

Johnny and the Apple Seeds

“Johnny,” yelled Mr. Crawford, “load those apples in the cart.”

Johnny wiped the sweat from the back of his neck. “Yes, sir.” He picked up a green one and took a bite. “Yuck. I keep forgetting these aren’t eating apples, they’re for making apple cider.”

Mr. Crawford laughed.

After work, Johnny looked out over the vast apple orchard. “I wonder if everyone has apples.”

“Nope,” said Mr. Crawford. “There are lots of places that don’t have apple trees. Don’t know why someone doesn’t plant them.”

Johnny thought for a moment then furrowed his brows. “Someone ought to plant them. And I think that someone should be me. I heard if you plant fifty apple trees on a parcel of land, you can own it.”

Mr. Crawford took his hat off and scratched his head. “What? You can’t just go off and plant apple trees. First off, you can’t afford to buy them to plant. And, how will you live?”

A smile spread across Johnny’s face. “I don’t need trees. I’m going to plant seeds. I’m going to go to every farm that makes apple cider and ask for the seeds from the apples they use. I’ll have more than I need in no time.”

The next day, Johnny asked Mr. Crawford for several cloth bags and some food. Then he headed west.

Johnny walked through Pennsylvania heading toward Ohio. He stopped everywhere farmers had apple trees for making cider. The farmers were all friendly. They gave Johnny food, let him sleep for the night, and gave him all the seeds they had.

“What you doin’ with all those seeds,” said Emma, the daughter of one of the farmers.

“I plant them,” said Johnny.

Emma crunched her face up. “Why would you do that?”

“Cause I get land by planting the seeds. Once the trees are grown, I’ll sell the land to settlers. They’ll be happy to get land full of apple trees. I’m gonna go on through Ohio, into Indiana, then on through Michigan.”

Emma headed back toward her house. “That’s a lot of territory you’ll be planting in. And, that’s a lot of seeds you’ll be planting. I’m gonna call you Johnny Appleseed,” she yelled.

Questions

1. What is the setting at the beginning of the story?
2. Why did Johnny want to plant apple seeds?
3. Where did he get the apple seeds?
4. Why did Emma decide to call him Johnny Appleseed?