

# Farmer Will Allen and the Growing Table

BY JACQUELINE BRIGGS MARTIN



## MATERIALS & RESOURCES:

- [Copies of the Title](#) for the student in the group
- [Farmer Will Allen and the Growing Table: Student Guide printable](#)
- Students will need to access the internet for web articles and video links
- [Brownfield Land Facts for Kids](#) - article for students
- [Lasagna Gardening](#) - article for students
- [Milwaukee Greenhouses Remain Full of Life After Growing Power Disbands](#) - article for students

## SUMMARY AND DETAILS

Growing up in Maryland, Will Allen hated farming! After a career in professional basketball and working in a “white shirt job,” Will turned his attention to helping a Milwaukee community learn to grow their own food when he rediscovered a passion for working in the dirt. This book will inspire children and teachers to look at every pot or plot of dirt as a place to grow something.

**Grade Level:** 3rd-5th

**Lexile Level:** AD63OL

**Guided Reading Level:** T

**Genre:** Nonfiction

## HOW TO IMPLEMENT THE HIGH FLIERS BOOK CLUB

- Determine if this book is the correct reading level for the students by **Lexile Level** or **Guided Reading Level**.
- Create a schedule with the students for assignments, including how many pages need to be completed along with the questions in the Student Guide at each book club meeting.
- Make a plan of how students will make up the work if they miss an assignment.
- All content can be assigned digitally through LMS.
- The educator should read the **Afterword by Will Allen** at the end of the book prior to starting the lesson for optional call-to-action steps for students.
- The Student Guide will provide opportunities for students to compare and contrast this book with [Our School Garden](#) by Rick Swann. The students should have already read [Our School Garden](#) prior to this lesson.

The High Fliers Book Club - Farmer Allen and the Growing Table

**ELA COMMON CORE**

**WRITING STANDARDS FOR INFORMATIONAL TEXT**

3<sup>rd</sup> Grade: [RI.3.1](#), [RI.3.3](#), [RI.3.6](#), [RI.3.7](#), [RI.3.9](#), [W.3.2](#), [W.3.7](#), [W.3.8](#)

4<sup>th</sup> Grade: [RI.4.2](#), [RI.4.3](#), [RI.4.6](#), [RI.4.7](#), [RI.4.9](#), [W.4.2](#), [W.4.7](#), [W.4.8](#), [W.4.9](#)

5<sup>th</sup> Grade: [RI.5.1](#), [RI.5.3](#), [RI.5.6](#), [RI.5.7](#), [RI.5.8](#), [RI.5.9](#), [W.5.2](#), [W.5.7](#), [W.5.8](#), [W.5.9](#)



Name: \_\_\_\_\_

High Fliers Book Club Student Guide

# Farmer Will Allen and the Growing Table

by Jacqueline Briggs Martin

*Farmer Will Allen* -- The author has written the words “he can see what others can’t see,” in a different color and font size than the rest of the text on this page. What do you think the author wants the reader to understand about this statement?

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*The Kitchen Table* -- Will’s family always had good food on the table and friends over to share. But his family also did not have a car or a TV. What do these two pieces of information tell you about his family?

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*A New Kind of Farm* -- Will Allen worked a “white-shirt job,” after his time in professional basketball. Go back to the page where he is playing basketball and reread what he did **before** he played basketball. With that information, describe what a “white-shirt job.” might be.

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*A New Kind of Farm* -- From Will Allen’s point of view, “he’d seen that fresh vegetables were as scarce in the city as trout in the desert.” This is a type of figurative language called a **simile**, where two things are compared using the words like or as. What two things are being compared and what does this statement mean?

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*A New Kind of Farm* -- Will Allen could “see kids, who’d never eaten a ripe tomato, never crunched a raw green bean, sitting at his table, eating his vegetables.” Refer back to the book *Our School Garden* and how Micheal and his friends feel about eating foods they grew in their garden. Do you think that Will Allen was correct that kids would want to join him at his table? What is the evidence to support your opinion?

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*The Dirty Soil* -- Read this article from Kiddle called [Brownfield Land Facts for Kids](#). What do you think caused Will Allen’s “dirty” soil based on this information?

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*The Dirty Soil* -- Farmer Will Allen uses a method of gardening called “lasagna gardening,” also known as sheet composting, to help clean his brownfield. Use the diagram in this article from the Clemson Cooperative Extension Home and Garden Information Center called [Lasagna Gardening](#) to explain how this method would be an easy way to start a garden for kids

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*Red Wiggler Worms* -- Reread *Pill Bugs* and the informational text from the next page about how the woodlouse helps the garden from the book, *Our School Garden*. Using clues from *Our School Garden*, what do you think Will Allen means when he says “worm magic is what makes his farm grow.”? What is the worm’s magic?

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*Making a Bigger Table: Growing Power* -- How did Will Allen solve the problem of not having enough space on the ground to grow all of the foods that he wanted to grow?

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*Making a Bigger Table: Growing Power* -- Farmer Will Allen added lots of animals to his city farm including bees. How can bees help a farm that grows fruits and vegetables?

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*Finding Farmers* -- Farmer Will Allen and his helpers grew and sold the fresh foods that he had once said was “as scarce in the city as trout in the desert.” How did Will Allen and his crew change the community?

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*Will and the Fifty Million* -- Use your own words to describe what Farmer Will Allen saw that others could not see.

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*Afterword* -- Could you and your classmates do any of Farmer Will Allen's suggestions from his letter? What and how?

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Farmer Will Allen did a lot of important work for his community and helped people learn a lot about farming. Unfortunately, his non-profit organization was disbanded after 25 years. The work that his farmers did will still be a part of the Milwaukee community for years to come and some of his original greenhouses are still thriving!

This book, *Farmer Will Allen and the Growing Table* is called a first-hand account of the story of his efforts for the growing table. Read this article called [Milwaukee Greenhouses Remain Full of Life After Growing Power Disbands](#). This article is called a second-hand account of the events of Farmer Will Allen's efforts.

What were the important things that you learned about in the book? What were the important things that you learned in the article? What was the same in each? What was different?

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