day comes from. But most importantly, I teach students the skills to be ready for college or a career after high school.”

Without thinking I blurted out, “I got skills! Some mean soccer skills!”

“I don’t teach those skills in my class,” Mr. Evan laughed. “I will give you an example of the kind of skills I teach.”

CHAPTER 5: PREPARING FLOWERS FOR AN ARRANGEMENT

Mr. Evan turned to the table and grabbed a few flowers and a knife that was sitting there.

He continued, “In my introductory Plant Science class, I teach a unit about floriculture, which is the science of raising flowers. During that unit students work in the school’s greenhouse to learn how to raise flowers. They gain skills on how to prepare soil, how to water, and how to measure and apply nutrients to grow flowers. Then we learn about careers in floriculture, one of them being a florist.”

The whole time Mr. Evan was talking, he was sorting through flowers on the table. When he found what he wanted, he would cut the stem to the length he wanted and place it in a glass vase. There were about 10 flowers in the vase already.

I asked, “Mr. Evan how do you know what flowers to use?”

He said, “Great question! First, I check to make sure each flower is conditioned.”

“What’s that mean?” I responded.

Mr. Evan walked over to a big door and opened saying, “Come on in here.”

It was dark and cold in this room. Mr. Evan flipped on the lights to show a room ceiling to floor with flowers in buckets. There had to be a few thousand flowers in this room in a hundred different colors, shapes, and sizes.

“This is the cooler. When Elijah buys flowers, he cuts the ends and prepares a water solution to place them in. Then, he places them in this cool dark room. If Elijah does all the steps right, you get flowers with stiff stems and petals that will stay in place for a long time. Those are the ideal flowers to put in arrangements.”

Mr. Evan pulled a flower out of a bucket and then picked up one he saw on the floor.

“Hold these two flowers,” he said and handed me the stems.

One flopped right over and the other stood straight up! Mr. Evan grabbed the one standing straight up and said, “Elijah learned and practiced how to condition flowers in my class. Looks like he applied those skills well!”

Then he placed the good flower back in the bucket and said, “Let’s get back to making the arrangement!”



CHAPTER 6: LEARNING THE CUSTOMERS' NEEDS

We headed back to the table where we had started our arrangement. On the way, Mr. Evan asked, “What kind of flowers does your mother like? Let’s make her something to surprise her.”

I said, “I don’t know any of the names, but I have seen these in our house before.” I grabbed a stem with a large red flower on top of it.

“Those are Gerber Daisies, and they are very popular,” Mr. Evan said.

I laughed, because I just got that the dogs were named after flowers!

Mr. Evan continued, “We will use these as a focal point for our arrangement.”

“What’s that mean?” I asked.

Mr. Evan responded, “They will be the flower in the arrangement that will draw the attention of your eye when you look at it. Think about looking at a beautiful sunset. There are many colors and the landscape usually complements the sky. The focal point is the center of all that color and beauty. It’s the sun! The Gerber Daisies will be like the sun of our arrangement. I think your mom will like that!”

CHAPTER 7: MAKING AN ARRANGEMENT

Mr. Evan handed me a scissors-like tool and said, “Carefully cut the stem right here at a 45-degree angle.” He pointed to a spot on the flower’s stem.

When I cut it, he said, “Nice clean cut, now cut four more, the exact same way.”

As I cut each flower, I handed it over to Mr. Evan, and he put them in the vase. He was also cutting additional flowers and adding them to the vase. Sometimes he would put a flower in, look at it a bit, and then pull that flower or a different one out.

“Is there something wrong with those flowers?” I asked.

“Nope,” Mr. Evan responded.

He continued, “They just are not right for this arrangement. There are a lot of things I look at in an arrangement; like how the colors complement each other, the spacing with other flowers, how the shape of a specific flower will add to the overall form.”

“What do you mean by form?” I interrupted.

“It’s the three-dimensional aspect of the group of flowers. Everything needs to work together and create a feeling of harmony and balance!” Mr. Evan exclaimed.

While he was talking, he continued to cut flowers adding them to the vase, turning it around, and moving and removing flowers.

“Done!” he said, “This is for you mother!”



CHAPTER 8: FLOWERS FOR MOM

I looked at the arrangement and realized how skillful Mr. Evan was. The Gerber Daisies popped out like a sun surrounded with beautiful complementary colors.

I told Mr. Evan, “Thanks, my mom is going to love this.”

Mr. Evan said, “No problem! With a little practice, you could develop the skills to make beautiful arrangements yourself. Maybe I will see you in an Agricultural Science class when you get to high school, and we will work on it together!”

I responded, “That would be great!”

Mr. Evan gathered up all the flowers left on the table, and said,

“Elijah, thanks for the flowers, these will be great for practicing arrangements in class today!”

Elijah looked over and said, “No problem Mr. Evan, I can’t thank you enough!”

Mr. Evan headed out the door.

I grabbed the vase and walked over to my mom and said, “Mom, these are for you. I helped Mr. Evan make this arrangement! He taught me how to condition and cut the flowers and showed me how to work with each flower as it comes together to create harmony and balance. We thought it was something you would really love!”

Elijah chuckled and said, “You learned all that in a few minutes with Mr. Evan! He is an excellent teacher. Let’s take a look at this arrangement!”

Elijah held up the vase and turned it around saying, “Mmmm, Mr. Evan is good! I am glad I was able to learn from him. It took me years to make something this good!”

“Did Mr. Evan teach you how to arrange flowers?” I asked.

Elijah said, “He was not the only person to teach me, but he is the one who introduced me to the idea of being a florist back in high school. I took an introduction to Plant Science class, and we did some basic arrangements. I really enjoyed that experience. Since then, I have taken some more classes and attended workshops to gain more knowledge and skills to apply in my shop. I really haven’t stopped learning how to be a florist!”

Just then the bell on the counter rang again. Elijah said to my mom, “I will get right to work ordering the flowers for the arrangements you want. I plan to deliver everything the morning of the wedding. Please take the arrangement that Mr. Evan and Jayce made with you! It is too beautiful not to enjoy!”

As Elijah disappeared into the front room, Mom said, “That sounds perfect!”

Mom grabbed the arrangement in one arm and put her other around me and gave me one of those “I Love You” squeezes.

She said, “Lets head home Jayce, and you can tell your sister how you made this arrangement!”

CHAPTER 9: FLOWERS AT THE WEDDING

Two weeks later, just before the wedding started, Elijah found me and handed me a small square pillow with a flower arrangement pinned around the edges. Some of the greenery around the flowers draped down to the floor. It looked super cool!

He said, “I told you I had something special in mind for the ring bearer!”



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BY RICK HENNINGFELD

Jayce's big sister is about to get married and while running errands with his mom, they make a quick stop at the flower shop. While waiting for his mom to review the flower arrangements for the wedding, Jayce meets the local ag science teacher and gets the opportunity to gain his own flower arranging skills. Help Jayce apply his new skills and create a beautiful arrangement for his mom!



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