R. M. Reaves worked hard on his dad’s farm. He helped grow corn and feed the livestock. Sometimes R. M. missed school because he had to pick cotton or do other chores.

One cold winter Saturday, R. M. was helping his father mend a pasture fence. As they worked, a man rode up. “Howdy, Jim,” the man said to R. M.’s father. It was Mr. James. Mr. James was the best farmer in the county. Now, he has a new job as county farm demonstration agent. “I’m looking for boys who are hard working and eager to learn,” Mr. James went on. “We’re starting a Corn Club in our county.”

“Just what will these boys do?” Mr. Reaves asked. “My boy doesn’t have time for clubs.”

Mr. James explained that Corn Club members would plant an acre of corn. He would tell them how to plow, fertilize, and plant. When it was time to harvest, each boy would measure how much corn he grew on his acre. “The boy growing the most corn gets a prize—$25 in cash,” Mr. James said.

R. M. listened with excitement. Twenty-five dollars was more money than he’d ever seen, much less owned! Seeing his son’s interest, Mr. Reaves agreed to let R. M. try.

That spring R. M. plowed and fertilized his acre just the way Mr. James told him. He planted the kind of corn Mr. James suggested. The rains fell right, and that summer R. M. harvested his corn—72 bushels and 1 peck! Was it enough to win the prize?

One afternoon as R. M. and his dad were coming in from the fields, Mr. James rode up. “Well, congratulations, R. M.,” Mr. James said. “Looks like you’ve won yourself $25.” R. M. was so happy. “Thanks, Mr. James!” he said. “You helped me a lot. And Dad helped, too.”

“Well, son, I guess we both learned a thing or two about growing corn. Think you can help me try these new ideas next spring on all our corn?” Mr. Reaves asked. “Yes, sir,” R. M. said, pleased that he could help his dad. And he smiled happily as he thought of what he’d do with that $25.
What Do You Think?

What club helped R. M. grow corn?

___________________________________________

What did R. M. learn to do better?

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Do you think Mr. James was hoping Mr. Reaves would try the new ideas for growing corn?

___________ Why?_____________________________________________________________

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This is a true story about a boy who lived in Alabama in 1911. This is the story of how 4-H Clubs got started. The Boys’ Corn Club, the club that helped R. M. grow corn, started in 1909. It later became the 4-H Club. Girls joined Tomato Canning Clubs and grew tomatoes. Then they preserved the tomatoes by canning them for their families to eat all winter. They became part of 4-H Club, too.

4-H Clubs not only helped young people. They were also a good way for adults to learn new and better ways to grow crops and raise animals. People like Mr. Reaves learned to be better farmers by watching their children try new farming ideas. Then they earned more money from their farms.

Of course, 4-H isn’t just for farm boys and girls today. As a 4-H’er you can choose projects like rocketry, natural resources, companion animals, and healthy living for life. You can win awards, take trips, go to camp, and become a leader.

This year is the 100th birthday of 4-H in Alabama. It’s a good time to learn more about the 4-H Club. 4-H has helped millions of boys and girls like you “Make the Best Better.”

You Tell It! Fill in the blanks with your ideas.

4-H makes the best better by

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I like 4-H because

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For more information, call your county Extension office. Look in your telephone directory under your county’s name to find the number.

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