The Stubborn Cork

What to do: fill the glass with water almost to the top. Now float the cork in the glass. Within a short time the cork will drift to the side of the glass. Your challenge is to convince the cork to come to the center of the glass without touching it or taking it out of the water. If you want to blow on it that is okay, but when it reaches the center of the glass it must stay there after you stop blowing. Here is how to make the stubborn cork obey. Slowly, one spoonful at a time, begin to add water to the glass. Eventually the water will rise above the top of the glass as surface tension holds it in place.

What happens: The cork drifts to the center of the glass and stays there when the water level rises high enough.

Why: Surface tension lets the water rise above the glass. It causes the water to form a little curled dome whose high point is at its center. The cork seeks the highest point of the water.