



## A Lesson on See Our Progress by Emily Malley

**Grade Level:** Grade 8

**Subject Area:** English Language Arts

**Lesson Length:** 2 hours

**Lesson Keywords:** See Our Progress, Grade 8, Reading, Vocabulary, Discussion, Writing, English Language Arts

**Lesson Description:** This lesson is intended to help students acquire vocabulary and develop critical thinking and writing skills through the facilitation of close reading. Through focused questions and discussions, students will be able to think about and discuss the implications and interpretations of the selected passage outside of the text itself. In addition, writing about the passage will allow students to relate it to their own lives, thus making it more significant and memorable while also making use of their ability to write narratives.

### Common Core Standards Covered with This Lesson

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.8.1: Write arguments to support claims with clear reasons and relevant evidence

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.8.2f: Provide a concluding statement or section that follows from and supports the information or explanation presented.

Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using : Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, relevant descriptive details, and well-structured event sequences.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.8.4: Determine or clarify the meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning words or phrases based on grade 8 reading and content, choosing flexibly from a range of strategies.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.8.4a: Use context (e.g., the overall meaning of a sentence or paragraph; a word's position or function in a sentence) as a clue to the meaning of a word or phrase.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.8.6: Acquire and use accurately grade-appropriate general academic and domain-specific words and phrases; gather vocabulary knowledge when considering a word or phrase important to comprehension or expression.

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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.

### See Our Progress

by

**Content:** My school appeared on the news last week because we had made an important change in our community. Our 8th grade class had planted a large garden in what was

once only a vacant lot. It was a lot of work, it took much cooperation and many weeks, but it was all worth it. I got blisters from digging, and we all got insect bites, too.

I learned a lot about gardening and collaboration, and then I learned about the media. This experience taught me a great deal about television news. First, our teacher telephoned the TV station and informed them of what we had accomplished. She spoke with the producer the person who assigns reporters to cover interesting stories.

I never knew how people get on the news, I didn't know you could call and tell the TV station about your school. The producer checked with the directors, but they claimed there were plenty of stories similar to ours. They wanted to know what was special about our particular garden, since many schools plant them.

The teacher explained that, after going on the Internet to learn about the prairie, we had made a prairie garden. We had gone to a prairie and gotten seeds from the plants, and then we planted them. We did not water the garden, but we did weed it. We decided to let nature water it with rain, since that was how prairies grew in the past. We sent a picture of the garden to the news station. In the picture, the grass was so high that it stood taller than the fourth grade students.

The director thought our story would be interesting because it was not just a garden, but a history lesson. Actually, it was also a science lesson. As a result, they sent a reporter to our school, and that reporter also brought a cameraman. The security guard helped them carry the equipment into the building.

They interviewed the principal and asked detailed questions about the garden whose idea was it, what did it cost, how big was it, and how big did we plan it would be expanding it? After that, they interviewed us, and we explained to them what we had learned through this project. They even interviewed a person on the street and asked what he thought about our garden.

They were at our school for two hours, and it was exciting, so we were really ecstatic. That night, we watched the news, and there we were. The news anchor told our story. It was only two minutes long, but it was us. We were famous. All that work, all those blisters, it was worth it, we knew that when we saw the garden every day, but now we knew that the whole city thought so, too.

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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:** Vacant **WordPhraseTier:** 2

**Question:** The text says "our 8th grade class had planted a large garden in what was once a vacant lot." What does "vacant" mean as used in this sentence?"

- A: Useful
- B: Large
- C: Old
- D: Empty

**Question:** Which of the following sentences correctly uses the word "vacant"?

- A: At night, the parking garage becomes vacant.
- B: Sometimes James finds himself feeling vacant.
- C: The conversation that took place between my roommate and I was very vacant.
- D: The crowd at the concert was extremely vacant.

**Q: 2 WordPhrase:** Particular **WordPhraseTier:** 2

**Question:** The author says "they wanted to know what was special about our particular garden, since many schools plant them." What does "particular" mean in this sentence?

- A: A detail
- B: Specific
- C: Fussy
- D: Special

**Question:** Which of the sentences below uses "particular" correctly?

- A: Music is very particular to me.
- B: My nephew is very particular when he does not get his way.
- C: Some books do not fit into any one particular genre.
- D: Not a single one of those particulars is correct.

**Q: 3 WordPhrase:** Prairie **WordPhraseTier:** 3

**Question:** The author of this story says "the teacher explained that, after going on the internet to learn about the prairie, we had made a prairie garden." What does the word "prairie" mean here?

- A: A large, open stretch of grassland
- B: A gardening technique that involves natural watering by rain
- C: A culture that emphasizes the power of prayer
- D: A type of steam locomotive

**Question:** Which of these sentences makes correct use of the word "prairie"?

- A: Using the prairie technique allows a garden to naturally flourish for a longer period of time.
- B: Squirrels are one of the many species of animals that live in the prairie.
- C: The prairie culture is heavily religion-based.
- D: The prairie was invented during the industrial revolution.

**Q: 4 WordPhrase:** Director **WordPhraseTier:** 3

**Question:** The sentence "the producer checked with the directors, but they claimed there were plenty of stories similar to ours" appears in the passage. How would the author define "director"?

- A: The person in charge of a company or department
- B: A person who makes decisions regarding the making of a television program
- C: Someone who critiques and provides feedback
- D: The person in charge of school events

**Question:** Given that definition, which sentence correctly uses the word "director"?

- A: The director has already finalized the script for the next season of my favorite show.
- B: The finance director has made some budget cuts this year.
- C: Our school's director approved our club's newest event.
- D: My friend is a director because he critiques every idea of mine.

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## Task 2: Forum Discussion

**Instructions:** This discussion forum will have questions for students to respond to. Read the posted questions, and respond to each. Students are responsible for posting one initial and two peer responses for each topic. Utilize evidence from the text if and when necessary.?

### 1 - How would this story qualify as a history and science lesson?

In the text, the author says that the director thought that the story of their prairie garden was interesting because it was a history lesson as well as a science lesson. Explain why the director might have thought this. In other words, explain the history and science lessons of the story.

### 2 - What change in the community could this activity have made?

The author begins this passage by mentioning how their school had appeared on the news for making an important change in the community. Using the information provided in the passage, infer what (other) kind of change the activity could have made in the community.??

### 3 - Which is the most important: gardening, collaboration, or media?

The author mentions learning a lot about gardening, collaboration, and media in this process. Which of these do you think is the most important? Why??

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### Task 3: Writing Activity

**Instructions:** In preparation for this writing activity, think back and reflect on your educational experience. In at least 250 words, write about a time when a teacher had you complete a hands-on activity to apply and extend the content you learned. What did you learn? What did you do? Was it successful or effective? Why or why not? Or, write about a time your school made an important change in the community.

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