

Jacinto



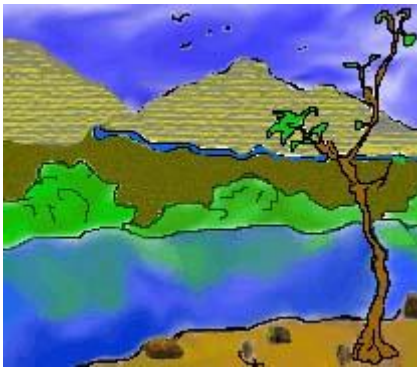
a child from Guatemala

Jacinto lives in Guatemala, a country in Central America. He lives in a house with his mother, Francisca, and his uncle, Modesto, who is half-blind.



Jacinto's house is very small and the walls are made of clay. The roof is made of palm leaves and the floor is dirt.

The house is way up on a mountain and it takes an hour to walk to the village from Jacinto's house.



Jacinto's house doesn't have any electricity. Jacinto and his mother get up in the morning when it is light and go to bed when they can't see any more.

The first chore in the morning is to collect wood for the fire for cooking.

Jacinto sometimes has to walk very far to find branches on the ground. No one cuts down trees.



Every morning Jacinto goes to school in the village.

He has to go through fields, climb over fences, and cross little streams.

During the rainy season it's not easy to get to school because there is mud everywhere.





While Jacinto is in school, his mother stays home to make tortillas, flat cakes made out of corn. It takes a long time to prepare them.

First she has to soak the kernels of corn, rinse the kernels, and then crush them with a rock.

After this, Jacinto's mother makes a kind of dough.

Then she takes small portions of the dough, rolls them into balls, and flattens them like pancakes.

Finally, she puts them on a flat stone over the fire to cook.



Jacinto doesn't have school in the afternoon.

On his way home he tries to find plants that he, his mother, and his uncle can eat for dinner.



When he arrives home in the afternoon, it is very hot. His mother gives him some of the tortillas she has cooked for lunch.

Often, that is all there is to eat. Jacinto and his mother and uncle sit outside for lunch on a little bench, which is the only piece of furniture they have.



Jacinto's family has a small piece of land on the mountainside. When it is time to plant the corn and beans his family grows, Jacinto cannot go to school because there is too much work to do.



Each day, Jacinto has to guide his half-blind uncle to the fields. Before he and his uncle can plant the seeds, they have to pull up the roots from last year's crops.



Their field is full of rocks, too. It is hard work for a ten year-old boy and his half-blind uncle, who has to feel his way around.

Jacinto and his uncle have to work hard to grow enough food for the whole year. At the end of each day, they are exhausted and fall asleep on the floor of Jacinto's house.

Jacinto is very proud that he can help his mother. Jacinto and his mother love one another very much.

But the kind of life that Jacinto leads is hard for a child and Jacinto has no time to play.



