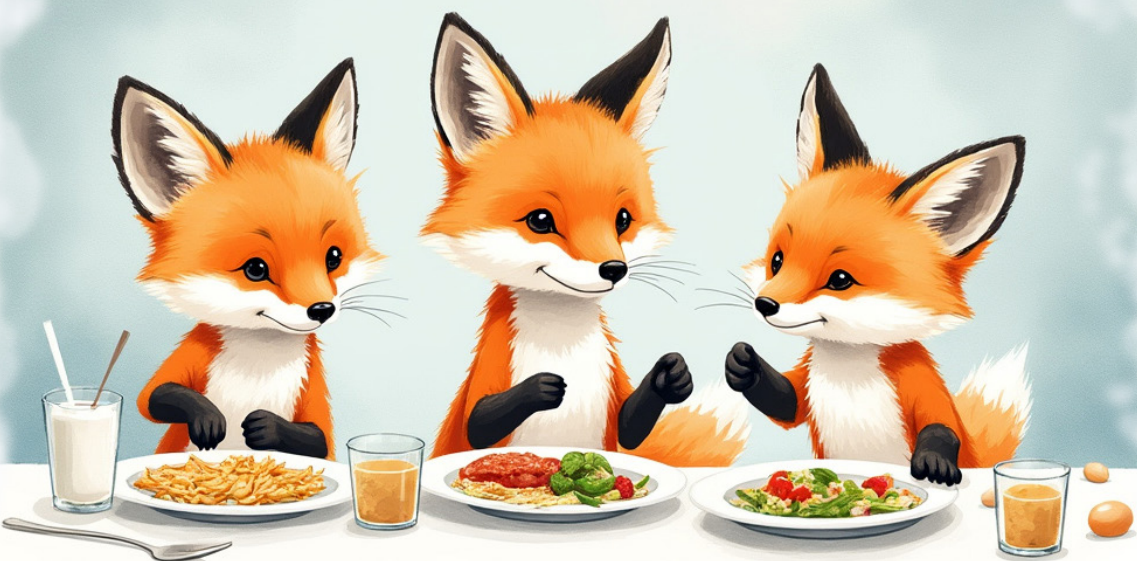




*Finneus  
Finds His  
Way*

Bethany Arnold

Finneus the fox was a happy and curious kit. He was respectful and kind, smart and strong. However, he didn't feel that he had truly found his place in the world. That was clear at the dinner table when his older brother and sister excitedly spoke of how they used their talents to help others. Finneus found himself with nothing to say, while his brother and sister knew exactly who they were and what they wanted to be.





When they were kits his brother, John, loved helping wild animals. He learned to mend breaks and soothe fevers, soon becoming a wildlife veterinarian.

His sister, June, would read to him as a child. She made stories come to life. After she grew up, she did the same with the other kits when she became a kindergarten teacher.





But Finneus didn't have that. He never felt like he was meant to do one particular thing. Actually, he wanted to do all the things. He wanted to play in the streams, think about why the clouds were so fluffy, and feel the rough grass under his paws as he ran. What was meant for a fox like Finny?

One early August day, Finneus ran into an old friend who suggested he go into the mountains to see the wise red fox, George. The red fox was known to help young foxes find their path.





With one step, Finneus started his journey. He trekked up the mountain, taking in the beautiful views as he hiked. He was scared to make the trip west, over the hills. What if the red fox didn't think he was serious or smart? What if he failed? But, he swallowed his fears and moved forward, one shaky step at a time.

Finneus couldn't help but gasp when he came upon the red fox's den. It was an empire among the big stones, marked by a lonesome pine. When he got there, he found that the red fox wasn't alone. There was someone there to help with anything and everything. There were smiling foxes to greet you, talk to you, and work with you.







An energetic fox welcomed him and walked him up to George. When he finally reached the great red fox, Finneus couldn't believe his eyes. George looked so . . . normal, so like himself. He told Finneus that he'd had trouble finding his place, too. He spoke of how he had failed many times, but two things helped him succeed. "The secret," he said, "is to follow your own passions and to work hard."

Finneus told him he had no passions, only the grass, the streams, and the clouds. “Well,” said the red fox, “what if you did something with that?” He had never thought of his hobbies as more than dilly-dallying. However, it seemed like the red fox thought he could turn his passions into something more. He realized that his interests were worthwhile.





Although confused at first, Finneus did what George said. He started studying with George and his crew. He examined the clouds, examined the grass, and pondered the streams. He talked to others who knew more than he, and he learned more each day.

Even though he loved nature, studying it wasn't easy. He couldn't just look at the clouds and become an expert. He had to work, and he had to think. He was afraid of failing and that sometimes made him not want to try at all. However, the joy he found from learning new things was far greater than his fear.





Finneus had grit. He was determined to learn, to work, and to succeed. He learned to stay calm, ask for help, and keep going. He didn't get upset when he was wrong; he kept going and he kept learning. He also learned that he had to set aside time to work on what was important to him.

Before he knew it, he knew the forest better than anyone. He even got a special hat and gown to show how much he had learned and how hard he'd worked.



When he came down from the mountain,  
he became the official town nature guide.  
Everyone was soon asking him questions about  
the streams, the sky, and the flowers. The best  
part was that he knew the answers.





Sitting among his family and friends now, Finneus had found his place. Like his sister and brother, he felt he had both a passion and a purpose. And the best part was, he couldn't be prouder of himself.



# Questions for Further Thinking

## Level One Questions

1. Who is the main character of the story?
2. What are some qualities of Finneus (Finny) the fox?
3. What did Finneus's brother, John, become when he grew up?
4. What did Finneus's sister, June, become when she grew up?
5. Who suggested that Finneus go into the mountains to see the wise red fox, George?
6. What two pieces of advice did George give to Finneus to help him succeed?

## Level Two Questions

7. What did Finneus become after his journey to the mountains, and what was his new role in the town?
8. What were some of Finneus's interests before he went to see George?
9. Describe Finneus's feelings as he made his journey up the mountain to see George.
10. What did Finneus learn from studying with George and his crew?
11. How did Finneus demonstrate determination in his journey to find his place?
12. How did Finneus feel when he finally found his place as the town nature guide?

## Level Three Questions

13. Have you ever felt unsure about what you wanted to do or be when you grew up, like Finneus? How did you feel?
14. Think about a time when you had to overcome a fear, like Finneus did when he was scared to visit George. What did you do to overcome it?
15. Can you think of something you're really interested in, like Finneus's love for nature? What is it, and why do you enjoy it?
16. Have you ever had to work really hard to learn something new, like Finneus did when he studied nature with George? What was it, and how did you feel when you succeeded?
17. Describe a time when you felt proud of yourself, like Finneus did when he found his place as the town nature guide. What did you accomplish, and why did it make you proud?



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