

37. **From City to Farm** Lexile: 1020  
By Samantha Gross

Jason Detzel was bored with his work as a psychologist for the United States Air Force, and he was tired of spending all day in an office. Many people enjoy working in an office environment with computers, but Dr. Detzel felt that in the city he was losing touch with something important. So the Richmond, Virginia, resident quit his job and started a farm.

He and his business partner found 80 acres of available land in a small town called Claverack, N.Y., and signed a 10-year lease. They bought hammers, crowbars, nails, and wood. While some farms used a lot of machinery, they decided they wanted to do as much as possible with their own hands.

They built a corral for the cows so that the cows would stay inside the pasture where they could move around and graze. They built pig shelters where the pigs could be protected from the weather in the winter. They built a house for the chickens where the hens could lay eggs and Dr. Detzel could collect them.

After almost a year and a half, Diamond Hills Farm had grown to include 10 pigs and 20 cows, including a baby calf that Dr. Detzel was feeding with a bottle. The farm was also home to 100 laying hens, which provided eggs, and 100 other chickens that would be used for their meat.

After many months of growth, Dr. Detzel felt like he'd already made something important—both for himself and for the land he and his partner owned.

"I'm definitely happier being out in the fields with my animals. Even if there are bad days, I'm still happy," Dr. Detzel said. "When you're inside all day, you don't get to see nature working."

After starting the farm, Dr. Detzel began seeing many aspects of nature at work. Instead of driving around the farm, he usually walked, and he could feel the texture of the earth beneath his boots. In the winter, the farm became a blinding sea of white. In the summer, it turned into a lush sea of green.

Dr. Detzel's work didn't bore him anymore.

"The job is different every day on the farm. It's amazing," he said. "You're a farmer. You're a veterinarian. You're a plumber. You're definitely a carpenter a lot. With animal husbandry, all that stuff is different every day on the farm. You're a jack of all trades, master of none. That's what I like about it."

As a farmer focusing on raising animals, one of Dr. Detzel's most important tasks was to grow a lot of healthy grass for the animals to eat. Each morning, he rang a bell to let the cows know it was time to move to another section of the corral in another part of the pasture where there was plenty to eat. The droppings, left by the cows and chickens that followed behind them, helped grow more green grass to replace what the cows had eaten.

Learning how to manage the animals had been one of the biggest challenges of starting the farm, Dr. Detzel said. He learned that it was important to stick to a routine. That's why he rang the same bell and called to the cows in the same way each day. The routine helped keep the cows calm and cooperative.

"They weigh much more than I do, and they could push through much, much bigger things than I could ever build," he said of his animals. "So it's a matter of keeping them where you want them by keeping them happy."

The cows were most happy, he knew, if they were someplace with lots of good water and plenty of healthy grass. If they weren't satisfied with the amount of grass in a pasture, they always let him know with their loud mooing.

It wasn't easy for Dr. Detzel to be accepted by the other farmers in his community. With all his tattoos, he looked very different. When he started the farm he was in his early 30s, while most other farmers were older. There weren't many young people starting farms, because it had become harder and harder for small family farms to make much income.

Dr. Detzel said that had begun to change when more people became locavores. A locavore is someone who tries to eat food grown and raised nearby. By shopping at their local farmers market, many locavores hope to reduce the amount of energy used to ship food long distances. Many locavores like knowing where their food comes from and being able to talk to the farmers about what chemicals were used and how the animals were treated. Some locavores say food that travels less and spends less time in storage tastes much better.

Dr. Detzel likes his new job, but it's much harder to make money. As of July 2013, he was working two jobs—40 hours a week at a local deli and 35 hours or so each week on the farm. But he says it's worth it.

"I'm much happier," he said.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

1. What does Jason Detzel become after being a psychologist?

- A Jason Detzel becomes a chef.
- B Jason Detzel becomes a farmer.
- C Jason Detzel becomes a singer.
- D Jason Detzel becomes a policeman.

2. Jason Detzel had a problem. His problem was that he was bored with his job. How did he solve his problem?

- A He quit his job and started a farm.
- B He got rid of his old computer and bought a new one.
- C He stopped eating food raised far away.
- D He started working at a local deli.

3. Jason Detzel likes working on a farm.

What evidence from the passage supports this statement?

- A "I'm definitely happier being out in the fields with my animals. Even if there are bad days, I'm still happy," Dr. Detzel said."
- B "There weren't many young people starting farms, because it had become harder and harder for small family farms to make much income."
- C "By shopping at their local farmers market, many locavores hope to reduce the amount of energy used to ship food long distances."
- D "Learning how to manage the animals had been one of the biggest challenges of starting the farm, Dr. Detzel said."

4. What is a big difference between Jason Detzel's work as a psychologist and his work as a farmer?

- A As a psychologist, he raised animals; as a farmer, he works with computers.
- B As a psychologist, he did something different every day; as a farmer, he does the same things every day.
- C As a psychologist, he worked in a pasture; as a farmer, he works in an office.
- D As a psychologist, he worked indoors; as a farmer, he gets to work outside.

5. What is this passage mainly about?

- A the job of a psychologist
- B why few young people start farms
- C the locavore movement
- D a man who becomes a farmer

6. Read the following sentence: "Jason Detzel was **bored** with his work as a psychologist for the United States Air Force, and he was tired of spending all day in an office."

What does the word "**bored**" mean?

- A hardworking
- B lazy
- C not interested
- D very interested

7. Choose the answer that best completes the sentence below.

Jason Detzel likes doing something different every day; \_\_\_\_\_, he likes being outside.

- A also
- B instead
- C in summary
- D initially

8. Name three different things Jason Detzel does on his farm.

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