



A Lesson on A Garden in Lawndale by Nina Shand

Grade Level: Grade 4

Subject Area: English Language Arts

Lesson Length: 2 hours

Lesson Keywords: Garden, Community, Volunteer, Language Arts, Grade 4

Lesson Description: The goal of this lesson is to have students utilize their reading and writing skills to observe a positive act in the community, and explain how they themselves can make a difference. The students will read and reread the passage to identify key vocabulary, will answer critical thinking questions in a discussion forum and create their own story about a contribution to the community. This lesson may be followed by a volunteer field trip so that students can put their ideas into action.

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.

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.

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

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.4.2: Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas and information clearly.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.4.6: With some guidance and support from adults, use technology, including the Internet, to produce and publish writing as well as to interact and collaborate with others; demonstrate sufficient command of keyboarding skills to type a minimum of one page in a single sitting.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.4.1: Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English grammar and usage when writing or speaking.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.4.4: Determine or clarify the meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning words and phrases based on grade 4 reading and content, choosing flexibly from a range of strategies.

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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: Vacant **WordPhraseTier:** 2

Question: The author in our story says "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." What does the word vacant mean in this sentence?

- A: Dirty
- B: Empty
- C: Small
- D: Old

Question: Which sentence uses the word vacant correctly?

- A: The room was so vacant and messy that it smelled terrible.
- B: The baby mouse was so vacant it fit in the palm of my hand.
- C: In the middle of the large vacant lot grew a single flower.
- D: The picture was so vacant, it was nearly 100 years old!

Q: 2 WordPhrase: Collaborate **WordPhraseTier:** 2

Question: The author in the story says "The students needed to collaborate with the community. They wanted to be sure that everyone in the community wanted the garden." What does the word collaborate mean?

- A: Cooperate
- B: Fight
- C: Confuse
- D: Dominate

Question: Which sentence uses the word collaborate correctly?

- A: To collaborate I must work alone.
- B: James and I are going to collaborate and make this painting together.
- C: I like to collaborate because I don't have to consider anyone else's ideas.
- D: To collaborate you must force everyone to like your idea.

Q: 3 WordPhrase: Community **WordPhraseTier:** 3

Question: In the story the author says "The students needed to collaborate with the community. They wanted to be sure that everyone in the community wanted the garden." What does the word community mean?

- A: Teacher
- B: President
- C: Group
- D: Library

Question: Which sentence correctly uses the term "community."

- A: My dog is my best community.
- B: I don't like to go to community.
- C: There was a community meeting and everyone in town showed up!
- D: That's a fat community.

Q: 4 WordPhrase: Catalyst **WordPhraseTier:** 3

Question: In the story the author says "A catalyst is a _____. It is the start of change." What does the word catalyst mean?

- A: Tree
- B: Sandwich
- C: Dog
- D: Spark

Question: Which sentence uses the word "catalyst" correctly?

- A: I like to take the catalyst for a walk.
- B: The lit match was a catalyst for a large fire.
- C: You create a catalyst when you put out a fire.
- D: I like catalyst on my pizza.

Task 2: Forum Discussion

Instructions: Please answer each question with one paragraph or more. You are responsible for one original post and two peer responses. Please give meaningful responses, not just I agree.

1 - Your Community

Write a paragraph about your community. It may be your classroom community, your sports community, your neighborhood community or your church community. Explain how your community interacts with each other, what you do together, and the people in your community.

2 - Lawndale Community

Who is included in the Lawndale community? What do the children do to help their community, and why did that help?

3 - Helping Out

Why is it important to help out in your community? Think about your small home community. Is it important that you do chores and help out around the house?

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Task 3: Writing Activity

Instructions: Please write a two paragraph essay on how you can help your community. You may either focus on one way to volunteer, or the many ways to volunteer. Make sure to provide specific examples explaining what you would do and how that would help your community.

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