



CEC READING LIBRARY • GRADE 4 • R3 CHALLENGE

The Barnyard Promise

12 Chapters

Day 1—

Read the story. Then think about each question.



Chapter 1: A New Pig on the Farm

VOCABULARY pig, farm, hello, friends

Pip the piglet stepped through the wooden farm gate for the very first time, his tiny pink hooves shaking just a little. In his arms he carried a small bundle with all his things. The grass tickled his hooves, and the morning smelled like clover and apple blossoms. The sky was wide and blue, and somewhere a rooster crowed a friendly hello. Pip looked around at the green fields, the tall oak tree, and the painted red farmhouse. Everything was new and big, and he felt a little shy. Then Wooly the lamb trotted up first, fluffy and curious, her wool bouncing with each step. "Hello there! I am Wooly," she said with a wide smile. "You must be new. Welcome!" Pip smiled and waved. His heart felt lighter at once, like a tiny worry had floated away. ★ **A pig met friends.** And his first day brightened.

THINK What did Pip carry in his arms?

Chapter 2: Four Kind Faces

VOCABULARY calf, goose, hen, friends

One by one, the other animals came over to meet Pip. First, Daisy the spotted calf walked up slowly, her big brown eyes kind and curious. She nuzzled his shoulder gently and lowed a soft hello. Then Gigi the goose came flapping across the yard, her bright orange feet slapping the dirt. "Welcome, little one!" she honked, spreading her wings wide. Last of all, Penny the red hen pecked her way closer. She clucked a happy welcome and circled around him, looking him up and down. Pip's tiny eyes grew wide. He now had four kind new friends, all in one morning! ★ **A little pig met new friends.** His world grew bigger. Pip felt warm all over, as if the morning sun had moved inside his chest.

THINK How did Gigi welcome Pip?

Read the story. Then think about each question.



Chapter 3: Under the Oak Tree

VOCABULARY apples, joke, laughed, tree

It was afternoon now. The five friends sat together under a wide oak tree at the edge of the green field. The leaves above made soft shadows on the ground. They shared crisp red apples, told silly jokes about turnips and tractors, and watched yellow butterflies sail past. Wooly told a story about losing her wool to a cheeky breeze. Daisy made everyone laugh with her funny mooing impressions. Gigi taught Pip how to say "hello" in goose-honk. "Honk-honk-honk!" Pip tried it, but his honk came out as a squeak, and everyone giggled. Pip leaned back against Wooly's soft wool and laughed for the first time since leaving home far away. ★ **A little pig met new friends on the farm.** A new family began to form right there under the old oak tree.

THINK How did Pip's honk sound?

Chapter 4: A Circle of Friends

VOCABULARY promise, circle, nodded, agree

On a soft afternoon, golden sunlight warmed the old wooden fence. The five friends sat in a circle in the yard, for Pip had asked them to meet him there. He looked at each one with serious eyes. Then he stood at the center, his tiny pink hooves trembling just a bit. "Friends," he whispered, "I want to make a promise with all of you." The wind paused for a moment, as if listening. Wooly nodded slowly, her wool catching the sun. Daisy bowed her spotted head gently. Gigi flapped her white wings once, and Penny clucked her quiet agreement. ★ **The animals made a promise.** Their hearts felt strong and warm together. Behind them, the old barn creaked softly in the breeze, as if it were listening to every word.

THINK What did the wind do?

Read the story. Then think about each question.



Chapter 5: "We Will Help"

VOCABULARY hard, quiet, help, brave

Pip looked around at his friends with serious eyes that seemed older than his small body. "When something hard happens," he asked softly, "when one of us is scared, or lost, or alone, what will we do?" The animals were quiet for a long moment, listening to the wind in the leaves. A butterfly landed on the fence and folded its wings. Then Woolly was the first to break the silence. "We will help," she said firmly. Daisy lifted her head and added, "We will help." Gigi honked, "We will help." Penny gave a brave cluck and said it too. One by one, every voice promised the same brave word.

★ **The animals promised to help.** The air felt safer than it had ever been before. A soft breeze carried the smell of fresh hay across the yard.

THINK Why does the author add the butterfly?

Chapter 6: Each Other

VOCABULARY together, hooves, wings, promise

"Each other," Pip said firmly, adding the most important word of all. "Not just sometimes. Not just when it is easy. If anyone is hurting, we do not wait. We do not look away. We help." The friends looked at each other with shining eyes. Slowly, they moved closer. They placed their hooves and wings together in the very center of their circle. Five small parts joined to make one strong promise. A soft breeze moved gently through the yard, as if the world itself had heard them and was nodding back. Even the old apple tree seemed to lean in. ★ **The animals promised to help**

each other. Their friendship became a kind of family that nothing could break. A small beetle crawled along a fence post nearby, and even it seemed to slow down to watch.

THINK How many parts joined to make the promise?

Read the story. Then think about each question.



Chapter 7: A Cry in the Storm

VOCABULARY rain, wind, duckling, brave

The sun went down early. Heavy raindrops drummed on the wooden roof, and the wind whistled through the cracks. Thunder rumbled in the distance, low and serious. The five friends sat together in the shed, listening. Then they heard it: a soft, frightened cry from somewhere far out in the muddy field. A baby duckling was lost! The friends froze, then huddled together, their hearts pounding like the rain itself. Pip pressed close to Wooly for warmth. They knew the storm was loud and dark. They also knew the duckling was small, wet, and alone. Their promise rang in each of their hearts. ★ **The friends were brave.** They could not stay still while another little one was crying. The smell of rain was in the air, and the leaves on the oak tree turned their silver sides up, as if the whole farm knew something big was coming.

THINK *Where did the cry come from?*

Chapter 8: The Little Lantern

VOCABULARY lantern, rain, together, behind

Pip lit a small lantern. With the glowing light in his hooves, he pushed open the heavy shed door. The rain hit his face like cold needles, but he did not stop or turn back. He held his head high and stepped out first. Wooly came right behind him, her white wool dripping wet within seconds. Daisy's brown spots grew dark and shiny with rain. Gigi spread her broad wings like a tiny living roof over Penny, and Penny stayed close at the back, calling softly with her cluck. The mud was cold and deep, but no one turned back. Step by step, they walked into the storm together, their lantern bobbing like a tiny star. "Little one, where are you?" they called, gently and steadily. ★ **The friends helped together.** And the wind seemed to soften around them.

THINK *What did the lantern look like?*

Read the story. Then think about each question.



Chapter 9: Behind the Log

VOCABULARY log, duckling, wing, drizzle

Behind a fallen log near the edge of the field, they found the tiny duckling shivering in the wet grass. Its yellow feathers were soaked through. "Do not be afraid, little one," Wooly whispered softly. Daisy gently knelt down and lifted the duckling onto her warm back. Penny tucked the small bird under her reddish wing, sheltering it from the rain. Together, they walked slowly back through the storm, careful with every step so as not to slip in the mud. Pip held the lantern high to light the path home. By the time they reached their shelter, the rain was easing into a soft drizzle, and so was their fear. ★ **The friends showed courage together.** That night they became heroes, not because they were not afraid, but because they helped even when they were. Somewhere far away, a crow called twice, and then the field went quiet again.

THINK Why did they walk slowly?

Chapter 10: A Party in the Yard

VOCABULARY party, garlands, flowers, song

The big storm was gone now, and sunshine returned to the farm. After the storm came many sunny, golden days. The five friends decided to hold a small party in the yard to thank everyone who had been brave. Wooly and Pip hung colorful paper garlands between the apple trees. Penny brought wildflowers for the table: daisies, poppies, and bright yellow buttercups. Gigi set out little wooden plates with apples, berries, and a loaf of bread, and she sang a happy goose song. Daisy mooed to start the music. A soft breeze carried laughter through the field, mixing with the songs of birds. Even the duckling they had rescued waddled around happily, fully dry and safe. ★ **They celebrated.** The yard felt golden.

THINK What flowers did Penny bring?

Read the story. Then think about each question.



Chapter 11: Music on the Farm

VOCABULARY music, cat, horse, dance

Music drifted across the farm, and soon other animals heard it too. The farm cat came padding over and curled up by the table, purring softly. An old gray horse with kind eyes rested in the shade of the apple trees, swishing his tail to the beat. Even the dragonflies hovered in the warm afternoon air like tiny dancers. A pair of sparrows sang from a nearby fence post. Everyone, animal, bird, and insect, moved together to the soft music, each in their own way. Pip danced with Wooly, then with Daisy, his hooves tapping happily. Wooly twirled so fast that her wool puffed up like a cloud. ★ **Everyone celebrated.** The farm felt alive with joy. The warm light of the lantern wobbled on the wet grass, and everyone leaned a little closer to it, glad to be together.

THINK What did Wooly's wool look like?

Chapter 12: My Family Now

VOCABULARY thank, friends, together, hay

The sun began to set over the wide green field, and the sky turned soft pink and gold. Pip stood on a small hay bale and looked at his four dear friends, his eyes shining. "Thank you for everything," he said softly, his voice trembling just a bit. "You welcomed me. You made promises with me. You were brave with me. You are my family now." Wooly leaned her head against his shoulder. Daisy stamped her hoof gently, a tear in her brown eye. Gigi honked once with pride, her wings fluttering. Penny gave a happy cluck and nestled close. They all hugged together. They knew that whatever came next, sunshine or storm, they would face it together. ★ **Everyone celebrated their friendship.** The farm became home for all of them, now and always. Fireflies began to blink above the hay, tiny lights that seemed to cheer for the five of them.

THINK What did Pip remember in his thanks?