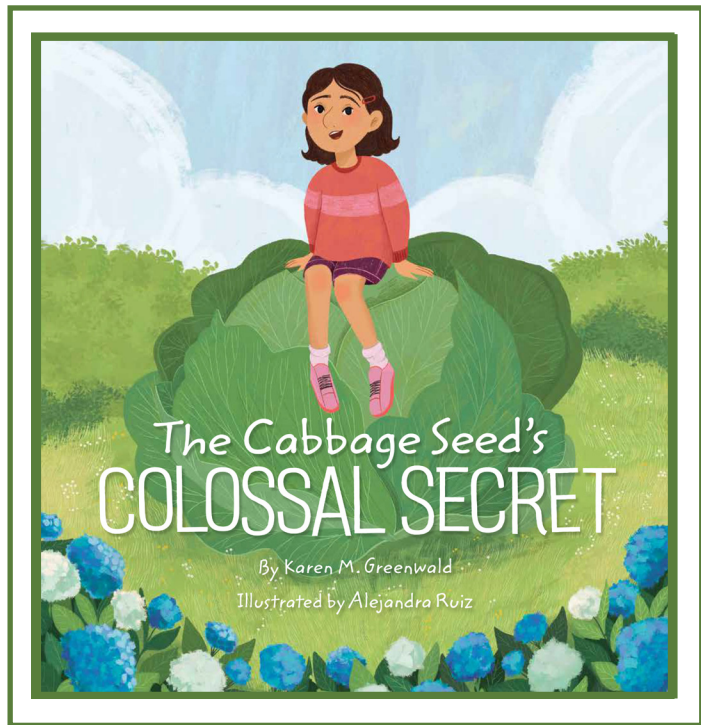

Educator's Guide

The lessons in this guide are designed to use in conjunction with reading *The Cabbage Seed's Colossal Secret* by Karen M. Greenwald, Illustrated by Alejandra Ruiz. Guide created by A CLOSER Read. Lessons may be modified to suit your students' needs.



About the Book

A child plants a tiny seed and wonders what secrets it might hold... As it grows and grows and grows, she nurtures the little plant until it isn't so little anymore—in fact, it's COLOSSAL. What does one do with a colossal cabbage? The girl dreams that the cabbage feeds a soup kitchen full of neighbors, inspiring her to grow more veggies to share with her community, and inspiring kids and families all over the country to grow veggies to share with their own communities. And when she wakes up, she is ready to let the world in on the cabbage's colossal secret.

Inspired by the true story of Katie Stagliano, her forty-pound cabbage, and the nonprofit Katie's Krops.

About the Author

Karen M. Greenwald is an award-winning children's author with experience in international law, government, brand creation, and message strategy. Her debut book, *A VOTE FOR SUSANNA, THE FIRST WOMAN MAYOR*, was named a Kansas Notable Book (2022). The state also chose it to represent Kansas at both the Library of Congress National Book Festival, and in the Library of Congress Center for the Book Great Reads from Great Places initiative—a permanent honor on their website.

In 2024, *THE MUD ANGELS: HOW STUDENTS SAVED THE CITY OF FLORENCE* launched to an international audience. It has received high praise in print and digital formats, from Italian publications to the American Library Association's Booklist. The book has been featured in domestic and international magazines, by conservation-focused organizations, and in the Tuscan news.










THE CABBAGE SEED'S COLOSSAL SECRET launched on National Cabbage Day, aka February 17, 2026. Ms. Greenwald holds at least two “new book” drives annually to get unused books into under-resourced schools and rural libraries.

Professionally, her strategic branding efforts have earned 19 international awards, including a 2024 Best in Category for Educational Marketing and a Silver international MEA. Ms. Greenwald is a Phi Beta Kappa graduate of Georgetown University and holds her JD from Georgetown's Law Center. For more information, visit: www.karengreenwald.com. Please address requests to her agent Liza Fleissig at pr@lizaroyce.com.

About the Illustrator

Stories have always been a window to the world for Alejandra Ruiz. They've helped her build empathy and construct imaginary worlds to escape to when things felt too much. She illustrates stories hoping to build empathy and to help children find the infinite love for reading. Ruiz lives in Bogotá, Colombia with her boyfriend Alejandro, two cats: Cuzco and Raya, dog Dona and a whole lot of plants. When she's not working you can find her reading, cooking or baking bread. For more information visit www.alejandraruizilustracion.com.

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Before Reading



Look at the cover and discuss the title. Ask students if they know what the word colossal means. Explain that it means “extremely large.” Make a list of synonyms for colossal (giant, mammoth, huge, etc.). Ask students to name something colossal. Based on that knowledge and the cover illustration, can students figure out what the cabbage seed’s colossal secret might be? Ask students to think about what they would do if they grew a colossal cabbage (or other vegetable).

Compare and Contrast

After reading *The Cabbage Seed’s Colossal Secret*, read *If You Give a Mouse a Cookie* by Laura Joffe Numeroff and Felicia Bond. Discuss how the stories have a similar if/then structure. It might help to list out all the actions and their consequences for students to see. e.g.

If	Then
Katie is given a seed.	She wants to plant it in her garden.
Katie waters and cares for the seed.	The seed turns into a plant.
The leaves reach for the sun.	More space is made for new leaves.

Challenge students to create their own if/then stories using this same structure. If students need help with inspiration, try one of these ideas:

- 🌱 Have students imagine how the story might be different if, instead of a human child receiving the seed, an animal like a bird or squirrel gets it. What would happen?
- 🌱 Katie turns a seed into a feast for others. Give each student a different recyclable material (newspaper, soda can, cardboard box). Ask them to imagine how that piece of “trash” might benefit others. Write a story about it.
- 🌱 If someone was very hungry and that person got to eat a meal made with Katie’s cabbage, how might that change the person’s life? What might happen to the person next?

Creative Writing

- 🌱 Katie’s piano teacher thinks her cabbage looks like an alien. Ask students to brainstorm ideas of what the cabbage looks like to each of them. (It might help to bring in a head of cabbage to class for students to see.) Students can either write a simple sentence (“My cabbage looks like a frog.”) or more complex stories depending on their abilities.

Creative Writing

- 🌱 The Cabbage Seed's Colossal Secret is based on true events. Ask students to write a fiction story about a different seed's colossal secret. What secret might an imaginary seed keep?
- 🌱 After reading The Cabbage Seed's Colossal Secret, read The Bad Seed by Jory John and Pete Oswald. Have students write stories about what would happen if Katie's cabbage seed met the Bad Seed.

Poetry

There are many poems about planting seeds. Choose one or two to read to the class. Compare what happens in the poem to this story. Challenge students to write an original poem about Katie's cabbage seed.

Class Recipe Book

Katie uses her cabbage to create coleslaw for hungry people. Have students create simple recipes and write them down. You can use the recipe for coleslaw below and add more with the recipe card template on page 15. Assemble the recipes into a class book.

Class Recipe Book

Colossally Good Coleslaw

INGREDIENTS:

- One head green cabbage
- One head purple cabbage
- 2 medium carrots
- 1 cup mayonnaise
- 3 tbsp apple cider vinegar
- 2 tbsp sugar (or honey)
- ½ tsp salt
- ½ tsp pepper

DIRECTIONS:

- Finely shred both cabbages and carrots. (Alternatively, you can buy a bag of pre-shredded cabbage and carrot mix.)
- In a small bowl, mix together the mayonnaise, vinegar, sugar, salt and pepper.
- Add the dressing to the shredded vegetables. Toss and coat thoroughly.
- Coleslaw should be eaten right away or stored in an airtight container in a refrigerator.



Vegetable Research

Learn more about cabbage by doing research in the library or by interviewing a farmer.

- 🌱 How big do they typically grow?
- 🌱 What do they need to help them grow?
- 🌱 For what climate are they best suited?
- 🌱 What are the nutritional benefits of cabbage?
- 🌱 What kinds of animals eat cabbage?
- 🌱 Do they have any uses besides nutrition?
- 🌱 Can you find any fun facts about cabbages?

Create posters or reports to share your knowledge with others.

Alternatively, students could research a variety of vegetables, and you could share a garden of research reports.



Readers' Theater

Have students create a readers' theater script (format below) to perform the story. If students get comfortable with the script, encourage them to add actions as they read their lines. Note: You can adapt the script to fit the number of readers you have.



The Cabbage Seed's Colossal Secret





A Readers' Theater Adaptation

CAST:

Narrator 1	Katie
Narrator 2	Mom
Narrator 3	Dad
Narrator 4	Piano Teacher
Narrator 5	Hungry Person 1
Narrator 6	Hungry Person 2
Narrator 7	Hungry Person 3
Narrator 8	Hungry Person 4


Grow a Garden

As a class, plant your own seeds and watch them grow.

-  Fill a large Ziploc bag with wet cotton balls and a few vegetable seeds. Tape the bags to a window and watch as the seeds germinate. When they begin to sprout, transfer them to pots or recycled containers for further growth.
-  For a simple demonstration, soak lima beans overnight. Next place one bean in a 16oz jar or cup filled with potting soil. Place the jar in sunlight and keep soil moist. Within a few days you should see your seed sprout.
-  Use a variety of recycled materials (including eggshells) and start a class herb garden. Herbs are easy to grow and maintain.
-  Use 2-liter soda bottles to build your own terrarium. Have an adult cut off the top quarter of an empty soda bottle. Wash the bottle thoroughly. Fill 1/3 of the remaining bottle with soil and your choice of either seeds or a plant. Water then cover the top with cling film. Place your creation in good sunlight and watch as the terrarium simulates the water cycle and waters itself. Once your plant outgrows its space, replant outside or in a larger pot.

BONUS: Have the class make one of the recipes the students compiled and use the herbs that you have grown—a great way to highlight the “farm to table” concept.

BONUS: Make the plant the class mascot. Have students vote on a name. Anthromorphizing it will make them feel responsible for its upkeep and give them a sense of accomplishment.

-  If your school has a space, see about starting a school garden. Work together to keep the garden watered and free from weeds and bugs. Brainstorm ways you can use the food your class grows. If there isn't suitable outdoor space, turn your classroom into a garden and try growing a few indoor-thriving vegetables/fruit like bell peppers, leafy greens, and cherry tomatoes. In the right conditions, even carrots will grow!

Scatter Seeds

Create seed balls as a fun way to spread wildflower seeds. Seed balls work best in spring and fall, just before rain.

INGREDIENTS:

- 5 parts soil
- 2 parts non-toxic, natural powdered craft clay
- 1 part wildflower seeds
- Water
- Large mixing bowl
- Tablespoon
- Newspaper

DIRECTIONS:

- Mix your dry ingredients together in the mixing bowl.
- Slowly add water until you reach the consistency of cookie dough. If the dough gets too wet, just add more clay and soil to balance it out.
- Take a tablespoon of the mixture and roll it into a ball. Let the ball dry on the newspaper.
- Repeat until all the mixture has been used.
- The finished seed balls can be used right away or stored in an airtight container for a few months.

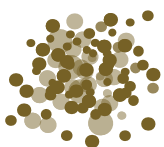


To use, toss one in an area you'd like to see wildflowers grow. Bare patches of soil and meadows work great. After a rainfall, the balls will break apart, and the seeds will scatter and (hopefully) grow.

Keep A Log

Katie does several things while her seed is growing. As a class, keep a log of the things that help plants grow (i.e. planting in good soil, watering frequently) and things that don't have an effect (i.e. dancing). You could also add a list of activities that would be harmful to plant growth (i.e. darkness, stomping on roots). Experiment by varying the amount of sunlight or water each plant gets. Watch what happens to your plants over the course of several days. Ask students to focus on how much water and sunlight each plant needs.

SOIL



WATER



SUN



TIME



Become Seed Experts

Bring in a variety of different fruit and vegetable seeds. Allow students to examine them.

- 🌱 Are they all the same?
- 🌱 What differences are noted?
- 🌱 Can you tell what plant each seed will produce? Some seeds (like peas) are easy to identify. Others are harder.

Give students pictures of the plants of each seed and see if they can correctly match each seed to its plant.

Alternatively, you could do this activity comparing plant leaves instead of seeds.

Forty Pounds of Fun

Katie's cabbage weighs 40 lbs. Use that knowledge to complete these activities.

Bring in a cabbage (from the supermarket or garden) and weigh it as a class. Fill in the data in the chart below.

Next find out the Guinness World Record for the largest cabbage ever grown. Have students record its weight in the chart as well.

Class Cabbage	Katie's Cabbage	World Record Cabbage
	40lbs	



CALCULATE THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN:

- 🌱 Katie's cabbage and the class cabbage
- 🌱 The World Record cabbage and Katie's cabbage
- 🌱 The World Record cabbage and the class cabbage
- 🌱 How many class cabbages would it take to make Katie's cabbage?
- 🌱 How many class cabbages would it take to equal the weight of the cabbage world record holder?

Have students find the weights of even more vegetables: carrot, potato, pumpkin and zucchini. (Substitute different ones if you like.) Record their weights and compare them to the World Record holders.

Vegetable	World Record Holder	Class Sample	Difference
Cabbage			
Carrot			
Potato			
Pumpkin			
Zucchini			

- 🌱 Calculate the difference between each pair.
- 🌱 How many of each vegetable would you need to equal the weight of the world record holder?
- 🌱 Create a bar graph to share your data.
- 🌱 When you're done, you might want to consider using your vegetables to make a pot of vegetable soup or as compost starter for your garden.

BONUS: Use a recipe from your class cookbook. Add in herbs, and vegetables or greens you've grown together.



Make A Difference

Read the book's back matter and discuss how Katie used her cabbage to benefit others in her community. Brainstorm ways you can make a difference in your own community. You can also consider one of the ideas listed below.

- 🌱 Grow vegetables, fruits, or flowers using one of the STEM ideas in this guide. Then donate what you grow to others.

Food banks can always use fresh produce.

Donate flowers or potted plants to nursing homes, retirement centers or hospitals.

Donate herbs to your school's cafeteria or create a lending library of herbs that families can use as needed.

BONUS: Create a "classroom-to-table" club, and use recipes from the class recipe book and ingredients from the class "gardens."



- 🌱 Make a class cookbook of healthy recipes. You can sell copies of your book to raise money for a food bank or give away copies to share health-conscious suggestions. Have students visit a lower grade and teach them how to help prepare the easiest of the recipes or start an herb garden in their class.
- 🌱 Contact your local food bank or soup kitchen and find out what they need. Perhaps you can help by collecting canned goods, making posters to put up in local stores (always ask first before posting), or volunteering in person.
- 🌱 Does hunger exist in your own school community? Talk to your school counselor about developing a weekend backpack program for kids who would benefit. Collect donated backpacks and healthy shelf-stable foods like apples, oranges, crackers, cereal and peanut butter. Assemble the backpacks so that kids can take them home on the weekends when they might need extra nutrition.

Cooking

Make your own coleslaw. Recipe card on page 4.

Create Cabbage Colors

Use a head of red cabbage to create different colors in this lesson that combines art and science.

SUPPLIES:

- Purple Cabbage
- Knife and Cutting Board
- Pot with Lid
- Water
- Slotted Spoon
- 4 Glass Containers
- White Vinegar
- Tablespoon
- Baking Soda



Did you know that red cabbage water is a natural pH indicator? You can use red cabbage water to test whether other liquids are acidic or alkaline. By adding an acid to the cabbage water, the color will change from purple to pink/red. By adding a base to the cabbage water, the color will change from purple to blue/green.

- 🌱 Chop a head of purple cabbage into 1-inch cubes. Add to a pot and fill with water until the cabbage is just covered.
- 🌱 Let the cabbage soak overnight (at least 8 hours). Then use a slotted spoon to remove leftover cabbage pieces. You should be left with a pot of deep purple water. (The cabbage pieces can be eaten or used for compost.)
- 🌱 Divide the water into four glass containers.
- 🌱 In the first container, add plain white vinegar (one tablespoon at a time) to change the color from purple to pink. (The color changes because the vinegar decreases the pH level of the cabbage water by making it more acidic.)
- 🌱 In the second container, add baking soda (one tablespoon at a time) to change the color from purple to blue. (The color changes because the baking soda increases the pH balance of the cabbage water and makes the solution more alkaline.) *Be sure to stop adding baking soda once you have a nice blue color.

- 🌿 In the third container, repeat the previous step by adding baking soda until you get a good blue hue, but this time continue to add even more baking soda until the color of the dye becomes green.
- 🌿 Leave the fourth container of purple dye untouched.
- 🌿 You can use your natural dyes in a variety of ways.
- 🌿 Twist squares of natural linen or cotton and tie together. Soak the fabric bundles in the dye of your choice to create a natural tie-dye design.
- 🌿 Use eyedroppers to explore using the dyes on linen paper or fabric. Have students make their own headbands, bandanas or bookmarks.
- 🌿 Color Easter eggs using these handmade dyes.
- 🌿 Dye small wooden blocks. When the blocks dry, students can play with them or use them to create a design or 3D collage.

Cabbage Costumes

People love to decorate pumpkins and turn them into jack-o-lanterns. Challenge students to create a costume for a cabbage.

Give each student a drawing of a cabbage like the one on page 14.

Using art supplies and their imaginations, students design costumes for their cabbages.

Are the cabbages dressing up for Halloween, a fancy party, or something else?



Planters and Pests

To play this game, you'll need a set of cones or beanbags.

Divide the class into two groups.

One group: the planters. Their goal is to "plant" the "seeds" (the cones or bean bags) in the open playing area.

The second group: the pests. Their goal is to take the "seeds" and carry them away to a bucket or circled off space in the middle of the playing field.

Set a timer. Until the alarm sounds, planters should continuously plant.

Likewise, the pests should continuously find and steal seeds. When the timer goes off, count how many plants are still standing.

Note: Planters and pests may only handle one seed at a time.

As a challenge, you may assign planters or pests a special activity to do while they play. For example, planters must hop on one foot. Pests must crab walk.

Trade roles and reset the timer. Which group of planters was most successful in keeping the garden growing?

Life Cycle of a a Plant Obstacle Course

Create an obstacle course for students that mimics the life cycle of a seed. While carrying a seed (it could be real or use a beanbag or small ball as a model), students should do the following:

Dig a hole: Have students crawl through a tunnel to simulate digging underground.

Reach for the sun: Students can either complete a set of jump ropes or jumping jacks to mimic reaching for the sun.

Grow far and wide: Students can either climb (a tree, rope or piece of playground equipment) or race across a distance to show how far and wide their plant might grow.

Spread new seeds: At some point, students should pass their seed to another student to demonstrate the continued lifecycle of plants.

Capture the Cabbage

Divide the group into two equal teams. Give each team a cabbage (tennis ball or green flag). Similar to Capture the Flag, teams should hide their cabbage in a designated area on their side of the playing field.

Both teams should choose players to be runners, guards and jailers. Runners go to the other side to steal the cabbage. Guards stay and guard their cabbage. Jailers catch runners who sneak over from the other side.

If a runner successfully steals the cabbage and crosses back to their own side, the game is over.

To make the game more challenging, give teams multiple cabbages to protect.

Class Recipe Book

RECIPE:

FROM:

INGREDIENTS:

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

DIRECTIONS:



Class Recipe Book

RECIPE:

FROM:

INGREDIENTS:

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

DIRECTIONS:

