## *Farmer Will Allen and the Growing Table*

## By Jacqueline Briggs Martin

Illustrations by Eric-Shabazz Larkin

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## Louisiana Young Readers’ Choice Nominee 2016

**Grade 3-5**

Submitted by Jessica Rushing, Student

School of Library and Information Science, LSU, Baton Rouge

**Title:** *Farmer Will Allen and the Growing Table*

**Author:** Jacqueline Briggs Martin

**Publisher:** Readers to Eaters

**Pages:** 32

**SUMMARY**

In an inspiring and beautifully illustrated book, Jacqueline Briggs Martin tells the true story of Will Allen who is passionate about people having “the RIGHT to good food.” Farmer Will Allen is able to see the potential in all things…including you! Driving past an abandoned lot in Milwaukee, he envisions a huge table filled with good food for the people. His vision became a reality through his ability to find the possibilities in building a farm and producing good food in an urban environment. Farmer Will manages to overcome the struggle of building a farm in the middle of Milwaukee, despite his lack of resources, space, and help. By making his vision a reality, Farmer Will Allen spreads his mission of growing power throughout the world. He challenges us to see our inner farmers, and build our own community gardens.

**AUTHOR BIOGRAPHY**

Jacqueline grew up on a farm in Maine, and moved to Iowa with her husband Rich. She has two adult children, Sarah and Justin, who respectively reside with their children in Wisconsin and Brooklyn. Inspired by the stories she read to her two children when they were young, Jacqueline Briggs Martin began writing stories in her Iowa home during the 1980s. Often writing about topics that are “a part of all of our lives,” Jacqueline has written 18 children’s books, and most recently she was inspired to write children’s biography picture books about pioneers for healthy eating.

Biographical information taken from the author’s website at

<http://www.jacquelinebriggsmartin.com/about/index.html>

and Encyclopedia.com at

<http://www.encyclopedia.com/doc/1G2-3071400057.html>

Accessed October 8, 2014.

**ILLUSTRATOR BIOGRAPHY**

Eric-Shabazz Larkin, a man of many talents, was born in Norfolk, VA. He is an art director for the Creative School of Thought in New York, but he thrives on working in any creative environment. As an artist, writer, designer, illustrator, director, composer, and award-winning poet, Larkin has devoted his life to art and social change.

Biographical information taken from

<http://creativeschoolofthought.com/eslarkinbio/>

Accessed October 9, 2014.

**ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

Author website <http://www.jacquelinebriggsmartin.com/contact/index.html>

Illustrator website <http://creativeschoolofthought.com/eslarkinbio/>

**OTHER TITLES BY AUTHOR**

*The Chiru of High Tibet* (2010)

*Chicken Joy on Redbean Road: A Bayou Country Romp* (2007)

*Banjo Granny* (2006)

*On Sand Island* (2003)

**OTHER TITLES BY ILLUSTRATOR**

*A Moosh Boosh* (2014)

# RELATED TITLES

*Weeds Find a Way* by Cindy Jenson-Elliott

*Our School Garden!* by Rick Swann

*Compost Stew* by Mary McKenna Siddals

*Wiggling Worms at Work* by Wendy Pfeffer

**CLASSROOM CONNECTIONS**

**Language Arts:**

* *Farmer Will Allen and the Growing Table* is based off of the life of a farming legend. Read an interview with Farmer Will Allen to gain more insight on his life:

<http://grist.org/urban-agriculture/soil-survivor-an-interview-with-will-allen/>

* Compose a letter to Farmer Will Allen asking him for advice in building your school garden. What problems do you think you might have? How has his book inspired you?
* Plant some seeds or small plants, either as potted plants or in a garden. Students will keep a garden journal documenting the growth of their garden plants. The garden journal could include details like weather conditions, soil conditions, etc.
* Using what they have learned about planting plants, ask students to write a gardening handbook for the new gardener. In the manual, students should include step-by-step instructions.

**Social Studies:**

* Students will explore the journey our food goes on from garden to table:

<http://www.kidsgardening.org/node/13469>

* Cultures across the world celebrate through their harvest through festivals. Research different harvest festivals and prepare a presentation on a festival. You can also include Louisiana festivals. Some examples are the Louisiana strawberry festival, tomato festival, corn festival, peach festival, etc.
* Students will explore the concept of hunger, and develop a plan to help a community who struggles to feed its people.

**Art:**

* Ask students to think of what they would want to plant in an imaginary vegetable garden. Using rulers, pencils and crayons students will draw a vegetable garden plotting plan and use information found online to determine plants will grow best by each other.

<http://garden.lovetoknow.com/wiki/Which_Vegetables_Grow_Well_Together>

* Provide students with information on identifying the different parts of a plant. Ask them to draw a garden plant and label the parts of the plant.

**Math:**

* Students will measure the growth rates of garden plants and display the results using charts and graphs. Ask students to make predictions on growth.
* Almost every type of fertilizer requires measurements. Using images of fertilizer labels found online, students can calculate the amount of fertilizer to use per liter or gallon of water.
* Additional Math related classroom garden activities can be found at Exploring Math in the Garden

<http://www.kidsgardening.org/node/12134>

**Science/Technology:**

* Students will grow a hydroponic garden in class to learn about how water can be used as a different method of gardening:

<http://brightagrotech.com/teaching-hydroponics-in-the-classroom/>

* Four example hydroponic garden ideas for kids

<http://www.examiner.com/article/playing-with-plants-4-hydroponic-projects-for-cincinnati-kids>

* Share with students information about gardening ecosystems and how animals can help the growth of plants. This is one example ecosystem activity that can be created with two liter soda bottles,

<http://cranberrycorner.blogspot.com/2010/07/summer-fun-ecosystem-edition.html>.

* Share with students information about composting and ask them to do further research. As an assignment, have students develop a compost pile for the school garden.
* Students will learn about the parts of a plant by labeling the flower:

<http://www.superteacherworksheets.com/science/plant-parts_WMTFQ.pdf>

Students will complete an observational lab examining a worm farm:

<http://www.worm-farming.com/worm-lesson-plans.html>

**P.E.:**

* Farmer Will Allen believes access to healthy food is everyone’s right. Develop a food plan for your week. Fill the food plan with healthy and balanced choices.

<http://www.superhealthykids.com/meal-plan-memberships/>

* Building and working in a garden can be hard work! Students will plan, build, and upkeep a garden as a part of their P.E. class. See Venable Elementary school’s model:

<http://www.cityschoolyardgarden.org/2014/09/25/pe-in-the-garden/>

**Vocabulary:**

Abandoned

Professional

Scarce

Greenhouses

Pollution

Composting

Hoophouses

Vertical

**DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

1. What is Farmer Will Allen passionate about and what inspires him to be passionate?

2. What is Farmer Will Allen’s message? What details tell help send this message?

3. Describe Farmer Will Allen’s characteristics. How do these characteristics contribute to his success?

4. What does it mean when the text says, “He can see what others can’t see”?

5. Describe how the book is divided into sections. How do these sections help us follow the book?

6. Who is telling the story? How is this point of view helpful?

7. How do the pictures contribute to the mood, characters, and setting of the book?

8. How can we help carry on Farmer Will Allen’s mission?

**RELATED WEB SITES**

**Growing Power Inc.**

<http://www.growingpower.org>

Will Allen’s organization Growing Power can provide information on Will Allen’s organization, his farms, outreach projects, and education.

**Empower Magazine**

<http://www.empowermagazine.com/will-allens-growing-power-using-urban-farming-change-existing-food-system-u-s-beyond/>

This site provides an interview with Will Allen about his vision on growing power. The interview discusses his vision, mission, and his future plans to revolutionize urban farming.

**Readers to Eaters Curriculum Guide**

<http://www.teachingbooks.net/media/pdf/Readers2Eaters/TheGrowingTable_CG.pdf>

Guide provides themes, synopsis, background, before reading questions, vocabulary, after reading questions, follow up activities, web resources, author & illustrator information, and publisher information.

**Community Ground Works Planning a School Garden**

<http://www.communitygroundworks.org/content/planning-school-garden>

Provides all the information needed to start your own school garden.

**Creative School of Thought Vimeo**

<http://vimeo.com/70377470>

The illustrator of the picture book reviews through the book giving his thoughts on participating in the process.

**Youtube Video Collection about Will Allen and growing power**

<https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL7986F24AF2277E03>

This video collection features 26 videos on Farmer Will Allen. Many of the videos feature Will Allen discussing his passion for growing.

**Unilever Project Sunlight**

<https://www.projectsunlight.us/stories/402414/Ending-Child-Hunger-With-New-Leaders-and-New-Dreams.aspx>

Elijah King, 14-year-old leader of a new movement, was inspired at the age of five to help spread the message on ending child hunger in the United States.