Japanese people show we are grateful for our food. We put our palms together and we say, “Thank you for the food.” We thank the farmers who produce crops and the families who run the grocery stores. We thank the people who work in food service. And we are thankful for nature, which makes food possible. In addition, we are thankful to those who cooked for us.

Before we eat the food, we say in Japanese: “Itadakimasu,” This means: “Let’s eat! I will eat animals and plants who give their lives for my life.” This is an important word. It helps us to truly understand the preciousness of life.

After we’ve eaten the food, we say “Gochisousama.” This is a word that represents the thanks we feel to the people who prepared our meals.

Even if you don’t like this prayer or the meal, you keep a straight face and you should do it anyway. This is a Buddhist-style prayer, but people of different religions in Japan use these words to express thanks for all the animals and plants that nature gives us. This prayer helps me remember the gratitude I want to show at every mealtime.

Study the illustration above. What is a possible title for this illustration? What jobs are part of each phase? What is left out? How do you show gratitude for all that goes into your food?