Name: _____ Date: _____

The Garden Plot Swap

Circle group

The community garden gave each family a square plot. Marisol's was number twelve, beside the fence. For three weeks she had watered it and pulled every weed. She waited for her bean seeds to sprout. Nothing came up. The plot next to hers was Mr. Okafor's. He was an older neighbor. His plot was a thick green tangle of tomato vines and squash leaves.

On Saturday, Marisol stood over her bare dirt. She felt very discouraged. Mr. Okafor looked up from his hoe. He said she was frowning at the soil as if it owed her money. Marisol said nothing would grow. She did everything the seed packet said.

He walked over and knelt down. He pushed a finger into her plot, and then into his own. He asked her to feel the difference. His soil was dark and crumbly. Hers was pale and hard. It was packed so tight that water ran off the top and did not soak in.

He told her that her corner used to be a parking space. The weight of cars had squeezed the ground flat. Plant roots cannot push through soil that tight. Marisol felt her cheeks get warm. The problem had never been her fault.

Mr. Okafor made a deal. He would give her some rich compost. In return, she would help him pick his squash that afternoon. They loosened her soil with a garden fork. They mixed in the compost. Marisol planted a fresh row of beans and watered them.

Ten days later, a tiny green loop pushed up through the dirt. She laughed out loud. She ran next door to tell Mr. Okafor.

Questions

1. What was wrong in Marisol's garden at the start?

_____

_____

2. How did Mr. Okafor show Marisol the difference between the two plots?

_____

_____

3. What had the corner of the garden been before?

_____

_____

4. What did Mr. Okafor trade for Marisol's help?

_____

_____

5. Why did water run off the top of Marisol's soil?

_____

_____

6. Why did Marisol's cheeks get warm when she heard the explanation?

_____

_____

7. How did Marisol's feelings change from the start of the story to the end?

_____

_____

Words to know

plot: a small piece of land set aside for a purpose
discouraged: feeling that you have lost hope
tangle: a messy mass of twisted things
compost: rotted plant matter that makes soil richer
crumbly: easily broken into small pieces

Talk together (every group has these)

1. Find one fact that every group read. How did your sheet say it?
2. What did your sheet tell you that you think another group's did not? Ask them.
3. What is one question about this topic that none of the sheets answered?

Name: _____ Date: _____

The Garden Plot Swap

Triangle group

The community garden gave every family a square plot, and Marisol's was number twelve, beside the fence. For three weeks she had watered it, pulled out every weed, and waited for her bean seeds to sprout. Nothing had come up. Meanwhile, the plot next to hers belonged to an elderly neighbor named Mr. Okafor, and it had become a thick green tangle of tomato vines and squash leaves.

On Saturday she stood over her bare dirt, feeling more discouraged than ever. Mr. Okafor looked up from his hoe and remarked that she was frowning at the soil as if it owed her money. Marisol admitted that nothing would grow, even though she followed every instruction on the seed packet.

He walked over, knelt down, and pushed a finger into her plot, and then into his own. He invited her to feel the difference. His soil was dark and crumbly. Hers was pale and hard, packed so tightly that water ran off the surface instead of soaking in.

He explained that her corner of the garden used to be a parking space, and that the weight of cars had squeezed the ground flat. Plant roots cannot push through soil that tight. Marisol felt her cheeks grow warm as she realized that the problem had never been her fault.

Mr. Okafor suggested a trade. He would give her some of his rich compost if she helped him harvest his squash that afternoon. Together they loosened her soil with a garden fork and mixed in the compost. Then Marisol planted a fresh row of beans and watered them gently.

Ten days later, a tiny green loop pushed up through the dirt. She laughed out loud and hurried next door to tell Mr. Okafor.

Questions

1. What was wrong in Marisol's garden at the start of the story?

_____

_____

2. How did Mr. Okafor show Marisol the difference between the two plots?

_____

_____

3. What had the corner of the garden been used for before?

_____

_____

4. What did Mr. Okafor trade for Marisol's help?

_____

_____

5. Why did the water run off the top of Marisol's soil?

_____

_____

6. Why did Marisol feel her cheeks grow warm when she heard the explanation?

_____

_____

7. How did Marisol's feelings change from the beginning of the story to the end?

_____

_____

Words to know

plot: a small piece of land set aside for a purpose
discouraged: feeling that you have lost hope
tangle: a messy mass of twisted things
compost: rotted plant matter that makes soil richer
crumbly: easily broken into small pieces

Talk together (every group has these)

1. Find one fact that every group read. How did your sheet say it?
2. What did your sheet tell you that you think another group's did not? Ask them.
3. What is one question about this topic that none of the sheets answered?

Name: _____ Date: _____

The Garden Plot Swap

Square group

The community garden had assigned every family a square plot, and Marisol's, number twelve, lay alongside the fence. For three weeks she had watered it faithfully, plucked out every weed, and waited with growing anxiety for her bean seeds to sprout, yet nothing had emerged. Meanwhile, the adjoining plot, which belonged to an elderly neighbor named Mr. Okafor, had become an exuberant green tangle of tomato vines and squash leaves.

On Saturday she stood over her barren dirt, feeling more discouraged than ever, until Mr. Okafor glanced up from his hoe and observed that she was frowning at the soil as if it owed her money. Marisol confessed that nothing would grow, even though she followed every instruction printed on the seed packet.

He strolled over, knelt down, and pressed a finger into her plot and then into his own, inviting her to feel the difference. His soil was dark and crumbly, whereas hers was pale and hard, packed so densely that water slid off the surface instead of soaking in.

He explained that her corner of the garden had once been a parking space and that the weight of cars had compressed the ground until it was completely flat. Plant roots simply cannot penetrate soil that firm. Marisol felt her cheeks flush with warmth as she realized that the trouble had never been her fault.

Mr. Okafor proposed an exchange: he would give her some of his rich compost if she assisted him with harvesting his squash that afternoon. Together they broke up her soil with a garden fork and blended in the compost, after which Marisol planted a fresh row of beans and watered them gently.

Ten days later, a tiny green loop pushed through the dirt. She laughed aloud and hurried next door to share the wonderful news with Mr. Okafor.

Questions

1. What was the trouble in Marisol's garden at the beginning of the story?

_____

_____

2. How did Mr. Okafor demonstrate the difference between the two plots?

_____

_____

3. What had Marisol's corner of the garden once been?

_____

_____

4. What did Mr. Okafor offer in exchange for Marisol's assistance?

_____

_____

5. Why did water slide off the surface of Marisol's soil?

_____

_____

6. Why did Marisol's cheeks flush with warmth when she heard the explanation?

_____

_____

7. How did Marisol's emotions change between the start and the end of the story?

_____

_____

Words to know

plot: a small piece of land set aside for a purpose
discouraged: feeling that you have lost hope
tangle: a messy mass of twisted things
compost: rotted plant matter that makes soil richer
crumbly: easily broken into small pieces

Talk together (every group has these)

1. Find one fact that every group read. How did your sheet say it?
2. What did your sheet tell you that you think another group's did not? Ask them.
3. What is one question about this topic that none of the sheets answered?

For the teacher: The Garden Plot Swap

Each student sheet carries a shape, not a level. The same topic and facts, written three ways.

Circle: The Garden Plot Swap

Easier · 273 words · Flesch-Kincaid grade 2.7

1. Her bean seeds had not sprouted after three weeks.
2. He had her feel the soil in both plots.
3. A parking space.
4. Some compost.
5. The ground was packed hard and flat, so water could not soak in.
6. She had blamed herself, and she felt relieved and a little embarrassed.
7. She went from discouraged to happy and proud.

Triangle: The Garden Plot Swap

This passage · 290 words · Flesch-Kincaid grade 6.1

1. Her bean seeds had not sprouted after three weeks.
2. He had her feel the soil in both plots.
3. A parking space.
4. Some compost.
5. The ground was packed hard and flat, so water could not soak in.
6. She had blamed herself and felt relieved and a little embarrassed.
7. She went from discouraged to happy and proud.

Square: The Garden Plot Swap

Harder · 304 words · Flesch-Kincaid grade 10

1. Her bean seeds had not sprouted after three weeks.
2. He invited her to feel the soil in both plots.
3. A parking space.
4. Some of his rich compost.
5. The ground was packed densely and flat, so water could not soak in.
6. She had blamed herself, and she felt relieved and slightly embarrassed.
7. She went from discouraged to delighted and proud.