OVERVIEW

ABOUT THE BOOK

Kadir Nelson, acclaimed author of *Baby Bear* and winner of the Caldecott Honor and the Coretta Scott King Author and Illustrator Awards, presents a resonant, gently humorous story about the power of even the smallest acts and the rewards of compassion and generosity. With spare text and breathtaking oil paintings, *If You Plant a Seed* demonstrates not only the process of planting and growing for young children but also how a seed of kindness can bear sweet fruit.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR/ILLUSTRATOR

Kadir Nelson won the 2012 Coretta Scott King Author Award and Illustrator Honor for *Heart and Soul: The Story of America and African Americans*. He received Caldecott Honors for *Henry’s Freedom Box* by Ellen Levine and *Moses: When Harriet Tubman Led Her People to Freedom* by Carole Boston Weatherford, for which he also garnered a Coretta Scott King Illustrator Award and won an NAACP Image Award. *Ellington Was Not a Street* by Ntozake Shange won a Coretta Scott King Illustrator Award. Nelson’s authorial debut, *We Are the Ship*, was a *New York Times* bestseller, a Coretta Scott King Author Award winner, and a Coretta Scott King Illustrator Honor book. He is also the author and illustrator of the acclaimed *Baby Bear*.

THE READ ALOUD

BEFORE READING

Use these prompts before reading the story to help students activate background knowledge and make predictions:

- (cover) Let’s look at the cover and see what we can find. (title, illustration, author/illustrator, rabbit, mouse, birds, plant)
- What do you think will happen in this story?

DURING THE STORY

Use these prompts while reading the story to help students interpret the action and content:

- (title page) How is the title page the same as the cover? How is it different?
- (p. 2) What do you think the sticks are for?
- (pp. 3-4) It looks to me like the rabbit and mouse are waiting. How does the author/illustrator let us know they are waiting? What do you think they are waiting for?
- (pp. 5-6) Which plant is the carrot? Tomato? Cabbage?
• (pp. 9-10) Did you know the birds were coming? Let’s look back at the previous page to look for clues.
• (pp. 11-12) The birds seem to be looking at you and me. I wonder what they want.
• (p. 13) What does “selfish” mean? Who do you think is being selfish? What is he doing that gives us a clue?
• (pp. 15-16) Oh no! What’s happening?
• (pp. 19-20) How is the mouse being kind?
• (pp. 23-24) How are the birds being kind?
• (pp. 27-28) Wow! Look at how things have grown!
• (pp. 29-30) It looks like rabbit and mouse have some new friends. What animals are they? What are they all eating?

AFTER READING

Use these prompts after reading the story to help students understand what they just read:

• What do you like best about this story/book?

BRINGING THE BOOK TO LIFE!

• Who has a garden at home? What is planted in it?

COOPERATIVE LEARNING

• Turn to your neighbor and talk about what vegetables you like to eat. Who wants to share with the class?

SMALL-GROUP IDEAS

1. DISCUSSION ACTIVITY

• Let’s take a picture walk through the book and retell the story in our own words.
• (pp. 25-26) Do these illustrations look familiar? Remember when the rabbit and mouse were waiting for the seeds to sprout into plants? (*Reader: look back at the illustrations on pp. 3-4*)
• (pp. 27-28) How many plants can you recognize?
• This is a story about what happens when we choose to be kind instead of selfish. What other ways, besides the ways shown in the story, can we be kind?

Suggested Optional Activity:

• Students create vegetables using colored paper and scissors. On each vegetable, they write a kindness. Tape the vegetables to a wall, bulletin board, or create a special display (a tree, a heart, etc.) onto which the kindnesses can be added.

2. WRITING ACTIVITY

• Make a list of 3-5 ways to be kind. Write one sentence for each, showing what that looks like to you (e.g. kindness means helping a friend; being kind means I share toys with my brother/sister; etc.)

3. EXTENSION ACTIVITY

• Find a sunny place in the classroom and plant seeds that germinate quickly (check seed packets). Using Styrofoam cups or recycled yogurt containers, add soil, then seeds, then water. Have students water regularly. Once seeds germinate, students can take them home to plant in a special place, or let them grow in their container.

COMMON CORE LINKS

RL. K.2, K.3, K.4, K.5, K.6, K.10