## *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**

*The following are suggested classroom ideas and activities.*

**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 with the lesson plan from the USDA: <https://fns-prod.azureedge.net/sites/default/files/diginTG_lesson2.pdf>
* Cultures across the world celebrate their harvests through festivals. Individually or in groups, have students 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 learn about hunger, both in our nation and abroad. Individually or in groups ask them select a community struggling to feed its people and then develop a plan to help them.

**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 practice calculating the amount of fertilizer to use per liter or gallon of water.
* *Flowers: Graph & Graph Again*, activity for ages 5-13, <https://kidsgardening.wpengine.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/KG_MITG-FlowerGraph-1.pdf>. From the description: “This activity introduces basic statistical skills, recording, organizing, and evaluating data.” This is an excerpt activity from the book, [*Math in the Garden: Hands-On Activities That Bring Math to Life*,](https://smile.amazon.com/Math-Garden-Hands-Activities-Bring/dp/091587346X/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1530198424&sr=8-1&keywords=math+in+the+garden&dpID=31lH8J%252BkzkL&preST=_BO1,204,203,200_QL40_&dpSrc=srch)  by Jennifer M. White and Katharine D. Barrett 2006.

**Science/Technology:**

* 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>.

# Hydroponics for Kids: Build a 2 Liter Bottle Garden for your class,

<https://www.epicgardening.com/hydroponics-for-kids/>

* 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.
* Teach students about the parts of a flower and the purpose for each part. There are many free lesson plans available for this online but most require that you sign up for their website in order to download the lesson plan.

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

* Teach students about worms and the important role they play in gardening and soil. This website, <http://soil4youth.soilweb.ca/>, has resources for this. The entire student activity lesson plan booklet is free to download here, <http://soil4youth.soilweb.ca/wp-content/uploads/sites/11/2011/06/soil-school-activities-nov27-dy.pdf>. Pages 12-13 teach students how to create a worm farm for the classroom and complete an observational lab examining the worm farm.
* Students will explore hydroponic gardening. These optional activities to set up hydroponic gardening in your class teach students about different methods of growing and the importance of water. This web page, <http://info.zipgrow.com/educators-packet>, has three downloadable lesson plans: Population Growth and Current Farming, Hydroponic System Assembly, and Seed Starting. You must sign up for their website to receive the free lesson plans. Here is an additional article about teaching hydroponic gardening in the classroom, <http://www.zipgrow.com/teaching-hydroponics-in-the-classroom/>.

**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/>

**Just for Fun:**

* Make individual dirt cakes with Oreos and gummy worms. This is one of many recipes for dirt cake, <http://www.kraftrecipes.com/recipes/dirt-cups-57763.aspx>.

**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?

9. What is something new you learned from this book?

**RELATED WEB SITES**

**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.

**Kids Gardening**

<https://kidsgardening.org/>

This engaging website has many resources for educators including lesson plans, webinars and suggested activates to get students excited about and engaged in gardening.

**My Plate Toolkit**

<https://www.choosemyplate.gov/myplate-mystate-toolkit-teachers>

This site provides resources for educators on topics including food, nutrition, farming, farmers markets, agriculture, etc. They have free lesson plans and activities to engage students in the topics.

**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.

**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.