

The Bean in the Jar

Nonno would not plant it in soil. He wanted me to watch.

4 min read

Before you read

- **swell** — to grow bigger
- **root** — the part of a plant that grows downwards
- **shoot** — the first green stem that grows upwards
- **soil** — the earth that plants grow in
- **patient** — able to wait without getting cross



A dry bean in a child's hand, beside a glass jar lined with wet paper

¹ My grandfather gave me one bean. It was dry and hard and the colour of a small stone.

² “Put it in a jar,” he said. “Not in soil. I want you to see.”

³ We lined the jar with wet paper and pushed the bean down the side of the glass, where I could watch it.

⁴ On the first day, nothing happened. On the second day, nothing happened.

⁵ “Be patient,” said Nonno.

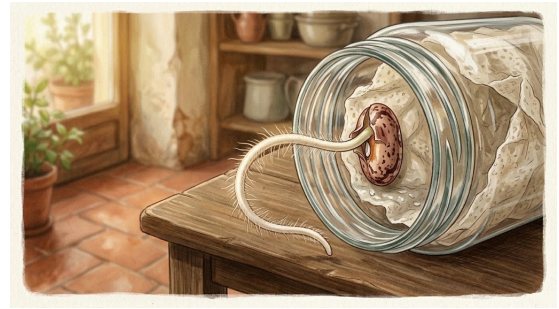
⁶ On the third day the bean had begun to swell. Its skin had split, like a shoe that is too tight.

⁷ On the fifth day a white root came out. It did not go up. It went down, along the glass, looking for somewhere to hold.

⁸ “How does it know which way is down?” I asked.

⁹ “It knows,” said Nonno. “Turn the jar.”

¹⁰ I turned the jar onto its side. In two days, the root had curved round and was pointing down again.



The jar turned on its side, the root curving back downwards

¹¹ After that the shoot came. It was pale at first, then green. It pushed up and opened two small leaves, like a pair of hands.

¹² By then the bean itself was wrinkled and empty. It had given everything it had to the root and the shoot.

¹³ We planted it in a pot of soil on the balcony, above the lemon tree.



The young bean plant in a pot on the balcony, above a lemon tree

¹⁴ It grew taller than me by the end of summer. Nonno kept the empty jar on the shelf.

Part A

Choose the best answer

Circle the letter next to the right answer.

1. What did Nonno tell the child to put the bean in?
 - A a pot of good soil
 - B a jar lined with wet paper
 - C a glass full of water
 - D a small paper bag
2. What came out of the bean first?
 - A two small leaves
 - B a green shoot
 - C a white root
 - D a yellow flower
3. What happened when the child turned the jar onto its side?
 - A the root stopped growing
 - B the bean fell out of the jar
 - C the shoot turned brown
 - D the root curved round and pointed down again
4. Where did they finally plant the bean?
 - A in a pot on the balcony
 - B in the garden by the gate
 - C beside the river
 - D back in the same jar

Part B

Write your answer

Answer in one or two sentences.

5. Why do you think Nonno wanted the bean in a glass jar instead of in soil?

6. By the time the leaves opened, the bean was wrinkled and empty. Why?

Part C

Think deeper

There is no single right answer here. Say what you think, and say why.

7. Nonno kept the empty jar on the shelf after the bean was planted. Why do you think he did that? What in the story makes you think so?

8. Nonno told the child to be patient. Tell about a time you had to wait a long time for something. What was the waiting like, and was it worth it?

Answer key

For parents and teachers

Part A

1. B — a jar lined with wet paper | 2. C — a white root | 3. D — the root curved round and pointed down again | 4. A — in a pot on the balcony

Part B

5. So the child could watch what normally happens underground — he said 'I want you to see'. Accept any answer about being able to see the root and shoot through the glass.
6. It had used itself up feeding the root and the shoot. Accept any answer showing the child understood the bean gave its food to the new plant.

Part C

These answers vary. Mark the reasoning, not the answer.

7. A strong answer gives a reason tied to the story — to remember the experiment, because it was the first thing they grew together, or to use again with someone else. A weaker answer gives a reason with no link back to the text. Prompt with: what happened in that jar?
8. Any honest personal answer counts, as long as it gives a reason. The skill being practised is because. Prompt rather than correct.

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