

TRIP TO THE PYRAMID

MESSAGE IN A BOTTLE



IN PARTNERSHIP WITH



UNITED WAY
Romania

READING
LEVEL

4

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NABU

About NutriCOOLtura

The United Way Romania Foundation, with the support of Edenred and Kaufland Romania, has developed the NutriCOOLtura project, which aims to inform and help children develop healthy nutritional habits through reading and practical learning experiences.

The project also ensures the development of teachers' competencies in literacy and working with vulnerable groups, along with providing basic nutrition-related information. We offer support and information to parents to raise awareness of the importance of education, reading, and healthy nutrition for children, as well as for the entire family.

About UNITED WAY

United Way Romania's vision is of strong, supportive communities committed to helping people reach their potential. Our mission is to improve lives in our communities through giving and volunteerism.

NABU's Mission

NABU is a New York-based 501(c)(3) non-profit organization, with a mission to solve the imbalance in children's book creation and distribution, so all children can read and rise to their full potential.

About the ABC Lab

The ABC Lab is NABU's Authentic Book Creation Lab and is where NABU stories are born and come to life through workshops with local artists and writers. The workshops are a part of our goal to address the need for children's books in mother tongue languages. It is a peer-to-peer learning structure that enables a continuous learning loop and the exchange of skills and ideas, aimed at creating original and authentic mother tongue children's story books.



TRIP TO THE PYRAMID – MESSAGE IN A BOTTLE



AUTHOR:
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It's Saturday again, and Coach Adina's dance class eagerly awaits their entry into the Food Pyramid.

"We're going to meet Kamut, how exciting!" says Nati, her eyes shining with enthusiasm.

"I have so many questions to ask him!"

"And I'm sure you'll get just as many answers," laughs Andra. "But I hope we don't go back to the cereal story again!"



“I’m glad to see how much you love history,
but today we’re focusing on nutrition and
healthier eating habits,” Coach Adina
continues.





“I remind you that we have to explore the fruit and vegetable level, which forms the base of the Food Pyramid. Last time, we strayed from our path because Kamut needed our help. So let’s go inside, and I’m sure we’ll discover interesting things.”

Horia, Radu, and Nati giggle.

“Maybe even another mysterious character—
who knows!”

Then they step inside, marveling at the abundance of fruits and vegetables on the first level. Kamut can wait a little longer.



The group arrives at a greenhouse where a sign reads in large letters: "Fruits and Vegetables from Romania."

There, they walk curiously among trees laden with fruit and colorful vegetables growing in giant pots.

"Let's recall what we've learned about the Food Pyramid!" says Adina. The children enthusiastically answer all at once: "The pyramid has multiple levels!" says Radu. "The first is for fruits and vegetables," explains Nati. "That means we should eat as many as possible," adds Horia.





“Very good, children!” Adina approves. “But what does ‘as many as possible’ really mean?”

“Well, for example, I read about the healthy plate!” says Nati, raising her hand excitedly. “Half of our plate should be filled with fruits and vegetables, a quarter with whole grains, and a quarter with protein-rich foods.”

“Good,” Adina continues. “And here’s something else: it’s best to buy seasonal fruits and vegetables from local farmers. Do you know why?”







Horia thinks for a moment, then smiles:

“Because they taste better?”

“That’s right,” Adina laughs. “But there are other reasons too. When we buy local products, we support farmers with gardens and orchards.”

“Yes, and we also protect the environment,” Nati recalls. “We learned in geography about the carbon footprint. Think about how many resources are used to transport fruits from other countries!”



As everyone chats, Radu, ever curious, spots something on a shelf: a dusty bottle covered in cobwebs.

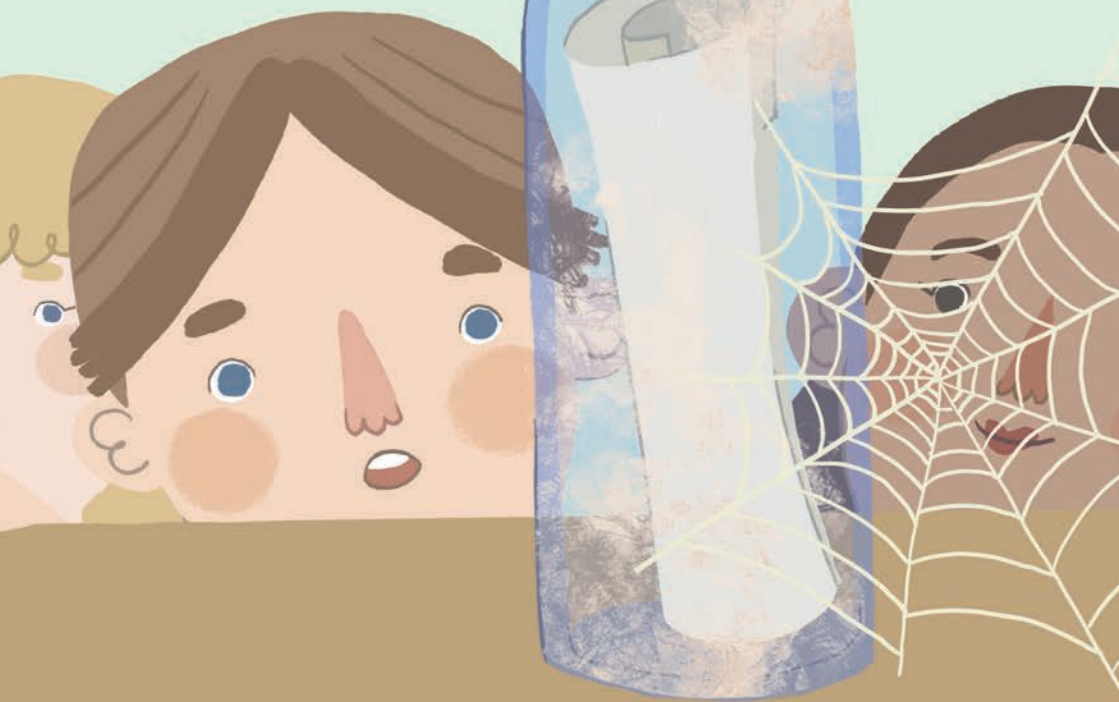
“Look what I found!” he shouts, making the others rush over. Everyone looks at the bottle with great interest. There’s something mysterious about it that draws them in like a magnet. Adina carefully picks up the bottle and wipes off the dust.

“It’s a message! A message in a bottle! Can we open it?” asks Horia eagerly.

Adina gently removes the cork and takes out a paper rolled up like a tiny scroll. The children try to decipher the message:



*Ship Matilda...
Need help...
Crew sick...
Save us!*



Suddenly, a raspy voice speaks from behind them:

“That’s my bottle! I sent it!”

They all turn around, stunned. Their adventure has taken an unexpected turn, as before them stands a sailor dressed in tattered clothes.

“The mysterious character!” exclaims Nati.

The other children watch him curiously.

“What’s your name, sir?” Radu asks.

“Thomas,” he says, bowing. “Pleased to meet you!”



Thomas looks around, puzzled, but is too worried to ask the children more questions.

He starts telling them his story with a serious voice:

“My crew is in great danger. We’re exhausted and sick. I left the ship to look for supplies but found nothing. So I sent this message, hoping someone would find it and help us.”



The children listen with their mouths open, saying nothing. Only Horia breaks the silence:

“But why are you sick? What happened?”

Thomas shakes his head sadly:

“It’s an illness sailors get when they spend too much time at sea. It’s called scurvy. We mostly eat salted meat and hardtack, and our ship’s doctor sent me to find fresh fruits and vegetables. Oh, it’s the year 1774—I thought I’d find them faster. Without them, we have no chance!”



“This message is 250 years old!” Nati exclaims.

“We’ve found the oldest message in a bottle!”

“Fascinating,” says Horia. “But I still don’t understand what scurvy is all about.”

“Well, it’s more dangerous than pirates!” Thomas replies. “If I don’t find fresh supplies soon, all my crewmates will die.”



Adina explains:

“Scurvy happens when we don’t eat enough foods with vitamin C. Can anyone tell me which fruits and vegetables contain the most vitamin C?”

“And can someone explain to me what a vitamin is?”

Thomas asks, puzzled.

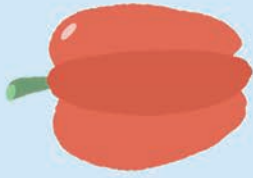
Nati and Horia exchange glances.

“Vitamins are essential substances our bodies need to function properly and stay healthy,” Nati begins.

"They help with growth, tissue repair, and fighting disease. Look, for example, vitamin C helps us have a healthy heart, strong bones, and heal faster when we cut or hurt ourselves. Vitamin A is good for vision and skin."



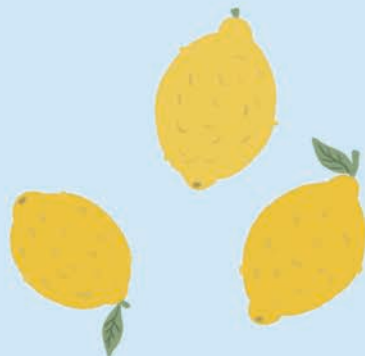


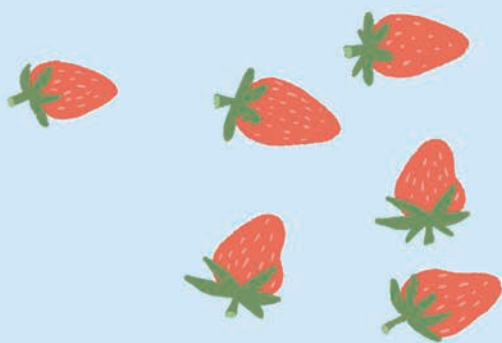
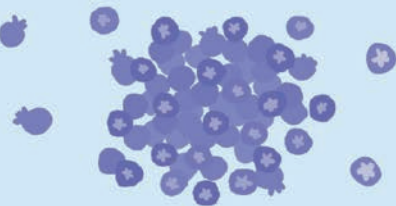


"Ah," Thomas seems to understand.
"So that's why fruits and vegetables are so important, because of vitamins!"

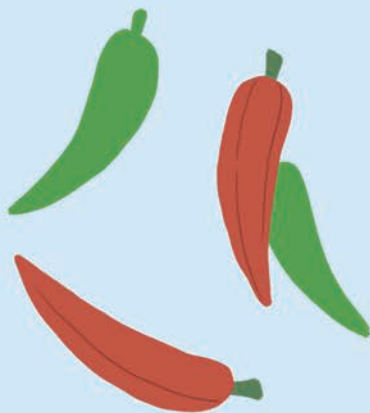
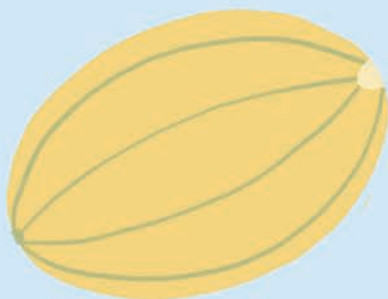
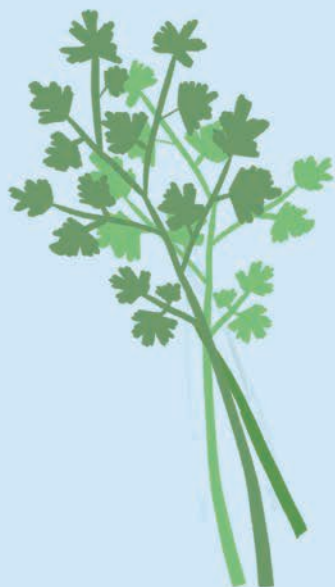
"But what about the answer to my question?" Adina continues.
Radu thinks for a moment.

"Vitamin C is found in lemons and oranges. Hmm, is it actually called vitamin C because of citrus?"





"No, no," Adina laughs. "Vitamins were named after letters of the alphabet in the order they were discovered by scientists. The first was vitamin A. It's found in carrots, sweet potatoes, and spinach. By the way, vitamin C is also found in other fruits and vegetables, for example in peppers. Or in cherries, but it's best to eat those when they're in season."



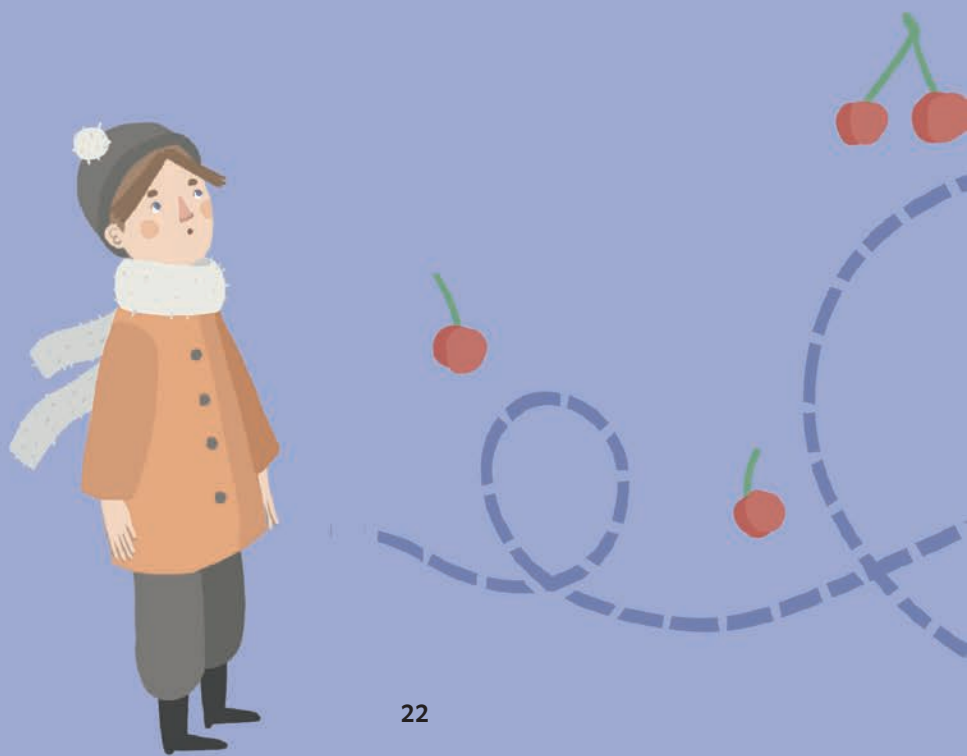
"And if I want fresh cherries in winter? How do I manage that?" Radu wonders.

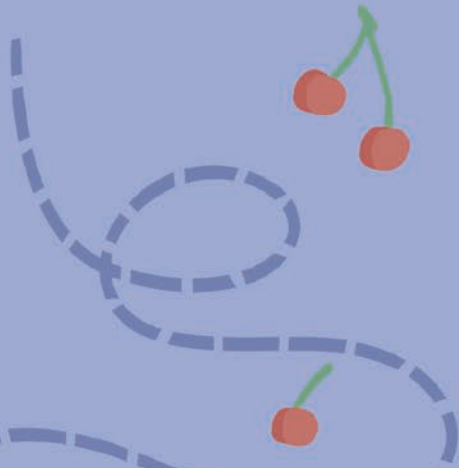
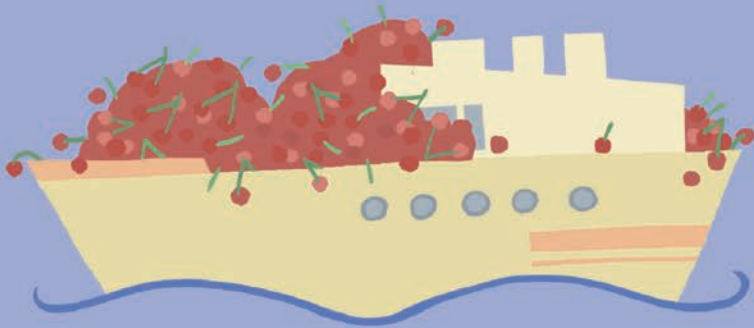
"Let's imagine their journey to us," Adina suggests.

"From which country would they come and how would they be transported?"

"If it's winter here, then... from South America," answers Nati. "By ship."

"How can you transport cherries from South America across the ocean?" Thomas asks, puzzled. "It takes many months to get here, they would spoil."





"In our times, it doesn't take that long anymore. But, even if the fruits are transported quickly, they lose vitamins and minerals along the way. So, although they look good, they're not as nutritious anymore. Plus, a lot of fuel is consumed for transportation and pollution increases."

"So, if I want cherries in winter, I'll make do with grandma's compote," Radu concludes. "And I'd better eat apples or pears."

Back to the topic of fresh fruits, the children and Adina continue their discussion.

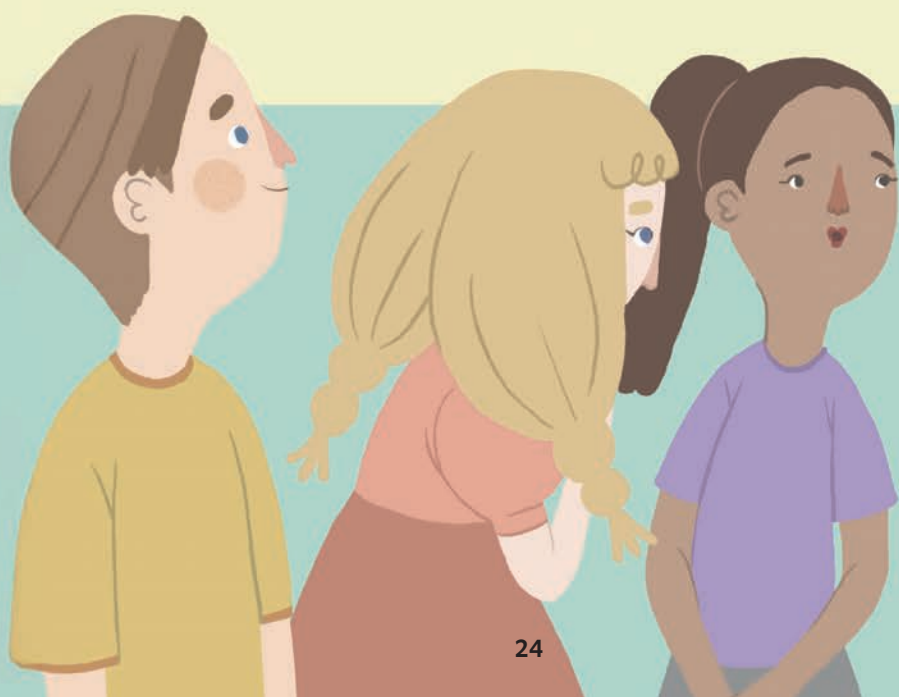
"Fresh fruits and vegetables help us strengthen our immune system and stay healthy."

Thomas raises his eyebrows:

"What does 'immune system' mean?"

"It's like a shield against diseases, it protects us from germs," Nati quickly explains.

Thomas smiles widely, but then becomes serious again: "I need oranges and lemons for my crew. Our doctor says they can save us."

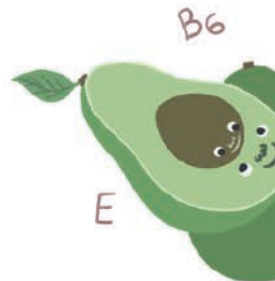
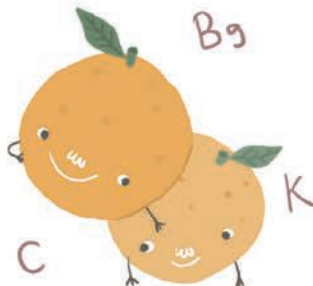
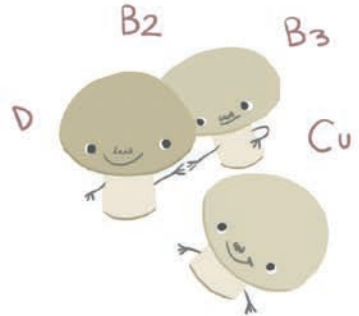
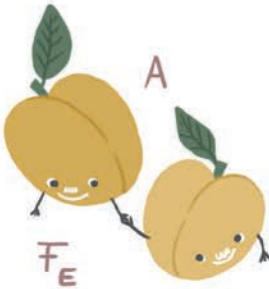
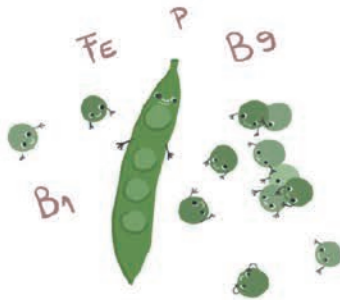




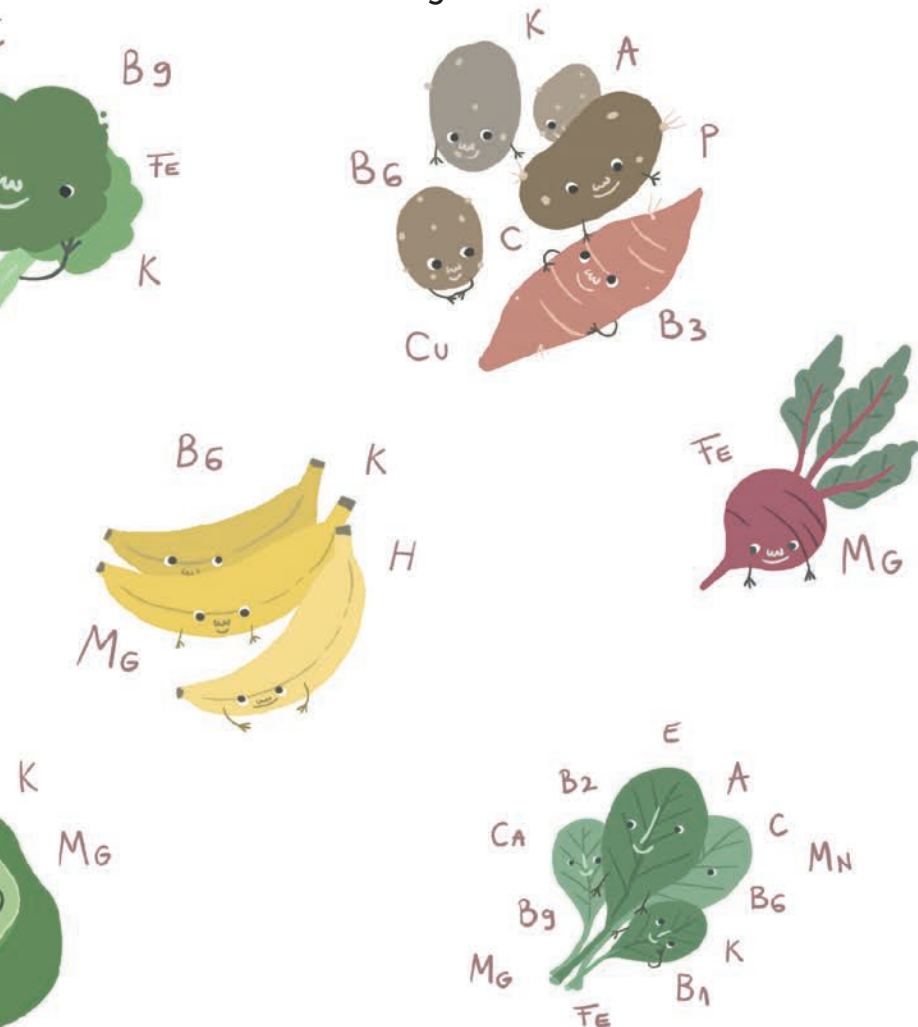
"As I was saying, not just citrus fruits contain vitamin C," explains Adina. "Many vegetables and fruits have this wonderful vitamin: hot and bell peppers, black currants, cantaloupe, and even some herbs like parsley. We have a chart here."



"Fruits and vegetables don't just contain vitamins, but also important minerals such as calcium, potassium, and iron. And lots of fiber, which helps digestion," Adina continues. "We need to have a varied diet and eat fruits and vegetables of all colors,



because they all have benefits: red and pink ones prevent heart disease, orange and yellow ones help vision, green ones prevent serious diseases such as cancer, and blue and purple ones help in the fight against diabetes."



Thomas looks at the abundance of fruits and vegetables around him.

“Can I take some for my crewmates? They urgently need them,” he asks.

The children bring crates and start filling them with the fruits and vegetables Adina mentioned as being rich in vitamins: cabbage, melon, cauliflower, spinach, tomatoes, apples. Horia brings a few pots with lettuce and parsley. “Herbs are useful too, and I also have a bag of seeds here so you can grow them on the ship.”





Once the provisions are ready, Thomas thanks them and asks for their help carrying them to a large wooden door.



“I am grateful to you, children!” he says. “Without you, my crew wouldn’t have had a chance.” Then he waves at them with a big smile and vanishes as if he had never been there.

The children stare at the door, puzzled.

“Where did Thomas go?” Horia asks.

“Actually, where did he come from?” Nati wonders.

"I didn't really understand either," says Adina. "But we'll stick with the conclusion and the nutrition lesson: fruits and vegetables are very important in our diet and help us grow healthy. I hope the sailor's crew will recover."





“I don’t eat a lot of fruits, but my mom gives me vitamin pills,” says Andra. “Isn’t that the same thing?” “Vitamin supplements are only necessary in special cases,” explains Adina. “For those who don’t have access to fresh fruits and vegetables, like astronauts or Thomas’s crew. If you eat a balanced diet, you don’t need vitamin pills.”

As they talk, a gong sounds.

“Oh no, closing time again! And we didn’t get to see everything,” murmurs Nati. “That’s okay, we’ll come back next week,” Adina reassures them. “Until then, remember: a healthy diet, water, exercise, and rest are the keys to staying healthy.”



As they leave, they are greeted by a surprise: a salad festival. The square in front of the pyramid is buzzing with activity—crowds of people and stalls offering all kinds of salads. The children look excitedly at the choices: cold vegetable salads, warm vegetable salads, fruit salads...

“Do they have chocolate topping?” Radu asks, making his classmates laugh as they playfully pat him on the back.



“Fruits and vegetables are a true treasure of nature,” says Nati.

“That’s right,” Adina agrees. “It’s good to eat two servings of fruit and three servings of vegetables each day, either raw or cooked, but without adding sugar or fats.”



“So, no chips,” Horia laughs, remembering the discussion with Kamut.

“That would be one rule, yes. Another is to eat as colorfully as possible and try new flavors. I’m choosing a salad with both fruits and vegetables. What a delicious combination: spinach, apples, carrots, walnuts, pears. Excellent!”



The children follow her example. Each one holds a small bowl of salad, enjoying every bite. As they eat, they discuss the day's events and share their thoughts.

Even Horia, who last time dreamed of mountains of chips and rivers of soda, happily crunches on pieces of apple.

They all eagerly look forward to their next visit, when they will see Kamut again and explore the fascinating world of grains.



ACTIVITY 1

Answer the questions with a classmate.



Why do you think it's healthy to eat seasonal fruits and vegetables and not, for example, cherries from Peru at Christmas?



What caused the sailors on the ship to be sick with scurvy?



Did you find out which local fruits and vegetables are rich in vitamin C?



ACTIVITY 2

During art class, create a mask on which you can paint your favorite fruits and vegetables. You have an example below.



ACTIVITY 3

Prepare a fruit and vegetable salad for your family. Put your imagination and talent to work, then exchange impressions and recipes with your classmates!



OTHER TITLES FROM THE NABU APP



DOWNLOAD THE APP HERE:



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