



Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills 8th Edition

Benchmark

Grade 7

Student Materials

End of Year

Prize Winning Vegetables

My great-uncle Bradford and my great-aunt Marianne lived in a tin-roofed cabin on the sunny side of a steep hill. Throughout the county, they were renowned for the prize-winning vegetables their garden patch produced. One year, they grew a pumpkin as large as a five-year-old child is tall. Every spring, the neighbors came to beg for some of their tomato seeds, but, even using their seeds, no one grew tomatoes as deeply red and juicy as my great-aunt and uncle did.

Some said it was luck that accounted for their success. Some swore Bradford was spraying his plants with some secret chemical formula. Bradford said it was his fiddle-playing on moonlit nights that caused the garden to flourish. Marianne always said, with a mysterious smile, "You just have to know how."

One summer, at the end of August, when Bradford and Marianne were out in the garden with their harvesting baskets, Marianne discovered an enormous zucchini hiding under some leaves. It was much too large to fit in her basket. It was already bigger than a newborn baby. Well, let's just see how big it gets, Marianne said to herself.

A week later, when they went to check on the zucchini, it was the size of a year-old piglet. Bradford wanted to bring it in, but Marianne convinced him to leave it on the vine just a little bit longer.

The following week, it was the size of a young calf. Then, it was the size of the calf's cud-chewing mother.

Finally, in October, they decided to pick it before the frost came. By then, it was the size of a recreational vehicle. Its growth had already knocked down the garden fence, and it was starting to threaten the side of the house.

It took an axe to chop the stem, and two men on a cross-cut saw to slice the gigantic vegetable into manageable pieces. Marianne cut some pieces into slivers, which she put up in a pickle brine, and some other chunks she put into a wood chipper and used the pulp for zucchini bread.

Here's my theory: the garden sits on a spot where an asteroid fell to earth, and the vegetables are nourished by extraterrestrial minerals.