

# The Farmer, the Snake, and the Eggs and Bacon

By Vinnie Rotondaro



The farmer woke up just as the sun crested his windowsill. Rays of light poured over his face. His eyelids cracked open. The farmer lifted his rough, powerful hands to his face and began to rub away the last of his dreams. Yawning, he pushed himself up onto his bottom and shook his head. His hair was a mess. He swung his legs off the bed, rose to his feet, straightened out his body and shot his arms into the air, stretching this way and that. It was time to start the day.

He had a mean hunger that morning. Truth be told, the farmer had a mean hunger every morning. Farm work is hard work, and for this farmer, like any other, breakfast was the most important meal of the day. "It's like putting a big old log on the fire," he often said about the meal. "You get that one big log on, get it burning real hard, and that fire will keep going all day long." That's how the farmer viewed breakfast. Eat something healthy, and eat much of it.

"What should I eat this morning?" the farmer thought to himself. He thought and thought, rubbing his chin with those rough, powerful hands of his. Then it hit him.

"Ah," he said. "Eggs and bacon."

The farmer didn't always eat eggs and bacon. Too many eggs and too much bacon too often isn't a healthy way to start one's day. But eaten every now and again it is a great way to get a healthy dose of protein, which is especially useful when one has much work to do – as the farmer often did. "Yes," the farmer said to himself. "Today I will treat myself."

He was giddy at that thought. There was nothing better in the farmer's estimation than two farm fresh eggs cooked over-easy and laid atop some bacon strips. The sight of it, the smell of it, the taste of it – the whole of it just gave the farmer that good and happy feeling. It filled him with love for life. The bacon had been curing for some time in a shed outside his kitchen, and was ready to go. The eggs were another matter. The farmer would have to go to the chicken coop to collect them. So that's what he decided he would do.

The farmer slipped on his overalls and laced up his boots and put on a broad, round-rimmed leather hat. He combed down his bristly beard and pulled his long, stringy hair back into a ponytail, and walked out the door. The chicken coop was a short distance away from the farmhouse, down past the pigpen and the garden.

"I'll be picking some of you," the farmer thought as he passed the lettuce patch. "And some of you," he thought passing the tomatoes. "And you I already have," he thought, passing the pigs.

But something seemed off when he neared the chicken coop. The chickens were making a fuss, clucking and flapping and swirling about all together in a corner of the coop. Usually they were relaxed, but this morning, no, they weren't relaxed. Something was wrong.

The farmer grew suspicious, and when he got closer, he saw what was wrong. A big, black, mean-looking snake had snuck into the coop. "A snake, great," the farmer thought. "Okay, let's get to solving this problem." "I'll need to find a long stick," he thought. "Preferably with a hook on the end of it."

The farmer was almost put in a bad mood by the turn of events, but he tried hard to keep a positive attitude – to keep that love of life coursing through him. He darted off to the woods and spent a couple minutes rummaging around through the brush. Then he found it – the perfect stick, long, strong and hooked at the end. “Eureka!” he exclaimed.

The farmer ran back to the chicken coop with the stick in hand. He opened the door to the coop and poked at the snake. He was far away enough not to risk getting bitten, and it hissed and stabbed its head out, showing its fangs. The farmer poked at it again, and this time, when it shot its head out he started pulling the rest of its body along with the hook on the end of the stick. Scooting back with his feet, he pulled that snake plumb out of the chicken coop and then whacked the snake on the butt.

“Get outa here you stupid snake!” he yelled. The farmer shook his head in disbelief. “The things I have to go through to get some eggs and bacon,” he thought.

Then he thought about what lay in store for him, and his eyes opened wide with anticipation. He grabbed two eggs, darted back to the garden, picked some lettuce and a tomato and ran to the shed where he kept the cured bacon. The food was bundled up high in his hands as he nudged the farmhouse door open with his foot, and walking into the kitchen, he let it all fall out onto the big wooden cutting board he had by the stove.

“Ready to roll!” the farmer said. He washed the lettuce and the tomato, and cooked up the bacon. When it was crispy he took it out of the pan and, using the leftover fat, he cooked up those eggs. “Man!” the farmer said, laying the eggs overtop the bacon, alongside the lettuce and tomatoes, “man, does that breakfast look good!”

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

1. Which of the following meals was most important for the farmer?

- A brunch
- B breakfast
- C dinner
- D lunch

2. What problem did the farmer encounter when he went to get eggs from the chicken coop?

- A The snake in the coop had eaten all the eggs.
- B A snake had snuck into the coop and he needed to get the snake out.
- C The chickens had not laid any eggs so he could not make his breakfast.
- D He couldn't find a stick with a hook at the end.

3. Read the following sentence: "The farmer was almost put in a bad mood by the turn of events, but he tried hard to keep a positive attitude – to keep that love of life coursing through him."

Based on this evidence, what conclusion can be made about the farmer's personality?

- A The farmer gets angry easily.
- B The farmer doesn't care about keeping a positive attitude.
- C The farmer is generally a positive person.
- D The farmer is usually in a bad mood.

4. Why did the farmer need to eat a big, healthy breakfast?

- A He only ate one meal a day so he made sure it was a big, healthy one.
- B He had not eaten for days.
- C He was going on a long trip and needed a lot of energy.
- D He needed a lot of energy to do the hard farm work.

5. What is this story mainly about?

- A the importance of breakfast
- B the recipe for eggs and bacon
- C what a farmer does to prepare breakfast for himself
- D how to get a snake out of a chicken coop

6. Read the following sentence: "The farmer lifted his rough, powerful hands to his face and began to rub away the last of his dreams."

What does the author mean when he writes that the farmer began to "rub away the last of his dreams"?

- A The farmer was rubbing his face when he was sleeping.
- B The farmer was dreaming that he was rubbing his face.
- C The farmer felt like he was dreaming when he was awake.
- D The farmer rubbed his face to wake up and begin his day.

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

The farmer found a snake in the chicken coop \_\_\_\_\_ he was able to get it out.

- A because
- B but
- C so
- D after

8. What did the farmer have to do in order to take the snake out of the chicken coop?

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9. Describe the steps the farmer took to prepare his breakfast.

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10. Should the farmer have gone through the trouble of treating himself to a breakfast of eggs and bacon? Use evidence from the text to support your answer.

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## Teacher Guide &amp; Answers

Passage Reading Level: Lexile 800

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8. What did the farmer have to do in order to take the snake out of the chicken coop?

**Suggested answer:** He had to find a long stick with a hook at the end of it. Once he found a stick that was hooked at the end in the woods, he went back to the coop and poked the snake with it. He was finally able to pull the rest of the snake's body along with the hook and whack it away.

9. Describe the steps the farmer took to prepare his breakfast.

**Suggested answer:** He got eggs from the chicken coop after getting rid of the snake, picked some lettuce and a tomato, and got cured bacon from the shed. When he got back to his kitchen, he washed the lettuce and the tomato, and cooked up the bacon. When it was crispy he took it out of the pan and, using the leftover fat, he cooked up those eggs. Finally, he laid the eggs over the bacon, alongside the lettuce and tomatoes.

10. Should the farmer have gone through the trouble of treating himself to a breakfast of eggs and bacon? Use evidence from the text to support your answer.

**Suggested answer: Answers may vary and could include:** Students may argue that yes, he should have gone through the trouble of treating himself to a breakfast of eggs and bacon because he does hard farm work and the eggs and bacon provided a healthy dose of protein which he needed to do his job. Students may also argue that he enjoyed eggs and bacon and deserved to treat himself even though it turned out to be more trouble than he anticipated. They may also argue that he ended up saving his chickens from the snake so it's good that he went to get the eggs and ended up getting rid of the snake.

Students may argue, no that the breakfast was not worth the trouble he went through to prepare it and that he should have cooked something that was healthier. He should have rested and prepared an easier breakfast.