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A Lesson on A Garden in Lawndale by Marci Gleicher

Grade Level: Grade 4

Subject Area: English Language Arts

Lesson Length: 2 hours 30 minutes

Lesson Keywords: close reading, vocabulary, thinking, discussion, writing

Lesson Description: This lesson aims to provide practice in close reading, critical thinking, and expression through writing. Students will read the passage and reread it closely as often as they need in order to answer the questions. Questions are focused on understanding vocabulary words and thinking deeply about concepts presented in the passage.

Common Core Standards Covered with This Lesson

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.4.1: Refer to details and examples in a text when explaining what the text says explicitly and when drawing inferences from the text.

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CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.4.4: Determine the meaning of general academic and domain-specific words or phrases in a text relevant to a grade 4 topic or subject area.

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CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.4.1: Write opinion pieces on topics or texts, supporting a point of view with reasons and information.

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CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.4.4a: Use context (e.g., definitions, examples, or restatements in text) as a clue to the meaning of a word or phrase.

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Lesson Content: Book/Story/Reading Passage

Instructions: Please read the following reading passage as many times as needed (aloud and silent) before starting to go through other lesson pages. Understanding the content of this passage is very important since the lesson activities will be all about this content. Feel free to print the passage if needed.

A Garden in Lawndale

by

Content: A catalyst is a spark. It is the start of a change. As you read this report, think what the spark was.

Eighth grade students at a school in Lawndale saw new buildings. Families were moving into the community. But they saw vacant lots, too. They saw trash there. Even when they picked up the trash, the lots did not stay clean. Wind blew trash there from the street. No one can do anything about this, said one student. Yes, we can, said another. Their teacher agreed. They would plant a garden in a vacant lot.

Their teacher showed them pictures of the community long ago. She showed them that it used to have great gardens. The students said they could make this change. It was after Barack Obama had been elected. His slogan had been Yes, we can. They believed it. They would prove it.

The students met with the principal. They asked if they could create a community garden in the vacant lot closest to the school. She told them that was a great idea, but they would have to volunteer their own time and work on it every week. The students agreed. They promised they would donate their time every Saturday until it snowed. Even then they would keep the sidewalk cleared near the lot.

The students needed to collaborate with the community. They wanted to be sure that everyone in the community wanted the garden. They met with block clubs and told them their plan. The block clubs applauded the project. They said they would help.

The students went on the Internet to learn about plants. They looked for plants that would grow well in Chicago. They chose some evergreen plants. They chose some bulbs, too. They learned a lot about plants and gardening.

The students needed money to get the bulbs and plants. They needed tools, too. They made a budget. They sent that budget and their plan to get funding. A Foundation funded their plan. The students got \$300 to buy what they needed.

They are 8th graders, so this spring they will meet with the seventh grade. They will ask them to take over the garden. It will be their legacy to the school community.

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Task 1: Vocabulary

Instructions: Please complete the following vocabulary activity by choosing the correct meaning of each word selected from the passage and use of each word correctly in a sentence.

Q: 1 WordPhrase: catalyst **WordPhraseTier:** 3

Question: The passage begins with the sentence: "A catalyst is a spark." What does the word "catalyst" mean in this sentence?

- A:** A person that is good at sports
- B:** A person or event that causes change or action
- C:** An event that is crowded
- D:** A celebration or party

Question: Which one of the sentences below uses the word "catalyst" correctly?

- A:** When the rabbit came out of hiding, he saw the frightening catalyst and went into hiding again.
- B:** Which catalyst do I need to see to treat my allergies?
- C:** In refusing to give up her seat on a bus, Rosa Parks became a catalyst for the civil rights movement.
- D:** My music teacher told me to pick out a catalyst to play in the band.

Q: 2 WordPhrase: collaborate **WordPhraseTier:** 2

Question: The author in the story says: "The students needed to collaborate with the community." What does the word "collaborate" mean in this sentence?

- A:** Feel sorry for
- B:** Explain
- C:** Work together
- D:** Teach

Question: Which one of the sentences below uses the word "collaborate" correctly?

- A:** The teachers wanted to help with the design of the new elementary school, so they met with the construction company so that they could collaborate.
- B:** The dog kept going back to his doghouse alone, which made us think he was trying to collaborate with us.
- C:** The restaurant was out of potatoes, so the waiter asked the customer if he wanted to collaborate mushrooms.
- D:** My sister didn't collaborate the lesson, so she asked her teacher for help.

Q: 3 WordPhrase: legacy **WordPhraseTier:** 3

Question: The author in our story says: "It will be their legacy to the school community." What does the word "legacy" mean in this sentence?

- A:** A relative
- B:** A problem
- C:** Graduation from school
- D:** Something given to someone in the future

Question: Which of the sentences below uses the word "legacy" correctly?

- A:** The president wrote a book about his time in the legacy.
- B:** The newspaper made a big legacy when they printed the name of the hockey team incorrectly.
- C:** My mother called the restaurant to make a legacy for dinner.
- D:** The mayor left the town a legacy of many after-school programs.

Q: 4 WordPhrase: slogan **WordPhraseTier:** 2

Question: The author in our story says: "It was after Barack Obama had been elected. His slogan had been 'Yes, we can.'? What does the word "slogan" mean in this sentence?

- A:** A type of book
- B:** A word or phrase that tells your goal
- C:** A long speech
- D:** A person who agrees with you

Question: Which one of the sentences below uses the word "slogan" correctly in a sentence?

A: I met the president's slogan at the park yesterday.

B: The slogan went on and on for hours, and people started to leave.

C: Harry wanted to come up with a slogan that let the other students know he cared about them.

D: If you want to make a change, you must talk to the slogan of the company.

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Task 2: Forum Discussion

Instructions: This discussion forum will have questions for students to respond. Read the posted questions, and respond to each. Students are responsible for posting one initial and two peer responses for each topic.

1 - Why did the author say this?

Why did the author say that the students needed to collaborate with the community? Why would this be important?

2 - What is the teacher's purpose?

Why do you think the teacher decides to show the students pictures of the community from long ago when there were gardens??

3 - What lessons were learned?

What are three lessons you think the students in this story might have learned?

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Task 3: Writing Activity

Instructions: Write and post here an essay that is at least 300 words.

The author begins this passage by saying that a catalyst is?a spark and the start of a change.?

What do you think was the catalyst in this story? There are many possible correct answers for this, so pick what you think was the catalyst and explain why this is the catalyst.

Think of something that has happened in your own life, community or some place in the world that began with a catalyst.?What was that situation and what was the catalyst? Explain why you believe this is the catalyst. Be specific.

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