



11. Work and Play

The children had done a lot more than just play with their hamsters. As they watched them grow, and learned about them, they wrote stories and poems describing what they saw.

Soon after the babies were born, they wrote a letter to Luke. They told him all about the babies, and how Susie was taking care of them all by herself, and how much she needed him to help her.

“I see what you mean now when you said that mothers need fathers to help them with their babies,” said Carol. “Susie just works all the time.”

” That’s true,” agreed” Miss Weston. “And we help her a lot, by bringing her all her food. What would she do if she were a little wild mother and had to get her own food, as well as feed her babies?”

“She’d have to leave them alone and go out to find it,” said Peter.

“While she was away, enemies might come and kill the babies,” said Brian.

“Hamsters are hoarding animals,” said Miss Weston. “That means that they like to gather food up and hoard, or save it. A hamster who knew she was going to have babies would collect food ahead of time, and store it up in a little pantry in her hole, and use it while her babies were tiny. But even so, she might have to leave the babies sometimes, and enemies could certainly harm them.”

“Human mothers can’t store food up like that, can they?” asked Susan.

“They could lay up a good supply of certain types of food, I suppose,” said Miss Weston, “but there are many things they would need that they couldn’t store up. Fathers take care of the mothers when their babies are little and see that they get what they need.”

“Luke isn’t a very good father,” said Charles. “He hasn’t done anything for Susie.”

“He’s as good as most animal fathers,” replied Miss Weston, “but no animal fathers are as good as human fathers in caring for their babies. The best of all the ways for people to live is in human families.”

The children spent four of their English lessons writing a poem about the babies, one verse a day. They worked on it all together, suggesting lines and rhymes and words, and helping each other until they had made it the best poem they could possibly write. Here it is

Susie’s Babies

*Susie’s babies are so sweet,
Eight of them all clean and neat!
First they’re pink, and then they’re grey;
Then they’re clad in brown array.
When their mother’s lying still,
Eight small babies drink their fill.
Sometimes oatmeal they will test,*