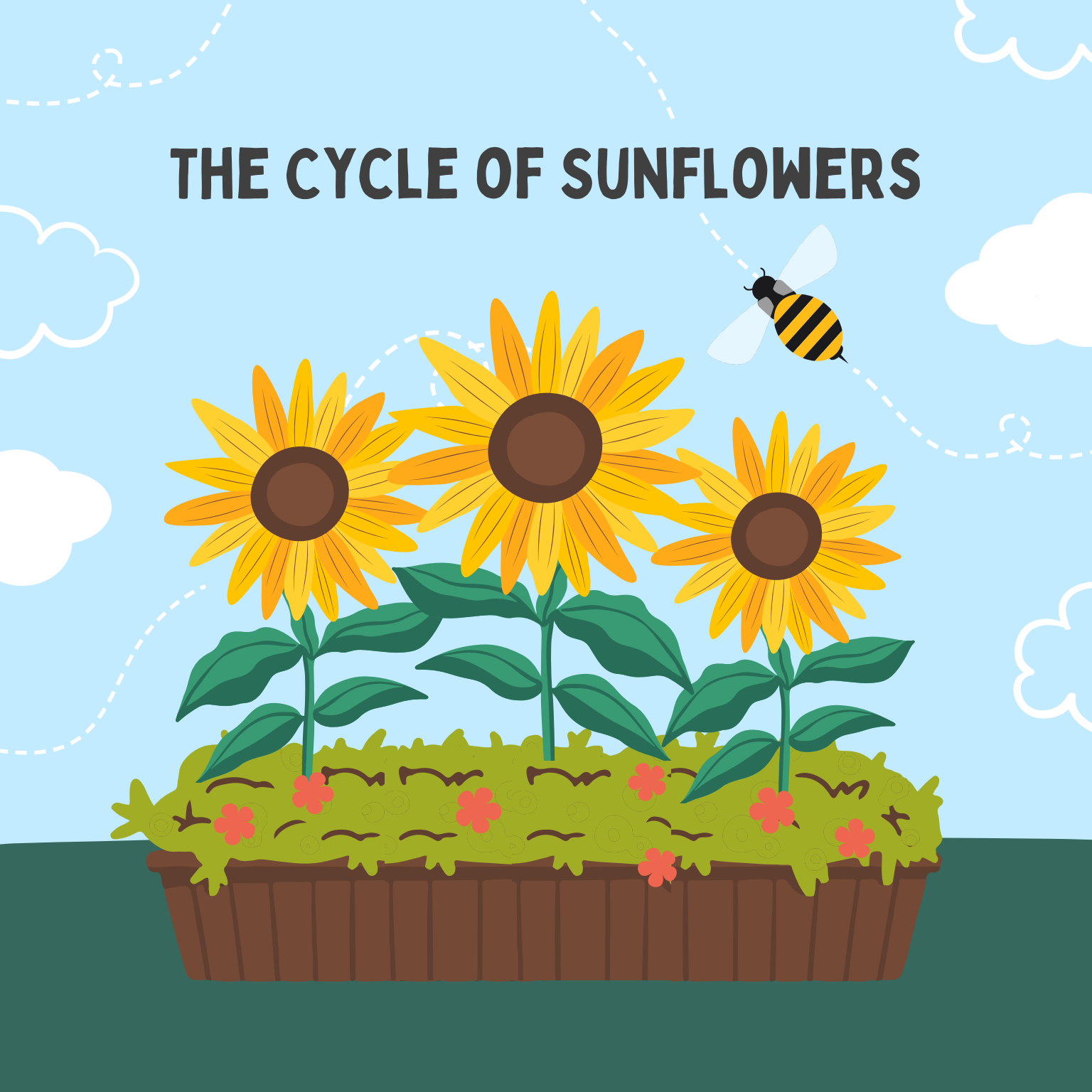
THE CYCLE OF SUNFLOWERS

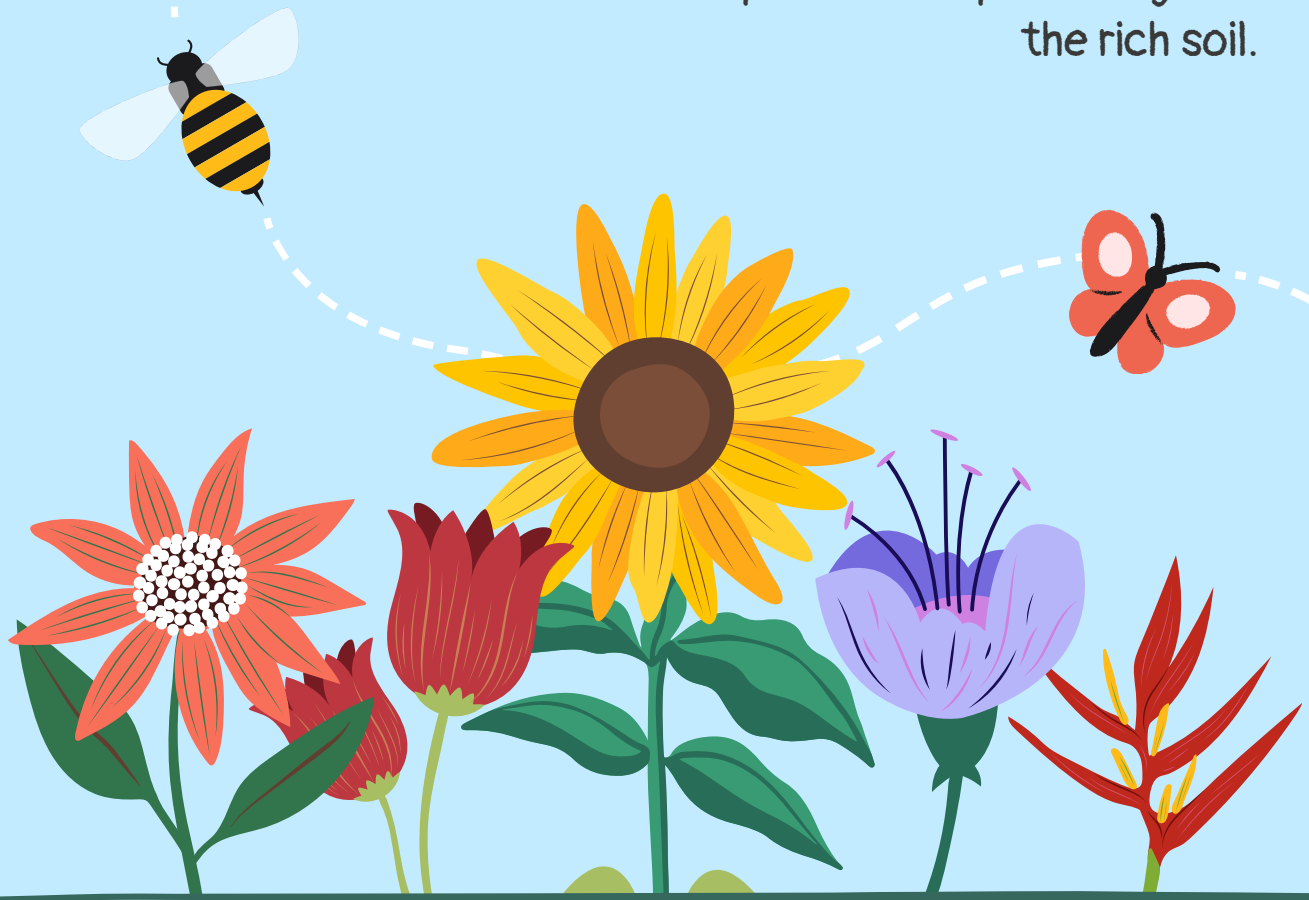


Daisy was excited.

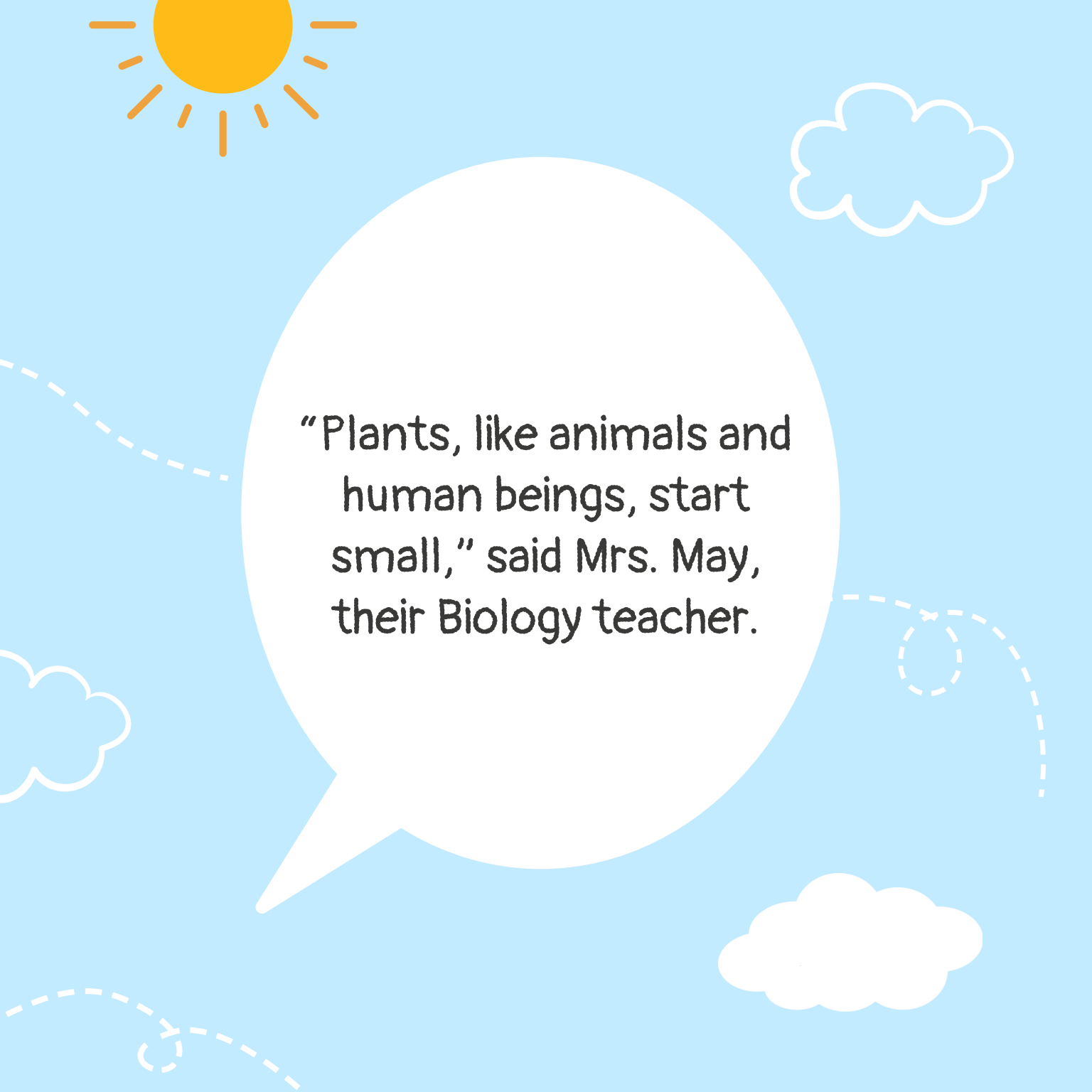
Today, their classroom was the school garden.

This meant her class would be visiting the sunflowers they had planted weeks ago.

In the garden, they saw little sprouts that pushed against the rich soil.

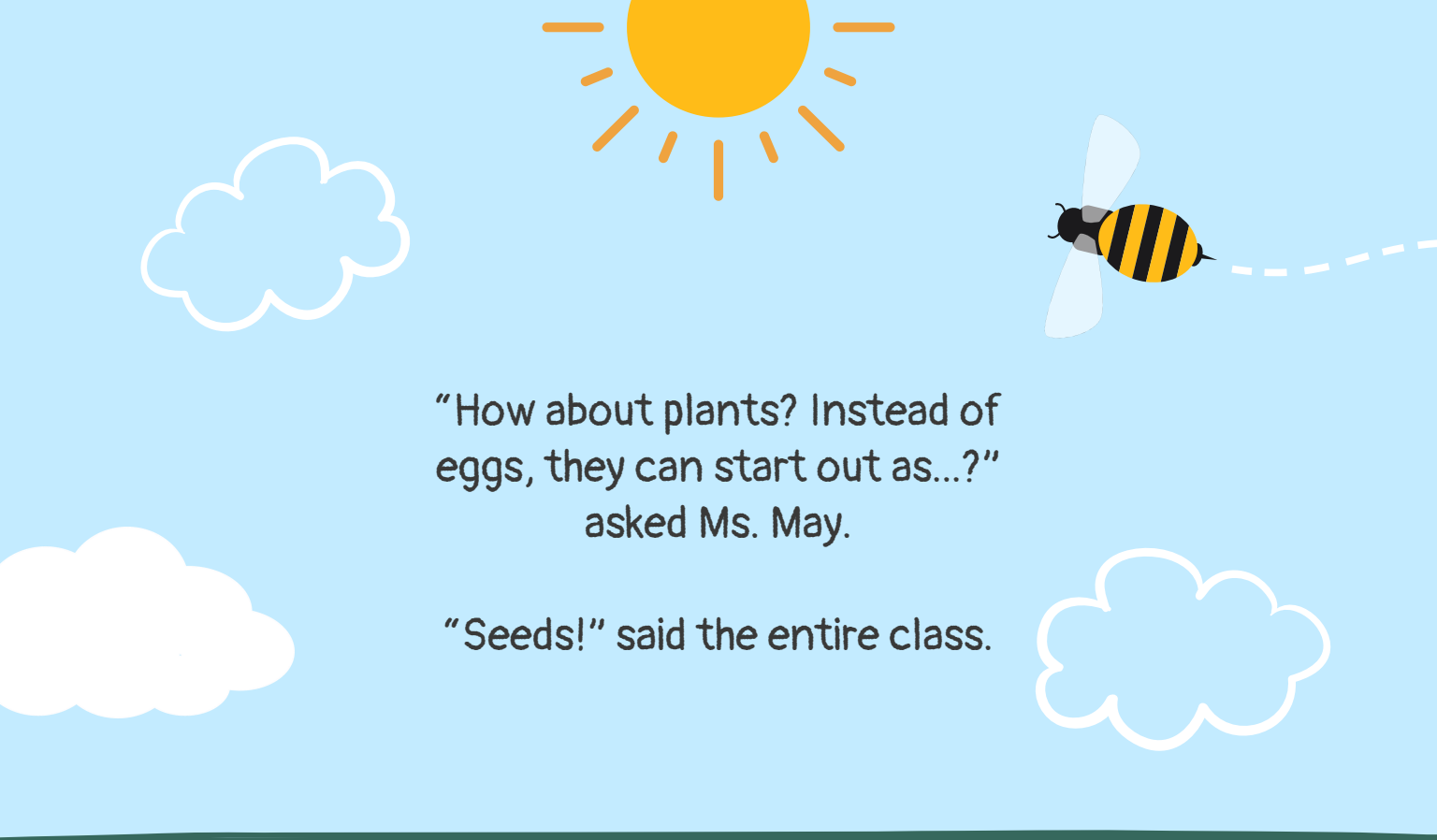


Bees and butterflies fluttered from one flower to the next.


"Plants, like animals and human beings, start small," said Mrs. May, their Biology teacher.

"The butterflies you see
started out eggs that hatched
into fuzzy caterpillars."

"You and I were once zygotes
that grew in our mother's womb."

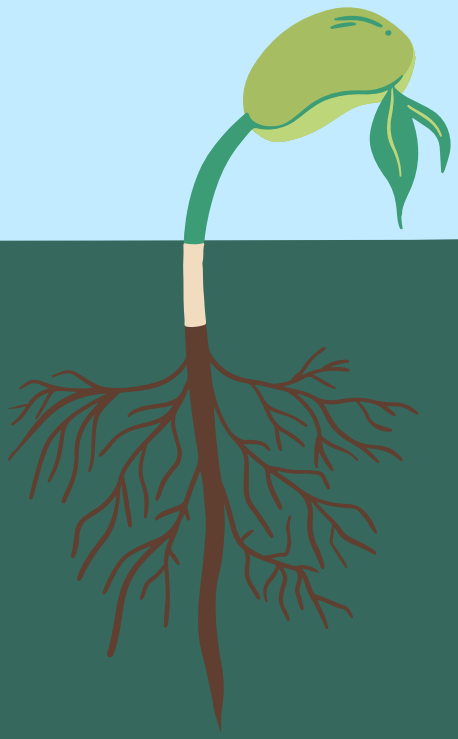


"How about plants? Instead of eggs, they can start out as...?" asked Ms. May.

"Seeds!" said the entire class.

That's right. They can also start out as spores.

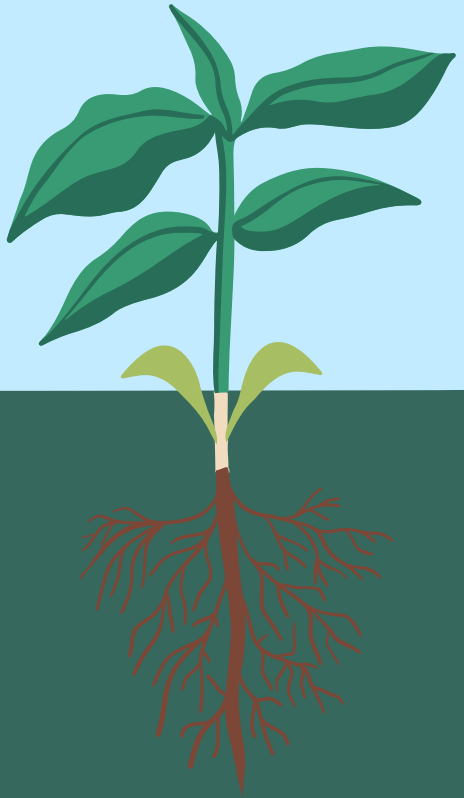
They can be planted directly into the soil or transported by nature's helpers like the wind or insects.



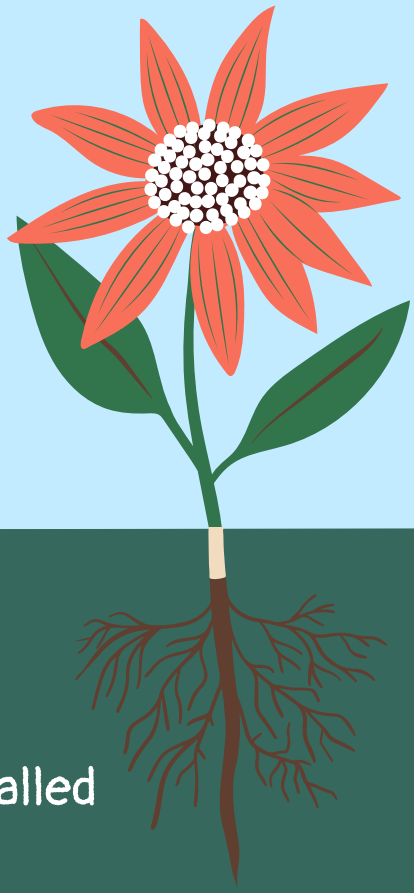
After being planted, they will begin to sprout. What is this process?

"Germination!" answered Daisy.

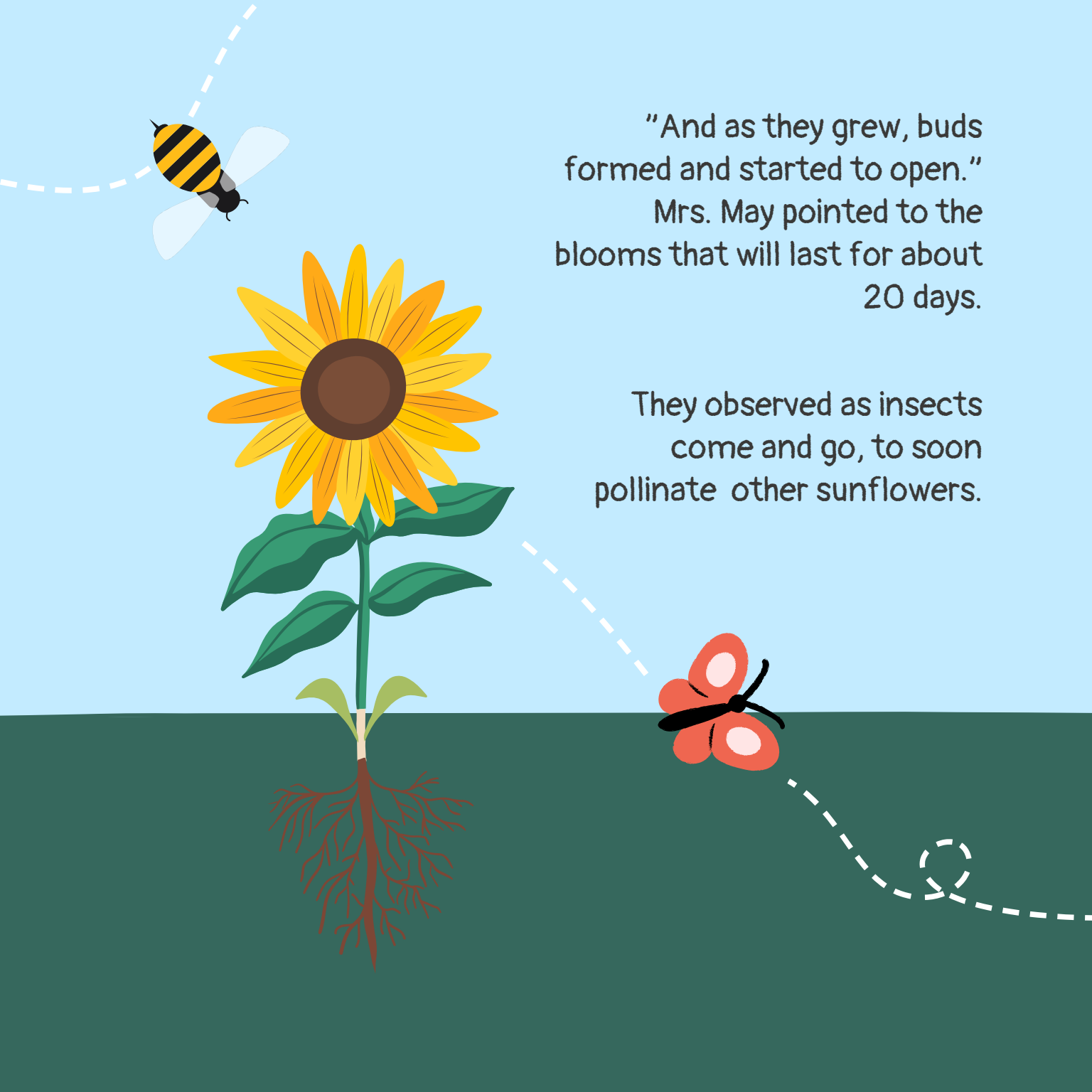
"Exactly. Because the temperature and the soil conditions were perfect for growth, our sunflower seeds were able to germinate."



As they grow, plants take minerals from the soil and make their own food from sunlight and water.



This process is called photosynthesis.

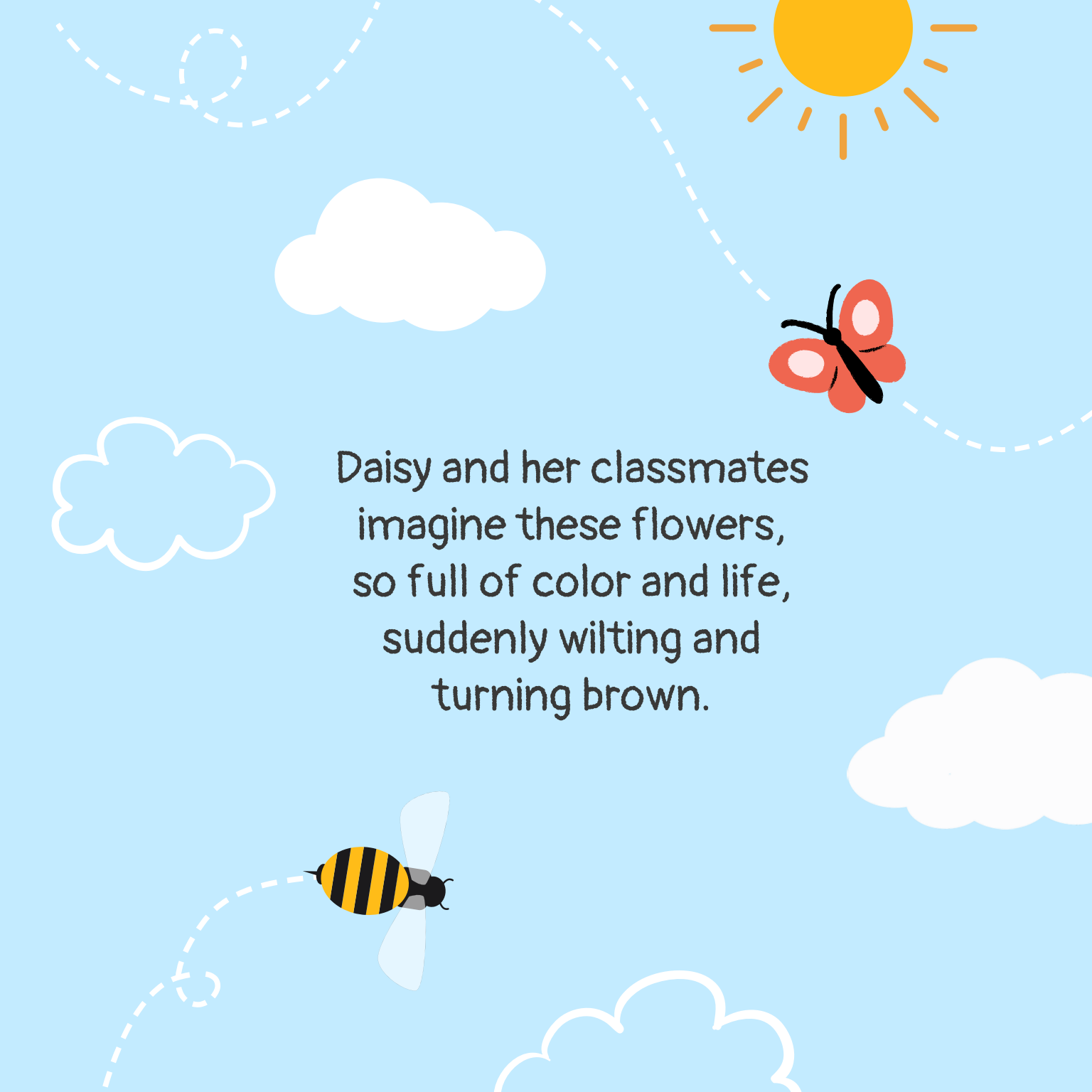


"And as they grew, buds formed and started to open." Mrs. May pointed to the blooms that will last for about 20 days.

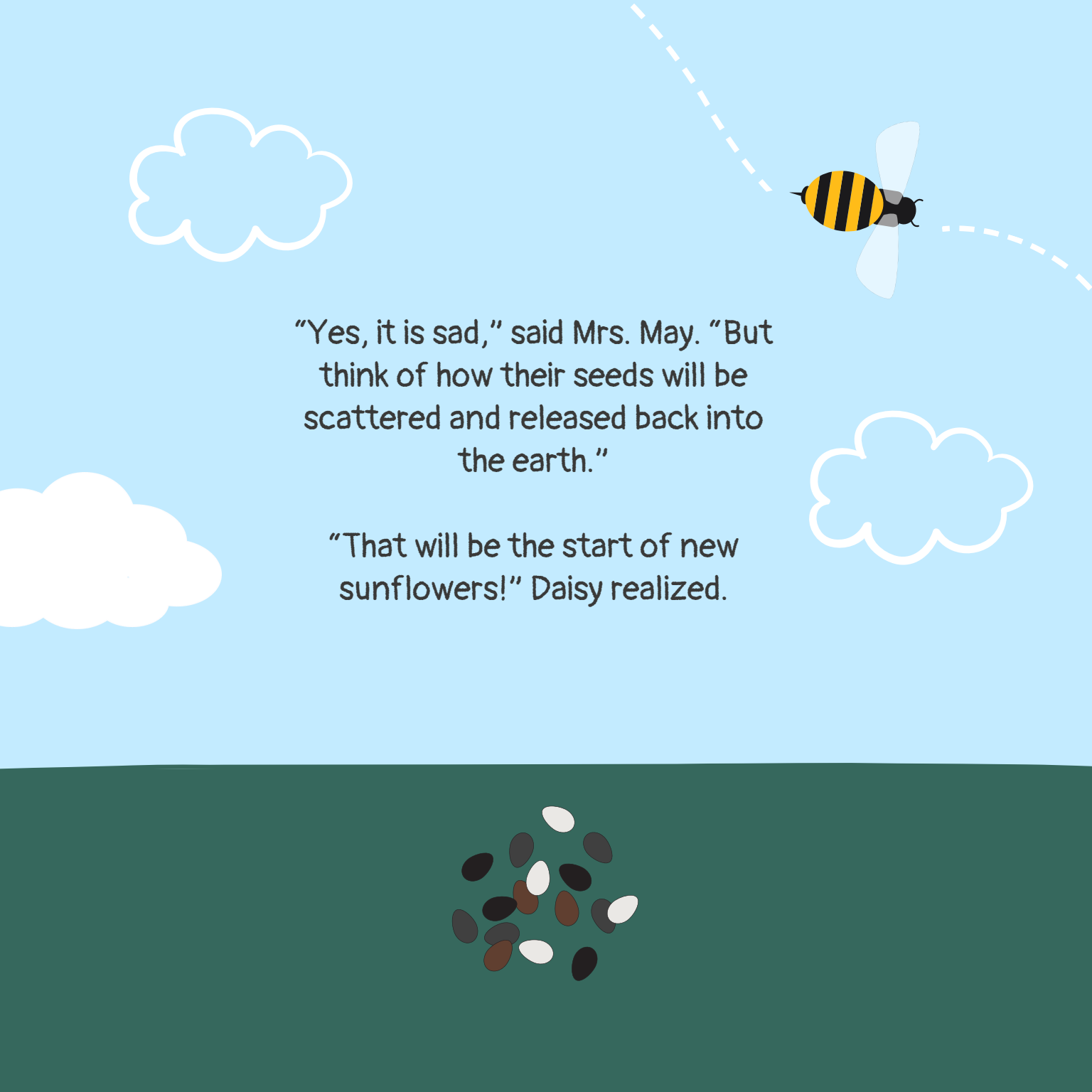
They observed as insects come and go, to soon pollinate other sunflowers.

"What happens after that?" Daisy asked.

"The plant's petals will later shrink and wilt. Eventually, all petals will be gone."



Daisy and her classmates
imagine these flowers,
so full of color and life,
suddenly wilting and
turning brown.

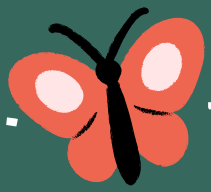


"Yes, it is sad," said Mrs. May. "But think of how their seeds will be scattered and released back into the earth."

"That will be the start of new sunflowers!" Daisy realized.

"Indeed! This whole process is called
the plant's life cycle."

Daisy smiled to herself and thought
of how wondrous nature can be.



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