

Read the story. Then answer the question below.

The Playful Zebra

A long time ago, Zebra, Gazelle, and Ostrich lived together with their herds in the grasslands of Africa. The animals lived among each other in peace, and they shared the job of caring for the land. Together, they made sure there was enough food for the animals to eat.

Most of the animals enjoyed working, except for the playful Zebra. While other animals gathered grasses for dinner, Zebra played in the nearby stream. When the older zebras needed help with their babies, Zebra was busy running races with Gazelle. When Gazelle and Ostrich were working, Zebra played counting games with his own stripes. He never wanted to work.

Finally, it was time to plant new grasses. The animals dropped seeds in even rows across many miles of land. Without a doubt, planting was hard work. Everyone except Zebra helped out. Zebra was nowhere to be found.

Zebra was down by the stream jumping in the water. He noticed a shiny red ball floating by like the sun darting across the sky. He soon realized what fun he could have! He threw the ball up in the air and caught it. He kicked the ball with his foot. Zebra loved his new toy.

"Zebra, if we don't get the seeds planted, we will not have new grass to eat," Gazelle scolded.

But Zebra did not want to plant any seeds. He was having way too much fun with his new toy. He told Gazelle he would help tomorrow.

Gazelle sadly returned to the others. "Zebra will not be helping us today," she reported. "He is much too busy being playful," she explained.

So the other animals worked very hard without any help from Zebra. Gazelle knew they would be able to finish sooner if only Zebra would do his share.

Suddenly, Ostrich saw Zebra jumping up and down under a tree. He looked upset. Ostrich stopped working and ran over to him to ask what was wrong.

"My new toy is caught in the tree," he explained. "I'm not tall enough to reach it."

Ostrich looked over to where the other animals were busy planting grasses. "Zebra," she said in a teacher voice. "Sometimes working alone is not enough to get a job done. By working together and helping one another, it is easier to complete a task."

Zebra thought carefully about Ostrich's words. "If I help you plant the seeds, will you help me get my toy down?" he asked.

Ostrich was glad Zebra understood. "Yes, I will help you," she said. Then Ostrich called for Gazelle.

Zebra stood under the tree. Gazelle climbed on Zebra's back. Then Ostrich climbed on top of Gazelle. Ostrich's neck was a tall tower. She easily reached the red ball.

Once he had his red ball, Zebra eagerly helped the others finish the planting. Then, he included his friends in a game of catch. Ostrich and Gazelle had helped Zebra to understand that working together does more than working alone.

A theme in "The Playful Zebra" is about the importance of working together. Write a response explaining what the zebra learns in the story. Use evidence from the passage to support your response.