

Reading Comprehension Worksheet: Academic Vocabulary

Read the short story and answer each question.



The Paper Garden

Milo lived in a crumbling apartment tower where nothing green ever grew. The walls were gray, the sidewalks cracked, and the sky always looked like wet newspaper.

But Milo had a secret. In his closet, under stacks of old notebooks, lived a garden—one he made from paper. Each flower was carefully folded, painted, and given a name. He called it his *Paper Garden*.

Milo's paper roses weren't just decorations. "They bloom with my thoughts," he whispered. When he felt joy, a sunflower's petals brightened. When he was sad, the lilies wilted slightly at the edges.

One day, a girl named Juno moved in next door. She was loud, bold, and curious. When she found his paper garden, she gasped. "This is magic."

Milo hesitated, then said, "It listens to how I feel."

Juno asked if she could help. Together, they folded and painted for hours. As they laughed, the garden grew taller, brighter—*alive*.

Later that week, their hallway neighbors found tiny paper daisies tucked in their mailboxes. Some smiled for the first time in weeks.

The Paper Garden didn't change the world. But it colored a little corner of it—and that was enough.



Name: _____

The Paper Garden

1. What does the phrase "the sky always looked like wet newspaper" suggest about Milo's world?

- A. The weather was always dark and dull.
- B. The air was filled with floating papers.
- C. There were newspapers hanging in the sky.
- D. The weather was bright and cheerful.

2. What happens when Milo and Juno work on the paper garden together?

- A. The flowers become real and grow outside.
- B. The garden responds to their shared joy and becomes more vibrant.
- C. They get in trouble for wasting paper.
- D. The garden shrinks and loses its color.

3. Fill in the blank:

Milo's paper garden changed based on his _____.

4. How does the author use figurative language to describe Milo's feelings and his environment?

5. What does the paper garden symbolize in this story, and how does it affect the people around Milo?



Parent and Teacher Guide

Guide Reading Level: T

Lexile Level: 900L-105L

Grade Level: 5th Grade, Beginning of the Year

Genre: Contemporary Fantasy

Introducing the Text

“Today’s story uses creative figurative language to show how a boy expresses his emotions through a paper garden. As you read, notice how the author describes the setting and the paper flowers to reflect Milo’s feelings and growth.”

Vocabulary: crumbling, wilted, folded, vibrant, symbolize

Before Reading Discussion Questions

1. What do you picture when you hear the phrase “paper garden”?
 2. Have you ever created something with your hands that felt meaningful?
 3. What does it mean when people say a story uses “figurative language”?
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During Reading Discussion Questions

1. How does Milo’s environment reflect how he feels inside?
 2. What does Milo mean when he says the flowers “bloom with my thoughts”?
 3. How does Juno’s arrival affect the garden and Milo?
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After Reading Discussion Questions

1. How does the author use metaphors or similes to bring emotion to the story?
 2. What might the paper garden represent in Milo’s life?
 3. Why do you think the paper daisies made the neighbors smile?
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Activity Idea

Have students create their own mini “paper garden” by writing a figurative phrase about their emotions and drawing or folding a flower that represents that feeling. Display them as a class mural of expression and metaphor.

