Unit 4/Week 1

Title: The Gardener[[1]](#footnote-1)

Suggested Time: 5 days (45 minutes per day)

Common Core ELA Standards: RL.4.1, RL.4.3, RL.4.4, RL.4.7; RF.4.3, RF.4.4; W.4.2, W.4.4, W.4.9; SL.4.1, SL.4.2; L.4.1, L.4.2, L.4.3, L.4.4

Teacher Instructions

*Refer to the Introduction for further details.*

**Before Teaching**

1. Read the Big Ideas and Key Understandings and the Synopsis. Please do **not** read this to the students. This is a description for teachers, about the big ideas and key understanding that students should take away **after** completing their work with this text.

Big Ideas and Key Understandings

Lydia made the best of a difficult situation by making a good life for herself, her uncle, and her neighbors.

Synopsis

Lydia Grade is sent to live with her Uncle Jim while her parents look for work. She happily settles in to her new home where she makes friends with Ed, Emma, and the neighbors. With their help, Lydia Grace plants, what she believes, is a secret garden to make her uncle flash a rare smile. After Uncle Jim sees her big surprise, he presents her with a special cake covered in flowers. Lydia Grace believes that cake equals one thousand smiles.

1. Read entire main selection text, keeping in mind the Big Ideas and Key Understandings.
2. Re-read the main selection text while noting the stopping points for the Text Dependent Questions and teaching Vocabulary.

**During Teaching**

1. Students read the entire main selection text independently without interruption.
2. Teacher reads the main selection text aloud *with students following along*. (Depending on how complex the text is and the amount of support needed by students, the teacher may choose to reverse the order of steps 1 and 2.)
3. Students and teacher re-read the text while stopping to respond to and discuss the questions and returning to the text. A variety of methods can be used to structure the reading and discussion (e.g., whole class discussion, think-pair-share, independent written response, group work, etc.)

Text Dependent Questions

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Text Dependent Questions** | **Answers** |
| **Why does Uncle Jim invite Lydia Grace to live with him?** | Her parents are out of work, and they are very poor. Uncle Jim can help take care of her. |
| **Why does Lydia Grace write Uncle Jim an important letter from the train station?** | She wants him to know important things about her that she will be too shy to say in person. |
| **What did Lydia Grace’s mother do for her?** | She made a dress for Lydia Grace from her own dress. |
| **How does the illustration help tell the story?** | Lydia Grace says she’s dreaming of gardens. There are packets of flower seeds floating in the air around her seat. (Teacher may need to explain that zinnia, cosmos, and marigold are types of flowers.) |
| **Why is Lydia Grace excited to see the window boxes?** | She can plant flowers at her new home. |
| **Why does Lydia Grace tell her grandmother about the sun shining down on the corner where she will live?** | Sunshine is important for growing plants. |
| **Adore means to really like or love something. Why does Lydia Grace adore her gifts from home? (Teacher may need to define catalogue and bulb to students.)** | She loves all things gardening. She can plant the bulbs in her window boxes. |
| **Why did Lydia Grace write a poem for Uncle Jim?** | She was trying to make him smile. |
| **Why does Lydia Grace say, “You should see them now?”** | The date is Feb. 12. It’s been several weeks since Christmas, and the bulbs have probably grown a lot. |
| **How did Emma and Lydia Grace become friends?** | They made a deal to teach each other how to knead bread and speak Latin. |
| **Why did the author put the word *my* in italics?** | To show that Lydia Grace was especially happy that the cat was sleeping on her bed, and not somewhere else. |
| **Where is Lydia Grace’s secret place?** | It might be on the roof. Fire escape steps are leading up. Also, she states that Otis is the only one who knows about it, and cats often like to explore. |
| **What are Lydia Grace’s “great plans?”** | She is planting all the seeds and bulbs in anything she can find to make a garden on the roof. |
| **What does it mean when Lydia Grace says, “the seeds and roots are sprouting?” What does sprouting mean?** | Showers cause flowers to grow. Flowers must grow in the rain. Sprouting means growing (into a plant.) |
| **Why did the store being full make Uncle Jim almost smile?** | The store was almost full with customers. More customers mean more money for the bakery. Uncle Jim is happy to be making money. |
| **Name all the people who have helped Lydia Grace with her “secret” place? Do you think it is still a secret?** | Grandma, Emma, neighbors, customers. Probably hard to keep it from Uncle Jim if everyone else knows about it. People call her “the gardener”. |
| **What holiday is being celebrated?** | 4th of July |
| **What does Lydia Grace mean when she says, “I’ve tried to remember everything you ever taught me about beauty”?** | Her grandmother taught her how to care for a garden and create beauty with flowers. |
| **In your own words, describe the surprise illustrated in the text.** | Rooftop garden with flowers everywhere; refreshments; sparklers |
| **Why is Lydia Grace’s “heart pounding so hard”?** | She is excited and happy about her surprise cake and news of Papa’s job and her parents’ homecoming. |

Vocabulary

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | **KEY WORDS ESSENTIAL TO UNDERSTANDING**  Words addressed with a question or task | **WORDS WORTH KNOWING**  General teaching suggestions are provided in the Introduction |
| **TEACHER PROVIDES DEFINITION**  not enough contextual clues provided in the text |  | Latin  Vacant, lot  Sprucing |
| **STUDENTS FIGURE OUT THE MEANING**  sufficient context clues are provided in the text | Window boxes  Adore  Sprouting | Anxious  Blooming  Knead  survived |

Culminating Task

* Re-Read, Think, Discuss, Write

*Re-read the sentence on page \_\_\_: “I truly believe that cake equals one thousand smiles.” Lydia Grace tried very hard to get her Uncle Jim to smile just once. Why do you think she instead got something that equaled one thousand smiles?*

Answer: Lydia worked for months making a large and beautiful rooftop garden. Her love, time, and effort were so great that Uncle Jim gave her something bigger or greater than just a smile. He put love, time, and effort into baking a special cake for her.

Additional Tasks

* *Time Line – The dated letters show the time span for the setting of this story. They also show how long Lydia Grace waited to see her uncle “smile”. Create a chart that shows every letter that mentioned Uncle Jim’s smile. How long did she wait?*

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Date** | **Description** |
| September 5, 1935 | He doesn’t smile. |
| December 25, 1935 | Wrote a poem, still didn’t smile. |
| February 12, 1936 | Hoping for a smile. |
| April 27, 1936 | Planning on a big smile. |
| May 27, 1936 | Almost smiled. |
| June 27, 1936 | Sure he will smile. |
| July 4, 1936 | Imagining his smile. |
| July 11, 1936 | Gave her something worth a thousand smiles. |
| **10 Months – (like a whole school year)** | |

* *Discussion - Why do you think Uncle Jim hardly ever smiled?*

Possible answers: The one time he “almost smiles” is when he has more customers, so it is possible that he is worried about money. Another possibility is that he may be alone, as the text does not show us a wife or children. Finally, he may be the kind of person who just doesn’t smile very much. Though the last two are possible, it should be pointed out that there is no direct evidence in the text for either. The point of this question is to draw attention to the fact that Jim not smiling is central to much of the text.

Note to Teacher

* *Build background knowledge - Great Depression*

Explain to students that this story takes place during a time in American history known as the Great Depression. During a depression, many working-aged people cannot find jobs. Therefore, many people were very poor during the Great Depression.

Name \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**“The Gardener”**

1. Why does Uncle Jim invite Lydia Grace to live with him?
2. Why does Lydia Grace write Uncle Jim an important letter from the train station?
3. What did Lydia Grace’s mother do for her?
4. How does the illustration help tell the story?
5. Why is Lydia Grace excited to see the window boxes?
6. Why does Lydia Grace tell her grandmother about the sun shining down on the corner where she will live?
7. Adore means to really like or love something. Why does Lydia Grace adore her gifts from home?
8. Why did Lydia Grace write a poem for Uncle Jim?
9. Why does Lydia Grace say, “You should see them now?”
10. How did Emma and Lydia Grace become friends?
11. Why did the author put the word *my* in italics?
12. Where is Lydia Grace’s secret place?
13. What are Lydia Grace’s “great plans?”
14. What does it mean when Lydia Grace says “the seeds and roots are sprouting?” What does sprouting mean?
15. Why did the store being full make Uncle Jim almost smile?
16. Name all the people who have helped Lydia Grace with her “secret” place? Do you think it is still a secret?
17. What holiday is being celebrated?
18. What does Lydia Grace mean when she says, “I’ve tried to remember everything you ever taught me about beauty?”
19. In your own words, describe the surprise illustrated in the text?
20. Why is Lydia Grace’s “heart pounding so hard?”

1. *This story is a “duplicate.” (It is found in other basals, as well.) This particular revision was completed by a teacher who uses a different basal, so the page numbers have been removed. This may require you to make some adjustments/add page numbers to some of the questions.* [↑](#footnote-ref-1)