

# The Good Garden - Teaching Guide

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## About the Book

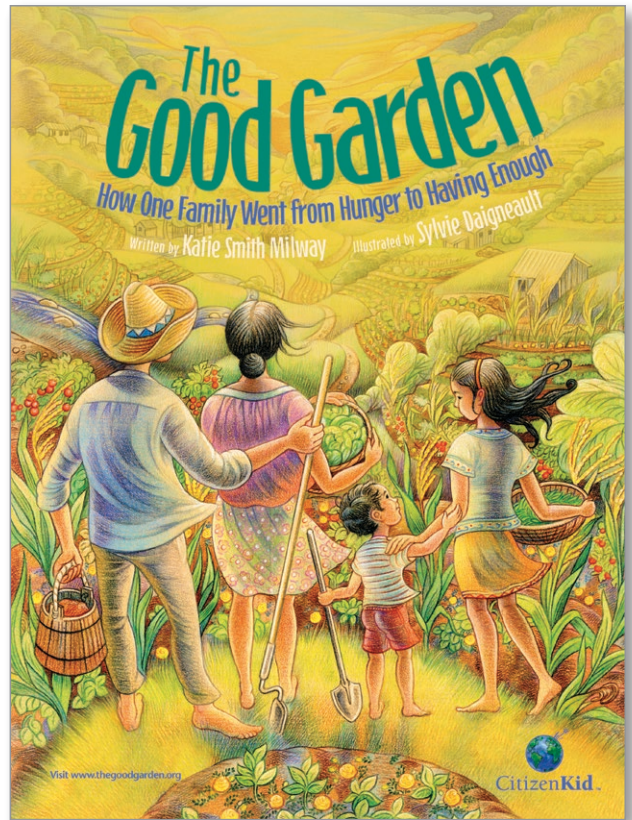
María's family are poor Honduran farmers, growing barely enough to eat. Then a new teacher comes to town and shows María sustainable farming practices that yield good crops. An inspiring story, based on actual events, that shows us how farms and hopes are transformed as good gardens begin to grow.

## About the Author

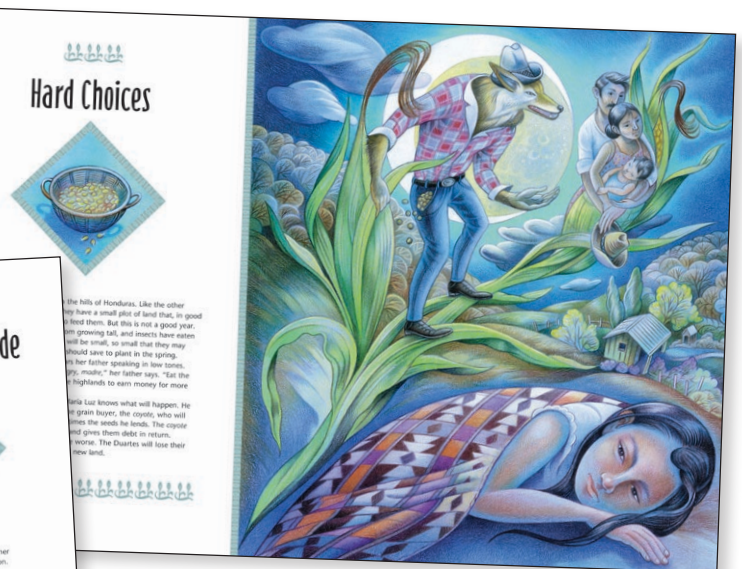
**KATIE SMITH MILWAY**, a native of Vancouver, British Columbia, has coordinated community development programs in Africa and Latin America for Food for the Hungry, consulted on village banking in Senegal with World Vision and was a delegate to the 1992 Earth Summit. She has written books and articles on sustainable development and is currently a partner at nonprofit consultancy The Bridgespan Group, based in Boston, Massachusetts.

## About the Illustrator

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## Overview

The factors that create and perpetuate poverty in the hills of Honduras are complicated. However, understanding these factors, finding internal agency, recognizing community heroes and fostering community mobilization can promote hope and ignite positive change. Using *The Good Garden*, the following activities apply the processes of inquiry and engineering design to have students: grow plants, think about a community hero and consider the implications of colonization.

	Grade	Theme	High-Yield Strategies
Activity 1	1 to 12	Life System	Identifying similarities and differences Cooperative learning Generating and testing hypothesis
Activity 2	4 to 8	Your Hero	Summarizing and note-taking Higher-order thinking Cooperative learning Identifying similarities
Activity 3	7 to 12	Understanding Perspective Who is the villain? The impact of colonization and the complexities of poverty	Summarizing and note-taking Higher-order thinking

## Activity 1: Grow a Bean Plant

Before starting this activity, review the Guiding Questions on the last page of this teacher resource.

### MATERIALS

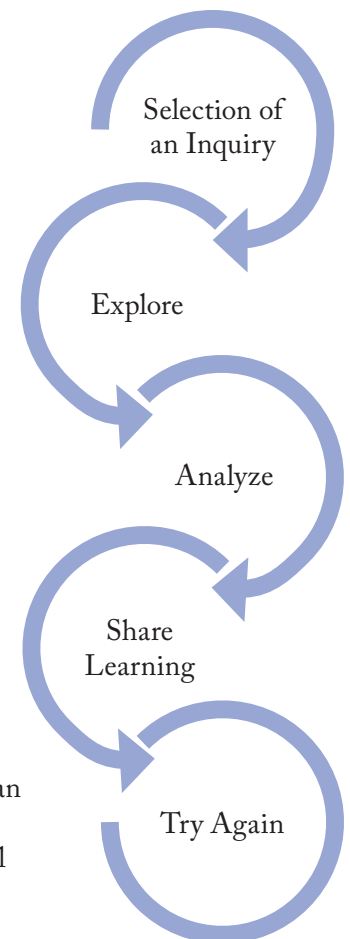
- *The Good Garden*
- Beans (4 to 6)
- Paper/Styrofoam cups (4 to 6)
- Chalkboard, Whiteboard or chart paper
- Chalk or markers

### OVERVIEW

Students will use the engineering design process to create their own bean plants. Bean plants grow quickly, so they are great to use in experiments with students. *The Good Garden* will be used as a springboard for students to make an inquiry about the best conditions for a bean seed to grow.

### LEARNING GOAL

Students will establish and test their own inquiry question about the best conditions for a bean seed to grow (i.e., Will a bean seed grow better in sand or soil?). Students will then create an experiment to test their question. Once they have carried out the initial experiment, they will change the conditions in response to the results and further inquire.



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## ACTIVITY

1. Discuss with students that you are going to read a true story about creating a good garden in Honduras.
2. Show students where Honduras is on a map (in Central America). Explain that the setting of the story is in a part of Honduras where the land is dry and void of nutrients.

**Note to Educator:** It is important for students to know that the poor conditions of the land are not the fault of the Honduran people. Explain that throughout history, and still today, when people fought over land, the people who “conquered” the land would take the best parts and leave the most difficult parts to the natives of the land. In this case, the Spanish conquered the land and the Hondurans received the parts in the hills most difficult to farm.

3. Identify and review keywords in *The Good Garden*.
4. Read pages 3–8 in *The Good Garden*.
5. Explain to students that you will be growing bean plants together.
6. As a class, brainstorm what students know and what they wonder about growing beans (see on the right). This will help students come up with inquiry questions.

What We Know	What We Wonder

7. Give students an opportunity to each establish a question about the best conditions to grow their bean plants. Remember that the students’ questions will explore a range of topics (see on the right).
8. Read pages 8–11 and ask students to explain one thing María did to create a good garden.  
**Note to Educator:** You may want to take notes as a class or ask students to take notes in their groups.
9. Ask students to think about things they could do to answer their inquiry questions.
10. Finish reading the book.

Students might question how soil, water, sunlight, music and more can make a difference.

## ACTION

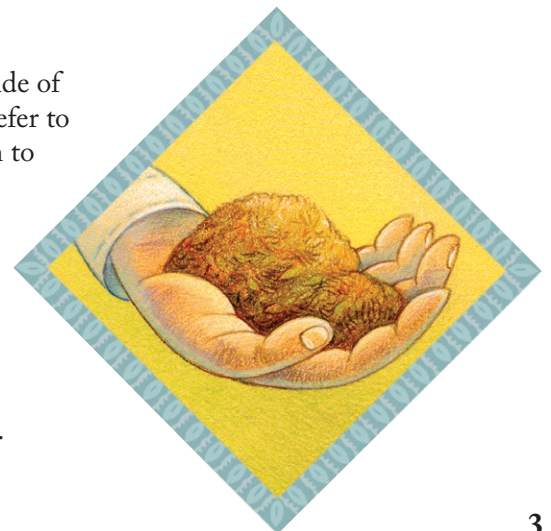
1. As a class or in small groups, plant the beans and watch them grow.
2. On a daily basis, give students an opportunity to observe and document their beans. It will take anywhere from 5 to 12 days for the beans to sprout depending on the type of bean.

## CONSOLIDATION

1. Ask students to review their initial inquiry questions.
2. Give students an opportunity to share their observations and more specifically their learning.
3. Have students analyze their learning and discuss what they would do differently if they were to do this inquiry again.  
**Note to Educator:** This is a key component of the lesson. This is where students will challenge their own thinking and critically come up with different ideas. This is what an engineer does!

## CRITICAL CONVERSATION:

Ask students to come up with 3 factors outside of the farmer’s control (or outside of their control) that could influence farming success. Students will most likely refer to the role that nature plays (e.g., sun, rain, natural disasters, etc.), but push them to think of at least 2 systemic factors (i.e., economic systems, political systems, trade agreements, etc.). Other questions that need to be asked include the following: If you have good growing techniques, does that actually mean you’re going to be a successful farmer? Who will you sell your product to? When? How? Where? Where do you get money for seeds? Asking the question “How do you grow a bean?” can be used as a launching point into a social justice discussion that includes a myriad of questions that will enable students to understand the challenges individuals face in developing countries.



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## EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

1. Have students change the conditions of their inquiries, based on their learning, and do it again!
2. Consider creating a School Sustainable Garden. See the following link for some ideas: <http://www.kidsgardening.org/node/11449>

## Activity 2: Your Hero

Before starting this activity, review the Guiding Questions on the last page of this teaching resource.

## MATERIALS

- *The Good Garden*
- Chalkboard, Whiteboard or chart paper
- Access to the internet (for research)

## OVERVIEW

In *The Good Garden*, Don Pedro is a hero who taught his protégé María Luz Duarte to improve her land and think critically. The character Don Pedro is based on a real person, Don Elías Sanchez, who taught over 30 000 farmers to increase land production. He is also a native Honduran. In this activity, students will research a hero who is native to their ethnic/cultural origin.

## LEARNING GOAL

Students will identify their own ethnic groups and research a “hero” from each of those groups. They will then produce a picture book, essay, presentation or graphic novel that demonstrates who the heroes are, what they did that makes them heroes, traits that allowed them to be heroes and how students can embody those traits in their own lives.

**Note to Educator:** Ethnicity is socially constructed based on race, religion, land of origin and more. Many students will be able to identify their ethnicities right away while others will have to think about it. Support this conversation with an identity activity. One possible activity can be found at

<http://www.rhymestoreeducation.com/lessons/>  
 (“Lesson Appendices,” Appendix M, pages 36 and 37).

## ACTIVITY

1. Identify and review keywords in *The Good Garden*.
2. Read *The Good Garden* with the students. With support from the text, summarize each page on a Whiteboard, chart paper, etc. (see on the right).
3. As you read pages 8, 11, 12, 17, 21, 22 and 26, ask students to list traits that allowed Don Pedro to become a hero (i.e., page 8: hope, optimism, creativity).

**Note to Educator:** You may want to write the word “trait” on chart paper and then record the characteristics around it for future reference.

**Extension:** Depending on the curriculum expectations that you are trying to achieve, you may want to have students identify the evidence for their main idea summary. For example: “Hunger on the Hillside”

**Main Idea:** The land is not producing crops the way that it used to.

**Support from the Text:** María asks her papa if the land has “lost its goodness.” Her papa replies yes.



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4. Ask students to define “hero” in their own words.

**Note to Educator:** Often students (and adults) will see a hero as male and courageous. This is still the definition in many dictionaries. Challenge this notion and guide students toward the idea of a hero as a person of any gender, racial group or income level who does something meaningful to remove barriers. The hope is to challenge the notion of “saving someone” as being heroic. Instead, helping someone help him- or herself is a true act of heroism.

5. View the video *María’s Journey from Hunger to Having Enough*: <http://www.thegoodgarden.org/LearnTheStory.php>

6. Ask students to determine their own ethnicities.

**Note to Educator:** A child might define his or her identity based on family origin, race, nationality, etc. For example, students may define themselves as British (family origin), South Asian (race), Jamaican (nationality), etc. Students need to be granted latitude when thinking about their identities. They may also wish to speak with parents about their identities. In addition, students may identify with more than one group; they need to know that this is okay and to simply pick one for the assignment.

## ACTION

1. Give students the opportunity to research and take notes on their heroes.

2. Have each student create a graphic novel or picture book about his or her hero.

**Note to Educator:** Depending on which curriculum expectation you are addressing, you may want students to write an essay, create a visual presentation, etc.

## CONSOLIDATION

1. Students should feel a sense of pride when presenting a “hero” who shares their ethnic heritage. Have students share their book or graphic novel in small groups. This is a chance for students to teach one another about heroes that they may never have otherwise heard about outside of this opportunity to share.

2. In reading buddies, have students share again.

## EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

1. Create a class library of the books and graphic novels that students have created.

## Activity 3: Perspectives

Before starting this activity, review the **Guiding Questions** on the last page of this guide.

## MATERIALS

- *The Good Garden*
- Chalkboard, Whiteboard or chart paper
- Access to the internet

## OVERVIEW

In this activity, students will make an inquiry exploring the question of “Why is Honduras an impoverished country?”

**Note to Educator:** One of the key learnings from this lesson is for students to recognize that people in poverty are not to be blamed for their economic position. There are many factors that lead to poverty; students should be guided to discover that many policies and practices of the Western world have also contributed to poverty in many places on the globe.



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## LEARNING GOAL

Students will identify and present one root cause of poverty in Honduras. These root causes can range from unsustainable food production, lack of education, politics, policies, to colonization, etc.

**Note to Educator:** For students who have originated from a country that is considered impoverished, you may consider differentiating the activity. Students may be most engaged exploring the history of their native land. Again, it is important to position poverty not as the fault of the people living in poverty, but rather as a result of many social, economic and political factors.

## ACTIVITY

1. Read pages 3–7 of *The Good Garden*. Ask students to first identify something that they have a question about and then, second, to consider how this contributes to poverty. Record their ideas in a chart on a chalkboard, Whiteboard or chart paper. You may need to provoke students to think critically (see chart).
2. Continue reading until page 14 and have students come up with additional questions.
3. Finish reading the book.
4. Have an open discussion with the students about blame. Unfortunately, those not in poverty often have many inaccurate assumptions about people in poverty (i.e., poor people don't want to work, poor people are not smart, it is their fault that they are poor, etc.).

**Note to Educator:** As students research Honduras or select a country and begin their research, it is important for students to adopt the lens of NOT blaming those in poverty for their poverty.

Why has  
the land lost  
its goodness?

Maria's family  
could lose  
their farm.

## ACTION

1. In partners or in groups of three, have students explore the following website to help them consider causes of poverty: <http://www.thegoodgarden.org/>
2. Have the students record causes of poverty.
3. Discuss as a class or have students journal about how poverty is framed. Are Hondurans being blamed for their own poverty on this website? Yes or no, and why?
4. Once students have established a country and cause of poverty that they want to explore, give them an opportunity to research.



## CONSOLIDATION

Allow ample time for students to present their findings. You might consider allowing students to first present in small groups so that students can help one another flesh out their ideas and make modifications prior to the larger class presentation.



For additional activities, videos and more, visit

**CitizenKidCentral.com**

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## Why Use This Teaching Guide?

This resource strives to support educators who want to give students the tools to critically read the world. It embraces a critical pedagogy that engages dialogue with students about how social, political and economic factors impact them and others. Through the activities provided, educators will empower and support students to challenge social inequities and create a better world.

This resource uses high-yield instructional strategies (e.g., making comparisons, cooperative learning, reinforcing effort, etc.) as a tool to increase students' skill sets and create a platform for relevant inquiries. Literature has the power to engage children and promote imagination, and it can also maintain stereotypes or interrupt them. This resource aims to offer young people the opportunity to think critically and to problem-solve — life skills that will equip them to navigate various life circumstances.

## GUIDING QUESTIONS WHEN USING PICTURE BOOKS

	Questions to think about PRIOR to using a picture book	Questions to plan for PRIOR to the activity
<b>Awareness</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Do you know your own biases?</li> <li>Do you know what stereotypes and biases are present in the book?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How are you prepared to challenge the stereotypes and biases in the book?</li> </ul>
<b>Connection</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Who will connect most with the images in the book?</li> <li>Who will connect most with the content and themes in the book?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How can you support all students to make a personal and meaningful connection to the book?</li> </ul>
<b>Perspective</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Whose voices are present?</li> <li>Whose voices are missing?</li> <li>Who has the power and privilege? (Think in terms of gender, race, ability, economic class, religion, etc.)</li> <li>What is the historical context of the book?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How can you include the missing voice(s)?</li> <li>How can you address issues of power and privilege?</li> <li>How can you contextualize the book?</li> </ul>
<b>Social Action and Challenging Inequity</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How can issues of social justice be taken up through the use of this book? (Every book has an avenue where we can consider issues of social justice. For example, if the book is set in a middle-class community, what are some of the injustices for those who do not live in middle-class communities?)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How can you help students to think about taking action that is meaningful to them (i.e., older students have more playscape time, the absence of a community center in the neighborhood, factors that cause poverty in the community/other countries)?</li> <li>How can you equip students to take action against inequities?</li> </ul>

## RESOURCES USED IN *THE GOOD GARDEN* TEACHING GUIDE

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