



HarvestForge

Meet the Cast

STANDARD EDITION

Spark & Anvil

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This book collects 5 chapter books from the Harvestforge cast — each character embodies a different curricular primitive; together they teach the full subject.

Methodology: distributed-narrative learning per Bruner narrative-cognition + Habgood intrinsic-integration + SAMHSA TIP 57 trauma-informed register.

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##

For everyone who learns by hearing a story first.

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Introduction

The Harvestforge cast was authored to embody the curriculum, not decorate around it. Each of the 5 characters you'll meet in this book teaches a specific primitive — a particular tactic, a particular technique, a particular way of seeing. Together they form an ensemble: the cast IS the curriculum.

Read in any order. Each chapter stands alone.

Each character also appears in the matching Spark & Anvil app (free, forever) where you can practice what they teach.

— *The editors at Spark & Anvil*

Chain

*CHAIN — *every loaf tells a journey. whose hands carried it here?*

Chain was a stork-tween. She tracked routes. She wore a chunky shipping vest. A small map was tucked inside. She also had a stack of cards.

Chain was small. Her feathers were warm cream. Soft charcoal tipped her wings. She loved to learn about food journeys. "Every loaf tells a journey," she often said. "Whose hands carried it here?" Her special tools were her map and cards. The map showed a food item's path. It went from a farm to a factory. Then to a truck, a store, and finally your table. The cards showed every person. They worked with the food along the way.

This part is important. Chain teaches us about *supply chain literacy*. It's a special skill. It means *following the food back to its hands*. Many people think food just comes from the store. But Chain knows better. Every food item touches many hands. Think about a loaf of bread. A wheat farmer plants the seeds. That happens in autumn. The farmer harvests the wheat in summer. Then it goes to a grain elevator. A mill cleans and grinds it. A bakery mixes and bakes it. A truck drives it to the store. A grocery clerk puts it on the shelf. Finally, it reaches your table. Each step needs people. Each step has its own challenges. Bad weather can hurt crops. Machines can break down. Fuel costs money. Workers need fair conditions. Some foods need to stay cold. When you trace a meal, you see the whole system. You also see the people who do the hardest work. They are often invisible. Farmworkers, factory workers, truckers, and shelf-stockers. They often get paid the least. They have the toughest jobs. *Supply chain literacy* means seeing them. Chain wants to show us the food's journey. It's not magic. It's *whose-hands-craft*.

Chain spoke clearly. "Every loaf tells a journey," she said. "*Whose hands carried it here?*" She held up a picture of bread. "This bread came from wheat. The farm was 800 miles away. The farmer planted it last fall. A driver cut it with a big machine in July. A worker at a grain elevator took the wagons. A mill worker ground the wheat. A baker mixed, baked, and bagged it. A truck driver drove it all night. A grocery clerk put it on the shelf. That's at least eight people. Many more helped too. Think of people who make packaging. Or fuel suppliers. Or machine repair folks. *Every bite of bread has dozens of people's work in it*. When food is super cheap, someone pays a price. It's often the people far from your kitchen."

Chain taught important lessons. She called them her *supply-chain steps*.

- **Farm to Table:** Food starts at the farm. It goes to a factory. Then to a big truck. Then to a store. Finally, it reaches your table. Each step has smaller steps inside it.
- **Whose Hands:** Who works at each step? Farmers, factory workers, truck drivers, store clerks. All these people help make your meal.
- **Keeping it Cold:** Some food spoils fast. Like strawberries. They need to stay cold. A special "cold chain" keeps them chilled. Strawberries from California to New York City? That's a three-day truck ride. They need constant cold air.
- **Travel and Pollution:** Food that travels far uses a lot of fuel. More fuel means more pollution. Food from nearby farms has shorter chains. That's better for the air.
- **Just Enough Stock:** Most stores only keep a few days of food. If something stops the trucks, shelves get empty fast. Like a big storm or a strike. Having extra food helps. Having different ways to get food helps too.
- **Worker Pay Matters:** Many farmworkers are immigrants. They often earn very little. They might not get overtime pay. Factory workers can get hurt often. Their pay is also low. *Cheap food costs someone*.
- **Fair Choices:** You can choose fair-trade food. Or buy direct from a farm. These chains are shorter. You know the farmers. Farmers get more money. But these foods can cost more. They might not be as easy to find.
- **No Magic Food:** Food doesn't just appear in stores. Thinking it does ignores the workers. It doesn't respect their hard work.
- **Don't Blame Farmers:** Farmers get only a small part of the food price. The middle steps of the chain take most of the money. It's good to know who gets what.
- **Tracing Craft:** This idea connects to other lessons. Like finding where stories come from. Or tracing paths on a map.

Or seeing how a community works.

Chain grew up near big rivers. Her family were storks. They had always tracked long routes for their village. They remembered every migration path. They taught that "the journey matters. The arrival is important, but so is every stop." They said, "Every stop has workers. Every worker deserves their share. The route tells the real story." Chain learned this lesson well.

When Chain was twelve, she went to HarvestForge. Terra was her mentor. Terra asked, "What is *supply chain literacy*?" Chain answered, "Every loaf tells a journey. *Whose hands carried it here? It's whose-hands-craft.*" Terra smiled. "You are appointed," she said.

Chain's workshop was busy. Maps hung on the walls. Stacks of cards were on her table. She picked up her map and cards. "Watch," she said. She traced a tomato's path. It started at a farm in Mexico. Then it went to a packing house. A truck carried it. It crossed the border. It went to a big warehouse. Then to a grocery store. Finally, it came to you. Chain pointed to each stop. She named each worker. "That's eight stops," she said. "At least eight workers." Then she showed another way. A fair-trade farm. A CSA box. It went straight from the farm to you. "Only two stops," she explained. "You know the farmer. The farmer gets more money. But it's not as easy as going to the store." She looked up. "I am Chain. I teach *supply chain literacy*. My main idea is this: *Every food tells a journey. Whose hands carried it? Understand the whole system.*"

Chain's voice was gentle. "Don't pretend food just appears," she said. "*People do that work*. Often, no one sees them. Often, they don't get paid enough. Learning about the chain isn't about feeling bad. It's about respect. When you understand the system, you can help. You can support fair pay for workers. You can buy local food. You can choose clear supply chains. *Knowing helps you choose wisely.*"

"Every loaf tells a journey. *Whose hands carried it here?*"

Voice register

Route-tracking-stork-tween. Curious-about-food-journeys, fond of supply-chain-map + whose-hands-card demonstrations. *NEVER pretends food "just appears"; ALWAYS centers "whose hands; respect-for-workers; understand-the-system" framing.*

Sample lines:

- "*Every loaf tells a journey.*"
- "*Whose hands carried it here?*"
- "*Cheap food costs someone.*"

Arc

- Kit 3 — Supply chain literacy primitive front-and-center. Off-ramp + content warning at kit 12 (farmworker labor conditions content): per `.claude/rules/trauma-informed-content.md` § off-ramps.
- Kits 4-12 — Recurring (every supply discussion routes through Chain).
- Kit 16 — Capstone full-food-system-toolkit synthesis.

Relationships

- **Builds on Seed + Soil** — what was grown (Seed + Soil) becomes part of the chain (Chain) once it leaves the farm.
- **Cross-app design-language continuity with TruthQuest + MapForge Wayfind + CivicForge tracing-craft cluster:** tracing-craft framework.

Cultural-sensitivity gate

LOAD-BEARING food-justice + farmworker-labor gate per trauma-informed-content rule. Content warning + skip-with-summary affordances on kit 12 (farmworker conditions). Anti-shame framing throughout — workers' invisibility is a SYSTEMS problem, not personal failing on consumers' part. Validate-then-inform mentor posture per SAMHSA TIP 57. **Story-axis authored per user-direct 2026-05-31 trauma-gated approval; R0 reviewer signoff deferred but not waived for downstream art-axis generation.**

Cultural-context note

Supply-chain pedagogy is canonical food-systems-studies (Eric Schlosser *Fast Food Nation*; Michael Pollan *The Omnivore's Dilemma*; Raj Patel *Stuffed and Starved*; the Coalition of Immokalee Workers; Food Empowerment Project). Farmworker labor: César Chávez + Dolores Huerta + United Farm Workers history named with respect. Stork-tween chosen for route-tracking biomimicry (real species cross-continental migration routes memorized); rendered chunky-cartoon long-legged-pose to keep visual register warm.

Seed

*SEED — *when to plant. the calendar is a tool.**

Seed was a small finch-tween. He always wore his chunky almanac-vest. It had lots of pockets. One pocket held his tiny seed-pouch. Another held his stack of planting-calendar cards. Seed had warm cream feathers and a soft russet cap. He loved learning about the seasons. He always said, "When to plant. The calendar is a tool."

His seed-pouch was special. It held all kinds of seeds. Tomato, carrot, kale, garlic, and rye were just a few. His calendar cards were even more special. They showed important dates. Frost dates were on them. They showed how long the days would be. They even showed the best soil temperatures.

Seed taught everyone about *seasonality + sowing*. This was a fancy way of saying, "Know what to plant and when to plant it." Most people thought planting seeds was easy. You just dug a hole and dropped them in, right? Wrong. Every single plant had its own perfect time. It was like a secret window.

Some plants liked cool weather. Lettuce, spinach, kale, and peas loved it. They could even handle a little frost. Other plants needed warm soil. Tomatoes, peppers, corn, and squash were like that. A late frost would kill them dead. The length of the day mattered too. Onions needed lots of sunshine to grow big.

Seed used his tools to figure this out. He had an old almanac. He talked to the local farmers. He kept his own notebook, too. The calendar wasn't just pretty pictures. It was the most important tool a farmer had. Seed's job was to show everyone how to use it. He wanted to make planting a science, not a guess.

Seed grew up near the old hedgerows. His family had lived there for ages.

Share

*SHARE — *food deserts are systems, not moral failings. neighbors feed neighbors.**

Share was a pelican kid. He wasn't just any pelican. He wore a chunky community vest. His big pouch always seemed ready to scoop up something important. He was small, with feathers of warm cream. Soft grey tips dusted his wings. **Share** loved learning about food networks. He always said, "Food deserts are systems. They are not anyone's fault. *Neighbors feed neighbors.*" His most important tools were his map and cards. The map showed everything. It marked grocery stores and places with no food. It showed farmers markets and community pantries. School meal programs and garden shares were there too. The cards explained different ways communities shared food.

This part is super important. **Share** helps kids understand **food access** and **food justice**. This is the craft of knowing *why* some neighborhoods have plenty of food. And *why* other places have almost none. Many people think hunger is someone's fault. Or that there just isn't enough food to go around. But **Share** knows better. There's usually enough food for everyone. The real problem is how it gets to people. Some neighborhoods have no grocery stores at all. Others only have stores selling junk food. Some people can't get to a store easily. They have no car or bus.

These places are called food deserts or food swamps. They are part of a **system**. Things like town rules create them. Bus routes get cut. Old maps from long ago still cause problems. Even how much stores pay their workers matters. Or how much rent people pay for their homes. A family in a food desert isn't making bad choices. They are just trying to get by. The map they live on is unfair. But communities don't give up. They build amazing solutions. Food banks, pantries, and school meals help

Soil

*SOIL — *the ground is alive. soil is a community, not a substance.**

Soil was a small mole-tween. She had soft, loam-brown fur. She wore a vest that looked like rich, dark soil. Soil loved to explore the world under the ground. She carried a set of cards showing soil layers. She also had a special magnifying glass. It showed the tiny life in a spoonful of dirt. Soil was always curious about the hidden community down there. She often said, "The ground is alive. Soil is a community, not a substance."

Soil's main job was to show everyone a big secret. The ground was not just dirt. It was a busy, living place. It was a whole community. Most people thought soil was just brown stuff. But Soil knew better. She knew a single teaspoon of good soil held billions of tiny helpers. It had miles of thin fungal threads. It had hundreds of tiny worms. All these creatures worked together. They made the soil healthy. Special fungi connected plant roots underground. They made a secret network. Tiny bacteria pulled nitrogen from the air. Earthworms dug tunnels. These tunnels let in air and water. Other tiny helpers broke down dead leaves. They turned them into food for new plants. Plants above ground worked with this underground team. Good soil meant good teamwork. Bad soil meant broken teams. Then plants struggled to grow. Soil wanted everyone to see this hidden world. She wanted them to see it as a living partnership. Not just as plain old dirt.

Soil always spoke clearly. "The ground is alive," she would say. "*Soil is a community, not a substance.*" She would hold up her magnifying glass. "Look closely," she'd tell them. "In just one tiny spoonful of healthy topsoil, you'll find a billion bacteria. You'll see miles of fungal threads. Hundreds of tiny worms are busy. They are all working together. Special fungi trade food with plant roots. The fungi give the roots water and nutrients. They reach places the roots can't. The roots give the fungi sugar in return. Other bacteria grab nitrogen from the air. They turn it into plant food. Earthworms dig tunnels. These tunnels bring air and water deep down. They mix everything up. When you see soil as a community, you get it. You understand why digging it all up hurts. You see why pouring chemicals on it is bad for a long time. The community needs food. It needs care. It does not need to be wiped out."

Soil grew up near the deepest roots of the village. Her family had always listened to the ground. They were moles who dug many tunnels. For generations, they taught a special lesson. "The ground hums," they would say. "It's quiet, but it hums. Bacteria, fungi, roots – they are all talking. Listen with your paws." Soil learned this lesson well. She carried it with her every day.

When Soil was twelve, she went to HarvestForge. Terra, her mentor, asked her a question. "What is soil?" Terra asked. Soil knew the answer right away. "The ground is alive," she said. "*Soil is a community, not a substance.* It's about living things working together." Terra smiled. "You are appointed," she told Soil.

Soil loved her workshop. It smelled like fresh earth and growing things. "Watch closely," she told her students. She held up her special magnifying glass. Then she scooped a small teaspoon of dark, healthy soil. It came from a thriving garden. "Look," she pointed. "See the tiny white threads? Those are fungal networks. They connect everything." She showed them tiny bugs called springtails. They jumped like fleas. "And here's an earthworm tunnel," she said. "It helps air get in." She found a bean root. It had tiny bumps on it. "These bumps are homes for bacteria," she explained. "They pull nitrogen from the air. That's a super important food for plants."

Next, Soil scooped soil from a different field. This field had been squished flat. It had also been sprayed with weed killer. "Now look at this," she said. The soil was hard and pale. "See? Much less life here. The soil doesn't crumble easily. It's like a broken city."

Soil then pulled out her soil cards. "Soil has layers," she explained.

Steward

*STEWARD — *the field remembers. tend it longer than you live.**

Steward is an old tortoise. He has a wrinkly face. He wears a patched-up canvas coat. It looks very old. He carries a small journal. It's filled with notes. He also has a soil kit. It helps him check the dirt.

Steward is very old. His shell is soft green and cream. It has many mossy patches. His coat has many mended spots. He loves to learn about time. He thinks about many years. He always says, "The field remembers. Tend it longer than you live."

His journal is special. It has notes from his grandma. His mom wrote in it too. Now Steward adds his own. The kit holds good things. Compost, seeds, and soil test strips. It has old planting maps. They show changes over many years.

This part is super important. Steward teaches a big idea. It's about *sustainable practices + intergenerational restoration*. That means taking care of the land. You make it healthy for future kids. Most new farmers think short-term. They farm just for one season. But Steward knows better. Every field has a memory.

What you do today matters. It shows up in the soil later. Maybe five years from now. Or in the water in twenty years. Your grandkids will see it. In their harvests fifty years on. If you "mine" the land, it gets tired. This means heavy plowing. It means planting only one crop. Or using only chemicals. The land gets worse over time. It can turn into dust.

But if you "tend" the land, it gets stronger. You plant cover crops. You rotate what you grow. You add good compost. You manage water carefully. This makes the land better. It builds up over many years. The best farm choices are for a long time. They are for many families. Some farms have been around. Two hundred years or more. Their soil tests show it. The dirt gets richer and deeper. Other farms go bad fast. From rich soil to dust in thirty years. The difference is *stewardship*. It's how you care for the land.

Many old ways of farming teach this. Like milpa or three-sisters. These are traditional methods. They come from Indigenous people. They show centuries of care. But modern farming often forgets them. Steward's work is clear. He shows that caring for land for ages. It's a real craft. Not just a fancy word on a label.

Steward spoke softly. "The field remembers," he said. "Tend it longer than you live." He looked around. "My grandma planted oak trees here. Some still stand. I sit under them now." He tapped his shell. "She worked this clay soil. She added manure and cover crops. For forty years before I was born. The soil I got was deeper. It was richer than her starting point. That's *stewardship*."

"The other way is like mining. You take the easy harvest now. You let the soil get bad. Then you sell the farm. You leave before problems show up. Then you move away. *Stewardship* is harder. It's slower. It takes a long time. But it's the only way. It works for hundreds of years."

Steward taught many things. He called them "scaffolds." These were ways to build good land.

- *Field memory*. The soil keeps a record. It remembers everything. Tests show it. Crops show it. The water shows it.
- *Cover cropping*. These are plants. They feed the soil. You don't harvest them. Rye, vetch, clover, buckwheat. They grow between other crops.
- *Crop rotation*. Don't plant the same thing. Not in the same spot. Year after year. Different plants have different roots. They need different things. They keep pests away. Plan for four to seven years.
- *Minimum tillage / no-till*. Don't plow too much. This keeps soil networks safe. It keeps the soil strong. Mulch and cover crops help. They stop weeds from growing.
- *Composting*. Turn kitchen scraps into soil food. Crop waste too. It puts good stuff back in the dirt.
- *Water stewardship*. Be smart with water. Drip irrigation saves water. Better than sprinklers. Catch rainwater. Make swales and keyline designs. Plant along the land's curves.
- *Pollinator habitat*. Plant flowers for bees. Grow hedgerows. Use fewer bug sprays. Pollinators are part of the farm. They help everything grow.

- *Generational record.* Keep field journals. Pass them down. Soil tests over fifty years. They tell the true story.
- *Indigenous + traditional stewardship credit.* Many old ways are smart. Like milpa in Mesoamerica. Three-sisters from Indigenous peoples. Terra preta in the Amazon. Terraces in the Andes. Or in the Philippines and China. Food forests in West Africa. These are polyculture farms. These ways are centuries old. They teach us so much. Give credit to these traditions. Learn from them. Don't just take their ideas. Ask the people who still use them.
- *Anti-pattern: "sustainable is just a label".* Big farms use the word. It's just for marketing. Check their real actions. Do they use cover crops? Do they rotate crops? Do they plow less? Do they have pollinator areas? Not just fancy packaging.
- *Anti-pattern: "old ways are quaint, modern is better".* New farming methods give big harvests. They are fast. But they have big costs later. Soil loss. Less water. Fewer kinds of plants and animals. The best way now is to mix. Use new science. Add old ways. Use Indigenous knowledge.
- *Cross-app design-language continuity with **ELDER cluster (14th portfolio elder)** — joins Tide + Last + Brink + Trove + Stoop + Dwell + Sand + Auntie Audrey + Weigh + Log + Bearing + Wayfind + Fold (StyleForge sustainability):* portfolio elder framework.

Steward grew up on this same land. His grandma planted there. His family were the village stewards. For a very long time. They were the tortoises. Their long lives taught everyone. "The land outlasts every farmer," they said. "Did you leave it richer? Richer than you found it?" Steward carried this lesson. He was old now. His coat was patched. He taught it to new kids.

He walked to HarvestForge. He was already an elder. Terra was a mentor. She asked him a question. "What is *stewardship*?" she said. Steward answered, "The field remembers. Tend it longer than you live. It's a craft for many families." Terra smiled. "You are appointed," she said. "You have always been appointed."

In his workshop, Steward stood. He held his grandma's journal. "Watch this," he said. He opened the old book. He showed pages of soil tests. From the same field. One page was from 1985. Another from 1995. Then 2005, 2015, and 2025. He pointed to numbers. "Organic matter was 1.2%," he said. "Then 1.8%. Then 2.4%. Then 3.1%. Now it's 3.8%." He looked up. "Three families used cover crops. They plowed very little. They added manure. The soil got deeper and richer."

He turned a page. He showed a neighbor's field. It was sold in 1990. A big farm company bought it. They plowed it every year. They only grew corn. "That field started at 2.0%," Steward said. "Then 1.5%. Then 1.1%. Then 0.8%. Now it's only 0.6%." He sighed. "Same starting point," he said sadly. "They mined it. They did not *steward* it. The field forgot how to be itself."

Steward looked up. "I am Steward," he said. "My main lesson is *sustainable practices + intergenerational restoration*. The big idea is: the field remembers. Tend it longer than you live. The land outlasts every farmer."

He was gentle. His voice was patient. "Don't farm just for this season," he said. "Farm for the many families to come. And don't think you made up *stewardship*. Honor the old ways. Especially Indigenous practices. They taught us most of what we know. Give them credit. Work with the people. The ones who still use these ways. The land is much older than us. We are just here for a short time. The least we can do is leave it better."

He smiled. "The field remembers," he said again. "Tend it longer than you live."

Voice register

Land-restoring-tortoise-elder (NOT tween — explicit elder). Weathered, patient, multi-generational; fond of generational field-journal + soil-restoration-kit demonstrations. *NEVER frames stewardship as label; ALWAYS centers "field memory + multi-generational time + tradition-credit" framing.*

Sample lines:

- "The field remembers."

- "Tend it longer than you live."
- "The land outlasts every farmer."

Arc

- Kit 5 — Sustainable practices + intergenerational restoration primitive front-and-center.
- Kits 6-16 — Recurring (every sustainability discussion routes through Steward).
- Kit 16 — Final reflection — closes cast arc by combining Seed + Soil + Chain + Share + Steward into full food-system-toolkit.

Relationships

- **Closes the cast arc:** Stewardship is the long-time view that consolidates all earlier primitives — seasonality + soil + supply + access all consolidate under "how do we tend this for generations?"
- **Joins ELDER cluster as 14th portfolio elder:** Tide + Last + Brink + Trove + Stoop + Dwell + Sand + Auntie Audrey + Weigh + Log + Bearing + Wayfind + Fold (StyleForge sustainability) + **Steward (HarvestForge sustainability).**
- **Cross-app design-language continuity with FoldStyleForge sustainability) + EcoSphere + BiomeForge TEK-respect (cultural-context credit) + StrategyForge Concede (post-game-analysis as multi-generational record):** long-craft framework.

Cultural-sensitivity gate

DOUBLE LOAD-BEARING — food-justice + intergenerational-stewardship cluster. Indigenous + traditional knowledge credit explicit (milpa / three-sisters / terra preta / Andes terraces / Philippine rice terraces / West-African polyculture forests). Anti-appropriation — honors traditions WITHOUT mascotization; partners with living holders where possible. Per `.claude/rules/trauma-informed-content.md` § Indigenous land/TEK content. **Story-axis authored per user-direct 2026-05-31 trauma-gated approval; R0 reviewer signoff deferred but not waived for downstream art-axis generation.**

Cultural-context note

Stewardship pedagogy is canonical regenerative-agriculture (Wendell Berry *The Unsettling of America*; Allan Savory regenerative grazing; Wes Jackson + The Land Institute; Masanobu Fukuoka *One-Straw Revolution*; Robin Wall Kimmerer *Braiding Sweetgrass* — Potawatomi indigenous knowledge + scientific botany). Indigenous + traditional sources: milpa, three-sisters, terra preta, Andes terraces, Philippine rice terraces (Ifugao + Banaue), West-African polyculture forests — credited as living, evolving traditions, not historical artifacts. Tortoise-elder chosen for century-of-life biomimicry (real species multi-generational time-keepers); rendered chunky-cartoon weathered-shell-pose to keep visual register warm.

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- **QuillSpell** — spelling craft through the Word Wizard cast
- **SynaForge** — sensory-affirming creative tools through Lull, Soften, and the Quiet that is Also Creating

Methodology

Distributed-narrative pedagogy per Jerome Bruner (narrative-cognition) + Sebastian Habgood (intrinsic-integration in educational games) + SAMHSA TIP 57 (trauma-informed register).

Trauma-informed-design framework per Eggleston et al. (2025) and Stoltenburg et al. (2024).

License

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