

# The Gardener Unit Study

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Literature based unit study prepared by Ami

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## **Social Studies: Independence Day**

Lydia presents the garden to her uncle (along with their friends) on July 4<sup>th</sup>. Mention to your student that July 4<sup>th</sup> is Independence Day. Discuss why we celebrate on this day. We celebrate the birth of our country (explaining it as the “birthday” of America may help your student grasp this concept). The events surrounding our country’s separation from England ended with the Declaration of Independence (on July 4, 1776); we became our own country on this day.

You can ask your student about what kinds of celebrations have become traditional for this day? What celebrations have become traditional for your household?

## **Social Studies: Geography (and the Great Depression)**

I don’t know where this story takes place, but you may consider a big city such as New York City and spend some time discussing NYC with your child.

Another option would be to talk to a family member who survived the Great Depression (this story is post-depression, but the effects are still seen).

If you decide to talk to your child about the Great Depression, you may want to explain to your child that sharing and “making-do” became a way of life during the Depression. If you want, read the following article “Phyllis Bryant Remembers” to him. She remembers what it was like to be a child living during the Depression.

### **Phyllis Bryant Remembers Her Christmas Doll Bed**

*In 1929 I was six years old, but I remember quite a few things from that era, especially growing up and never having too much.*

*What sticks mostly in my mind was losing my money in the bank. I didn't quite understand why that bank had to close and take my money, which probably was only a few dollars. When they started paying off a few years later, my check was eleven cents. It helped when my brother gave me his, which was eighteen cents, and my older sister's, which was twenty-three cents. I was really in the money then.*

*Beans were a common meal and were often given to us by a farmer friend. What helped them along was the hot homemade bread. We usually had lots of homemade cookies and cakes, too. But it was kind of great, going to family reunions and eating their "store bought" cookies and bread. My mother would cook for hours and hours on a little wood-burning laundry stove. Summers, a three-burner kerosene stove was used. I recall going to the gas station for ten cents worth of kerosene and can still smell the stink of it!*

*My dad was a carpenter and farmer and did lots of things to keep us going. We lived in the small village of Imlay City, close to a family that owned a cow. My dad milked her twice a day, fed her and cleaned the stall. In return we got two quarts of milk a day. With all the canning my mother did from our garden, our weekly grocery bill wasn't that big. We only bought the bare necessities....*

*Christmas was an exciting time, but there were never too many gifts. I got a doll bed one year with a doll and aluminum dishes. It was the best Christmas I remember. (A couple of years later it dawned on me that my dad had made the bed.) We always had homemade candy and popcorn balls. The lights on the tree were very difficult. If one burned out, the whole string would go out. So there you were with a good bulb trying all the sockets until you found the burned-out one. When there was no money to buy extra bulbs, all you had to do was break the bulb, twist the wires and screw the bulb back in the socket, being very careful if you didn't get all the glass off....*

*I was in high school in 1937 when the first strike in Flint occurred. I thought that was so terrible--men with good jobs, steady employment and making good money putting their families through that.*

*Michigan History Magazine, January-February, 1982 (Vol. 66, No. 1)*

### **Social Studies: Human Relationships**

Lydia Grace loves her family. Discuss the different ways in which she loves her family with your student; Lydia writes letters home to her family to keep in touch with them. She also wrote her uncle a poem for Christmas. Writing takes time and is work. She spent time on her family members because she loved them; this is also obvious in the time she invests in the flower garden for her uncle. If you notice in the last illustration, you are left to believe that she has a special relationship with her grandma as well. They are practically twins. Lydia Grace has a special

relationship with her grandma because her grandma taught her to garden; she used the knowledge of gardening to make her uncle happy.

Ask your child what they have learned from their family members. How can they show an uncle, aunt, grandma, etc. that they love them? Help your child complete one of the actions they suggest.

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### **Language Arts: Letter Writing**

Letter writing can begin before a child can actually form the alphabet with a pencil. Allow your child to choose a family member to “write” a letter to. They can do this by dictating to you what they want to say, and you can write it down. Explain the basics of friendly letter writing (greeting i.e. dear; body; complimentary close i.e. your niece; signature; post-script--p.s.).

Make sure you put the date at the top like Lydia did. Also, have the child sign his or her name. You may also want to include a piece of artwork (or flower seeds!). If your child can write, you may want to help her get her thoughts on paper, then have her re-copy the letter in her own handwriting.

### **Language Arts: Making a List**

August 27, 1935: Lydia Grace's grandmother helps her pack to go and live with Uncle Jim. Classify the items that Lydia Grace is packing (e.g., underwear, shirts, socks). What other items in the room might Lydia Grace take with her to the city? Ask your student to make a list of personal items that they would take with them if they were going away for a long visit.

### **Language Arts: Reading Poetry Together**

Spend some time together reading poetry together. Make sure you point out the use of line and rhyme (where it is used).

You can also review elements you have already studied (onomatopoeia, personification, alliteration, repetition, etc. Also mention to your student that poetry is meant to be read aloud.

Some suggestions for reading poetry together:

*Animals, Animals*

*Favorite Poems of Childhood*

*Poems and Prayers for the Very Young*  
*A Child's Garden of Verse*  
*Sing a Song of Popcorn (we love this at our house!)*  
*Classic Poetry: An Illustrated Collection*

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### **Art: Contrast and Color**

The picture of Lydia Grace arriving at the train station shows her surrounded by a gray-black background. She, however, is in color and has a halo of light around her. Ask your student how does this picture make you feel? (lonely or afraid)

Take time to compare this picture with the picture of her leaving the train station. The latter feels warm because the color yellow is used whereas the first has coldness about it. Have your student look for other contrasts in the illustrations that provoke emotion.

### **Art: Medium--Ink**

All throughout *The Gardener*, the drawings are outlined in ink. Unlike a pencil, ink has a tendency to fluctuate from thick to thin on its own.

Try using a stick (from an outside tree branch) as a pencil and allow your student to dip it into ink and create some lines. Point out how shapes take on a different dynamic when one of the lines is thicker than the other.

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### **Math: Bakery Buying**

If you have a lot of energy, you could spend a morning baking some goodies. If you don't have a lot of energy, you could make some pretend food from pictures cut out of magazines, etc. Either way, it would be fun to set up a bakery.

In the book, it shows posters with food prices. Rolls are 1 cent, bread is a whopping 5 cents, and muffins/cookies are 2 cents each. You can play bakery with your children. Just get out some pennies and something to make a cash register.

If your child wants to buy more than one item, make sure they add up the purchase and give you the right amount of pennies. Take turns being the customer/shop owner. This is a great way to play math (and a great excuse to eat

some cookies!) You can also make your own prices on posters and introduce the cent sign. With your older child, you may talk about prices.

This would be a good time to discuss how prices change (increase) over time. You can't get a cookie for 2 cents! Note the price of a cookie or a loaf of bread the next time you are at the grocery store together.

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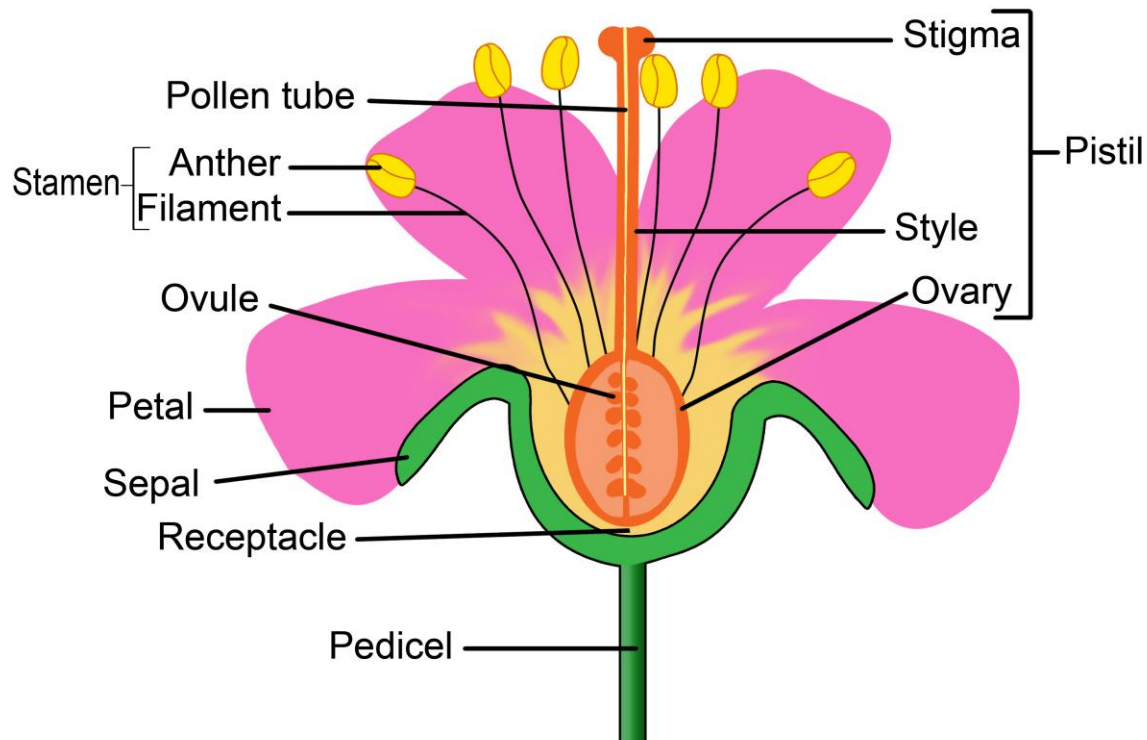
### Science: Gardening

Seed packets are falling out of Lydia's suitcase while she is on the train. Note the names-- Marigolds, Cosmos, and Zinnias. Pick some of these seeds up at the store (Cosmos and Zinnias are my favorite flower garden flowers! They both grow great in Indiana!), and start some indoors. If you have an extra tea cup or a cake pan, plant them in it (like Lydia did). Radishes, Onions, and Lettuce are also mentioned. If you would like, allow your child to try growing one or more of these vegetables. They can also be started indoors (in window boxes like Lydia if you like).

### Science: Dissect and Label a flower

Explain the five basic parts of a flower to your student.

## PARTS OF A FLOWER



If you have a daffodil or tulip in your yard (or even a carnation from the store), “dissect” it with your student. You can cut it apart to find all five parts and tape the parts to the blank diagram.

### Parts of a Flower

1. Stem
2. Sepal: Protected the flower when it was in bud. The sepal is often green.
3. Stamen: The male part of the plant which produces the pollen (yellow, dust like).
4. Petals: Brightly colored in insect pollinated plants. Small (or non-existent) in wind pollinated plants.
5. Pistil: The female part of the plant which produce fruit once pollination has taken place.

### **Science: Flower Notebook**

Go on a nature walk around your block or to a local park. Make sure you take a flower guide with you (see titles below). Let your child sketch the flowers in a notebook and add the names of the flowers (you may want to add the Latin names as well).

If desired, use the Flower Three-part Cards found at the end of this unit study.

### **How to use flower cards:**

Cut out cards. One card will be cut apart on the dotted lines.

The card with the name attached is the control card. Teach the child using the control cards.

Lesson one. Say, “this is a rose (and point to it), this is a carnation “(and point).

Lesson two. Say, “can you show me the rose, can you show me the carnation.”

Lesson three. Say, “what is this called (point to the carnation), What is this called (point to the rose)”

Start by laying out a few cards, then increase as child learns more. Eventually, the child should be able to match all the cut cards. After he is done, he checks his work with all of the control cards.

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## Just For Fun

To top the week off, you could bake a cake with your children and decorate it with fresh flowers (Ask your local florist for edible flowers or use violets.). Dedicate the cake to dad or someone special.

## Cake Recipe

STARS AND STRIPES CAKE (for Independence Day)

- 1 package yellow or white cake mix
- 1 quart vanilla ice cream, softened
- 1 cup blueberries
- 1 pint strawberries, hulled and thinly sliced vertically
- Whipped cream or whipped topping

Prepare cake mix according to package directions. Pour into a waxed paper-lined and greased jelly roll or cake pan (about 16 x 12 inches); bake in a preheated 350-degree F oven 12 to 15 minutes or until toothpick inserted into center comes out clean. Let cool; invert onto large tray; peel off paper. Into same pan, spoon ice cream, smoothing and leveling off surface with a spatula to form an even layer. Freeze ice cream layer until firm. Dip pan in warm water for 10 seconds and unmold onto cake layer. To decorate cake, use blueberries for blue field, sliced strawberries for red stripes and pipe whipped cream for stars and to decorate sides of cake. Freeze. Remove from freezer 10 minutes before serving. (Makes 12 to 16 servings)

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