

NAME _____ DATE _____

In 1885, a sister and brother lived with their parents at the edge of a beautiful green valley in the Pacific Northwest. Their names were River and Riley.

The valley was filled with a vast evergreen forest. Its trees towered over the home where Riley and River lived. River and Riley loved the forest. Every day they went exploring. They paddled in the forest's cool streams and made trails under the giant conifers.

They also liked to have picnics at the top of a hill near their home. Up there, they could look down on the tops of the valley's huge trees.

One day when they were up on the hill, they decided to give the valley a name. They called it Tree Tops Valley.



Then in the middle of a hot summer day, everything changed. A lightning storm started a fire in the forest. Luckily, the wind blew the flames away from River and Riley's home. But when the fire went out, they saw it had burned their Tree Tops Valley. All the tall trees were burned. The tender little seedlings that had grown on the forest floor were gone. All that was left was the burned remains of trees.

They both wanted to cry. River said, "I just can't look at it. Our beautiful forest is gone forever. I never want to sit on our hill again." After the fire, the family moved to another community, where River and Riley made new friends.

Then five years after the fire, their father said, "Why don't we visit the valley? It would be good to see it again."

River and Riley didn't want to go. They remembered how the valley had looked after the fire. But they agreed, and one day, the family saddled their horses and rode up to the valley.

What a surprise! Things had happened since the fire. Wind had blown seeds into the valley. Birds had dropped them from the air. The seeds had sprouted. Now, instead of bare, burned ground, there were mosses, weeds, grasses, and ferns growing everywhere. The children rode back home feeling much better about Tree Tops Valley.

The years went by. Before they knew it, River and Riley had grown up. The community where they lived was much bigger now. Riley became a teacher and taught at the one-room school there.

River had heard stories about people who were finding gold farther north. So, she decided to be a prospector. She bought supplies and one day she came to tell Riley goodbye. She promised she would write him.

Riley didn't hear from River for many months. Then, finally, a letter arrived. In the letter, River wrote, "On my way north, I passed through Tree Tops Valley. You would be amazed at how the valley looks now! Our old home is still there, but everything else has changed. The whole valley is full of berry bushes. I had a feast!"



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Several years later, when Riley had two children of his own, he decided to take them to Tree Tops Valley. He thought it would be fun to pick berries, just like River had done. His children loved the valley. But there were no berries to pick. Most of the bushes were gone.

Instead, the valley was filling with deciduous trees. Riley wrote to River about them. He wrote, "There are lots of leafy green trees in the valley. And I saw some conifer seedlings. The leafy trees have shaded the berry bushes and choked them out. I don't know what the trees are called, but they have made the valley all green again."

Many years passed. Riley's children grew up and had families of their own. One summer, when Riley was 75 years old, he received a letter from River. She wrote:

Dear Riley,

Remember how we loved Tree Tops Valley when we were young? Last month I decided to visit it again, before I got too old to make the trip. It was a long drive, but I made it! You would be happy to see our valley now. It's beautiful! Remember that leafy green tree you saw on your last trip there? Well, most of them are gone. Now the valley is full of young coniferous trees. Who knows? Maybe our great-grandchildren will see the valley looking the way we once saw it.

Love, River

The years went by. It was now 130 years since the fire had swept through Tree Tops Valley.

One day, Riley's great-granddaughter, Jennifer, was looking at some old family letters. She found the letter River had written to Riley 45 years before.

"Look at this," Anna said to her brother, Lee. "It's a letter that belonged to our great-grandfather, Riley. His sister wrote it to him. It's all about a place called Tree Tops Valley. I wonder if we could find the valley. Why don't we try?"

And that's what they did. Anna and Lee found the valley. They even found the hill where River and Riley had taken their picnics.

From the hill they could see tall conifers filling the whole valley. They climbed down and explored and enjoyed the shade of the tall trees. While the trees were tall and mighty, Jennifer and Lee had evidence from the past that the forest would not always be the same. They wondered if someday, they too might witness changes in Tree Tops Valley like River and Riley talked of in their letters.

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CAREER CORNER

FICTION WRITERS compose short stories, plays, or novels using imaginary characters and events. They often base their stories on real-life, just as the author of "Tree Tops Valley" has done.

I LOVE MY
GREEN JOB!