

## **THE LITERATURE AND SERVICE LEARNING CONNECTION**

### **How Does Our Garden Grow?**

These three books related to gardening are ripe with curriculum connections and service learning suggestions. Read on to find ties to literacy. Harvest them and plant with students of all ages. Watch the results grown!

**The books, selected from *The Service Learning Bookshelf*, are:**

- i     *The Green Truck Garden Giveaway--A Neighborhood Story & Almanac*  
by Jacqueline B. Martin, Simon & Schuster 1997
  
- i     *Jack's Garden*  
by Henry Cole, Mulberry Books, 1995
  
- ï     *Down To Earth - Garden Secrets! Garden Stories! Garden Projects You Can Do*  
Created by Michael J. Rosen, with 41 children's book authors and illustrators, Harcourt Brace, 1998

These materials were written by Cathryn Berger Kaye as part of the Healthy West Hollywood Project for the City of West Hollywood.

## **HOW DOES OUR GARDEN GROW?**

### **Books for the West Hollywood Healthy Cities Project**

#### ***The Green Truck Garden Giveaway--A Neighborhood Story & Almanac***

by Jacqueline B. Martin, Simon & Schuster 1997

Summary: When two people pass out seeds and gardening supplies, neighbors, who claim to have no interest in gardening or their community are transformed. Along with the engaging story, the author has boxes of historical information about plants, recipes, and advice for up-and-coming gardeners, an old-fashioned almanac!

These activities can be adapted for use in grades 1-5. They may be led by classroom teachers or older students (grades 4-12) to introduce younger students to gardening. Literature is an effective methodology to tie learning with serving the community. The Green Truck Garden Giveaway also can be used for curriculum connections with science, social studies, visual arts, and drama.

#### **C L A S S R O O M I D E A S !**

**READ ALOUD WITH DISCUSSION** ~ In this activity, the teacher reads the book aloud and engages the students in thoughtful investigation of the book: Before reading the book, assign specific characters to different small groups of students – Hastings, Lura, Freddy Junior, Aunt Olive, and McDermott. Ask the groups of students to listen carefully to what occurs with all the characters, but especially their assigned character. Older students can take written notes while listening. Have the small groups discuss: *What did your character do in the story? How did your character change in the story? How did your character influence others? What does the reader learn from this character?* Have each group make a list of at least seven words that describes this character. Each group presents their words and what they learned from this character's role in the story. As a class, discuss: *How does The Garden Truck Giveaway change the community?*

**BOOK ILLUSTRATORS** ~ In this activity, students listen to a segment of the story and then draw illustrations: Provide the students with art paper and markers or crayons. Read the book aloud, pausing at specific intervals. Do not show them any pictures as you read. At each pause, ask the children to pick one image that they heard and to draw this picture. For example, at the end of the first page of the story, ask students to draw. You may get a picture of old newspapers, of a bird flying in the air. You may vary this activity by providing paper of different sizes – round, or index card size. You may assign different pages to different students. You may suggest students make quick sketches and then allow time at the end to complete the drawings. Discuss the images with the students. What words create images in a story? Use the art to create a collage or a new

set of illustrations for the book.

**DISCOVERING ALMANACS** ~ In this activity, students make almanac-style fact cards to place in their garden: Describe to students how almanacs are collections of information useful to farmers as they plan gardens and grow vegetables. In urban settings, we are less familiar with almanacs and how they are used. If possible, have an almanac, available from a library, to show. There are many facts about weather and plants they will amaze and amuse students. Read through the almanac facts provided in *The Green Truck Garden Giveaway* (or your larger almanac). Have students select facts they think are interesting and would pertain to the plants in their garden. For older students, this can lead to research projects. Working in small groups, have students write their fact on a large index size card and decorate. Laminate the cards and post them in the garden for visitors to read and learn from.

**MAKE A TIMELINE** ~ In this activity, students make a visual history of their gardening project: Use the story to help students create a timeline of what occurred between the arrival of one Giveaway truck and the conclusion of “two green trucks on Second Street.” Have students make a visual timeline of the planting and progress of their garden, from planning to harvesting. Students can take turns adding pages in a Timeline Book or flow chart that is posted in the room. The timeline can be used to teach others about gardening, or used in writing projects to create storybooks for other children.

**READERS’ THEATRE** ~ In this activity, students act out the book for other classes to introduce the idea of gardening: In the *readers’ theatre* format, a narrator reads the story and students act out the characters and even plants or inanimate objects. Simple props may be used – cardboard boxes, posters, masks - to create a visual image. Students may even read character lines off a script during performance. Following the performance, students can demonstrate seed planting and help audience members to plant radishes or flowers in paper cups.

**PARENT EDUCATION** ~ In this activity, students demonstrate gardening techniques for parents: Based on information from the book and their own gardening experience, ask students, *How can we educate parents about gardening at our Open House event?* Assist students in planning a garden tour and activities that will give parents and other visitors a hands’ on experience of their garden. Refer to the book for ideas!

**GROWING POETRY** ~ In this activity, students reflect on their gardening experiences: Reread *The Green Truck Garden Giveaway* after several weeks or months after the students have success with their garden. Afterwards, give the students strips of paper, and ask each student to complete two sentences on one strip as it relates to their gardening experience: *I used to be . . .* and *But now I am . . .* Collect the strips and combine for a collaborative classroom poem.

Written by Cathryn Berger Kaye, Education Consultant  
for **Healthy West Hollywood**  
**Spring 2000**

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### **Books for the West Hollywood Healthy Cities Project**

#### ***Jack's Garden***

by Henry Cole, Mulberry Books, 1995

Summary: In this cumulative story, Jack begins with tools, a plot of land, and seeds. Add rain and sunshine and watch his plants grow. The illustrations are filled with the worms, birds, and flowers that bring a garden to life.

These activities can be adapted for use in grades 1-5. They may be led by classroom teachers or older students (grades 4-12) to introduce younger students to gardening. Literature is an effective methodology to tie learning with serving the community. Jack's Garden can be used for curriculum connections with science, social studies, language arts, math, and drama.

#### **C L A S S R O O M I D E A S !**

**ALL KINDS OF SEEDS** ~ In this activity, students learn that seeds come in all shapes and sizes: Ask students to bring in a fruit or vegetable that has seeds inside, e.g., apple, pear, avocado, tomato, peppers, cucumber, and melon. Have students find the seeds and compare them. How are they alike? How are they different? Make a graph to show how many seeds are in each (they may find too many seeds in a cucumber to count!). Bring in foods that do not have visible seeds, like lettuce and radishes. Have students research to find out how these plants and others “go to seed.” Bring in a bag of sunflower seeds that are still in their shell. Distribute to the children and discuss how these seeds, encased in a hard shell, end up in the soil.

**BOOK ALIVE!** ~ In this activity, students create a choral reading presentation: In this book, the illustrator and the author are the same person, Henry Cole. Discuss as a class how he took such a simple narrative and added so much information through the illustrations. As a class, adapt the story to a choral reading. Have the students work in small groups to create visual props for each section of the story. Use this presentation as a teaching tool for other classes or when leading tours of your garden.

**CREATING A CUMULATIVE STORY** ~ In this activity, students write cumulative stories: As a way to practice writing nonfiction, have each student select a familiar experience – it could be making a sandwich, doing homework, walking to school, playing baseball, cleaning a bedroom – an activity that is routine but that upon further examination has many parts. Have the students write the narrative, and then illustrate in the manner that Henry Cole has drawn the book about Jack's garden, perhaps without quite so many illustrations!

**A SKY OF CLOUDS** ~ In this activity, students learn about clouds: Jack's garden

grows with rain, but from which kind of cloud does rain fall? Have students read about clouds. For one (or more) week, allow time for students to draw and classify the clouds they observe. Which is more common at different times of the year? If possible, repeat in each season.

**WHAT WORDS SHOULD BE** ~ In this activity, students examine compound words, and draw what they “should” represent: Should a firefly have fiery flames? Should a hawkweed look like a bird? Does a buttercup have a cup of butter? Is a grapevine beetle really wrapped in a vine? Have the students select compound words from the illustrations that have built-in visual images. Make “should be” books, with students making individual or collaborate contributions, depending on your class. Show the “should” along with the actual plant or animal.

**LIFE CYCLES** ~ In this activity, students follow the life cycle of a plant: From a seed to a sprout to a radish -- the life cycle of a plant is easy to follow. Try one or more of these activities to make visible the steps. 1) Plant seeds in a *root-vue*, a plastic housing for plants that allow students to watch roots form below as seedlings form above. Students can draw the process, measure, and chronicle how long it takes. 2) Designate several plants in your garden as *life cycle* plants (lettuce is good for this). After other plants are harvested, watch what happens to these plants as they *go to seed*. 3) Write *life cycle poems* that share the images of growth from seeds to salad or vase or seeds again!

**LEAVES GALORE** ~ In this activity, students compare and contrast different shapes of leaves: Ask students to fold a piece of unlined paper into four panels. Ask students to work individually and not to share their work, yet. On panel one, have students draw a leaf. On panel two, have students draw a different shaped leaf. Repeat for panels three through eight (if you want to use the back of the paper), or stop whenever students become stuck. Discuss what is considered a standard or common leaf shape. Find a way to look at leaves together, either by walking on the school grounds or the neighborhood, visiting a garden, or as an at-home assignment. Refer to *Jack’s Garden* for examples of different leaves. Discuss why plants may have different shaped leaves. For closure, repeat the initial art activity.

**PARENT EDUCATION** ~ In this activity, students demonstrate their garden to parents by adapting the book: “This is the garden our class planted” might be the narrative to begin the story of your class garden. As Jack shows in the picture, the students can demonstrate the safe use of tools. Turn the “page” and “This is the compost that made the soil for our class garden.” And so on. Parents may go away well-educated about the many steps to create a garden.

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for Healthy West Hollywood, Spring 2000**

## **HOW DOES OUR GARDEN GROW?**

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#### ***Down To Earth - Garden Secrets! Garden Stories! Garden Projects You Can Do***

Created by Michael J. Rosen  
with 41 children's book authors and illustrators  
Harcourt Brace, 1998

Summary: Stories and pictures from 41 different authors and illustrators provide a variety of words and images about a favorite fruit or vegetable. Book profits help to support *Share Our Strength*, a nonprofit organization, in establishing community gardens all over the United States.

These activities can be adapted for grades 1-5. They may be led by classroom teachers or older students (grades 4-12) to introduce younger students to gardening. Literature is an effective methodology to tie learning with serving the community. *Down To Earth* can be used for curriculum connections in most subject areas including science, social studies, language arts, math, and drama.

#### **C L A S S R O O M I D E A S !**

**WHO KNOWS WHAT KINDS OF ADVENTURES** ~ In this activity, students write a creative story: Simply read Adam McCauley's story (page 9) and have the class complete what the author began, "I'd have climbed into the leaves and had..." Students can use the visuals in the artwork to get started, or create their own picture to send them off on an amazing journey.

**An "Uh Oh" Story** ~ In this activity, students write a creative nonfiction story: In Will Hillenbrand's story about the daisy plant (see page 17), his best intentions go awry. Ask the students if this reminds them of a time when they had good intentions, and something goofed. Write a *creative nonfiction* story, one that is factual but filled with creative writing elements. If a story does not come to mind, invite students to make up the entire plot.

**ENOUGH TO SHARE** ~ In this activity, students learn about animals who share garden treats: In Angela Johnson's story about scuppernongs (page 19) and Erich Hoyt's story about apples (page 35), both authors mention the animals that shared their fruits. "*When the time had passed for the scuppernongs, the people had taken what they needed and the birds had the rest.*" "*Thereafter the bears and I made a deal... There were enough apples for bears and people.*" How do animals play a role in our gardens? Some animals are valued for keeping away other critters. Some come uninvited. Can animals and humans partner to grow and share food? Research which animals would be welcome garden collaborators and which you want to keep away. What about a garden planted for the local animals to enjoy?

**SIX REASONS I LIKE ...** ~ In this activity, students conduct research about a food ~ Judy Sierra definitely likes mustard greens (see page 30). Have students select their favorite fruit or vegetable. Student compose their own list of “six reasons” based on both the taste factor, and what they learn about the qualities and attributes of what they enjoy best.

**PLANTING A VICTORY GARDEN** ~ In this activity, students learn about World War II: On page 34, Gloria Rand writes about her father’s “victory garden” planted during World War II. Have students conduct research to find out what a victory garden was – by looking in history books, and asking community members who would know first hand. What kind of garden would the students like to plant to commemorate a time in history? Many schools select to plant gardens of indigenous plants in coordination with learning about the indigenous cultures.

**LET’S GET GROWING: ACTIVITIES** ~ In this activity, students participate in one (or more) of the many activities provided in the book: Author Michael Rosen has included 33 activities, many related to the lovely stories in the first part of the book. From dangling pie plates in branches, to pressing and drying flowers, to making potato prints, this section is guaranteed to provide a classroom of creative, informative fun.

**SHARING OUR STRENGTH** ~ In this activity, students learn about the role of nonprofit organizations in helping our communities: Read the section *A Growing Concern* to students (pages 62-63). Discuss why the organization Share Our Strength (SOS) was founded and the important work it does to help our society. Often students are unfamiliar with the role of nonprofit organizations. Conduct research, having the students write to the organizations listed on page 64. Have them ask their parents and neighbors about local organizations that help. Ask students to look in the newspaper for articles about groups that work to better our neighborhoods and communities. Invite a representative from a local group to visit the class. Plan an activity when students can contribute their time and energy to helping a nonprofit organization. Everyone benefits.

**PARENT EDUCATION** ~ In this activity, students demonstrate their Down To Earth creations: “This is the garden our class planted” might be the narrative to begin the story of your class garden. As Jack shows in the picture, the students can demonstrate the safe use of tools. Turn the “page” and “This is the compost that made the soil for our class garden.” And so on. Parents may go away well-educated about the many steps to create a garden.

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