

Read this folktale and answer the questions that follow.

The Billy Goat and the Vegetable Garden

retold by Lucía M. González

1 Once there was a very old woman and a very old man who lived on a farm. They shared a vegetable garden in which they grew tomatoes, lettuce, peppers, potatoes, beans, and plantains. They spent hours working in their garden and planning all the delicious dishes they were going to make with their vegetables.

2 One morning, a billy goat came into their garden and began eating up all the vegetables.

3 “Look!” cried the little old woman. “That billy goat is going to eat up everything in our garden. What shall we do?”

4 “Don’t worry,” said the little old man. “I can make him go away if I speak to him very, very nicely.”

5 So he went down to the field where the billy goat was eating and he patted it on its back. “*Buenos dias*, Señor Billy Goat,” he said. “Good morning. Please do not eat up our garden. You are so young and strong, and we are so old and weak. Surely you can find food somewhere else. Please go away.”

6 But before the old man finished talking, the rude Señor Billy Goat’s legs swung up in the air and his head bent low. Then he turned and charged at the old man with his horns!

7 “*¡Ay, Mujer!** *¡Mujer!*” the old man cried out to his wife, running up the hill as fast as he could. “Open the door, please! The billy goat is after me!”



* *Mujer* — wife

8 The little old man ran inside the house, shut the door, and began to cry.

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9 Then suddenly, something tickled the little old man's ear. He shook his head to get rid of it and, as he did, down dropped a little red ant.

10 "I have come to help you," said the little ant. "I can make Señor Billy Goat go away from your garden."

11 "You?" cried the little old woman. "You are so small, what can you do? How can you help us?"

12 "Just watch me," said the ant. "You are being too nice to that bully. I can speak to him in the only language he understands."

13 And with that, the little ant crawled out of the house, through the field, and over to the billy goat. The goat didn't even see the little ant as he crawled up his hind leg, across his back, straight up to his ear — and stung him!

14 "¡Ay!" cried the billy goat.

15 The little ant now crawled to the other ear and stung him.

16 "¡Ay!" cried the billy goat again.

17 Then the little ant crawled up his back and down again — stinging him all over as he crawled along!

18 "¡Ay, ay, ay, ay, ay!" the billy goat cried. "I have stepped in an anthill! If I don't get out of this garden at once, these ants will eat me alive!"

19 Quickly, he jumped up into the air and ran out of the garden as fast as he could.

20 The little old man and the little old woman gave many thanks to that brave and clever little red ant for saving their vegetable garden, and they always made sure he had plenty to eat. They spent many hours that fall harvesting their beautiful ripe vegetables and talking about the delicious dishes they were going to prepare.

21 And what about that billy goat? Well, for all anyone knows, he hasn't gone near that vegetable garden to this very day!

