Name: _____ Date: _____ Period: _____

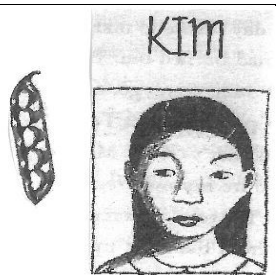
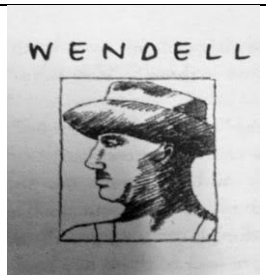
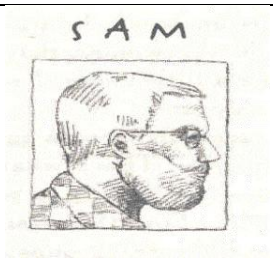
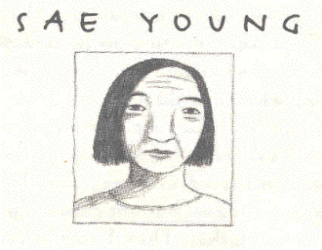
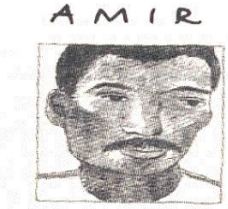
<u>SEEDFOLKS</u> READER'S THEATER SCRIPT COVER SHEET

Written by Mr. Christopher Maynard (mrmaynardreading.com)

Directions: At your table, choose roles. There are 12 roles so aim for each person to have 3-4 roles.

Read the script together. When done, write an SWBST summary of the script.

Cast of Characters

 _____	_____	 _____	_____
_____	 _____	_____	 _____
_____	_____	 _____	_____

The Gibb Street community garden wanted to _____,

but _____.

So _____.

Then _____.

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<u>SEEDFOLKS</u> READER'S THEATER SCRIPT

By: Chris Maynard (mrmaynardreading.com)

Narrator: On a cold Halloween afternoon in a poor section of Cleveland, Ohio, a group of diverse people, young and old, black and white, citizen and immigrant, gather in a haphazard lot. The setting is the Gibb Street Community Garden, which only six months ago was a vacant garbage pit filled with rusty refrigerators, frozen mice, and even an old couch. In the time since then, the lot has sprouted from a single lima bean seed into a vibrant, community garden that has not only brought pride to the neighborhood but broken down stereotypes and forged the unlikeliest of friendships.

As these 12 people stand and talk, they seem to know each other quite well. However, that was certainly not always the case, especially before they became the garden's seedfolks.

An old man named Sam emerges from the crowd and steps onto a wooden box that will serve as his podium.

Sam: *(clearing his voice)* Good afternoon everyone!

All: Hello!

Curtis: *(last but not least, in a macho voice)* What up, Sam?

***Sam*:** It is a great to see so many familiar faces as we get ready to close the Gibb Street Community Garden for the winter season.

Leona: Say it isn't so, Sam my man.

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Sam: Unfortunately, it is so Leona. It is certainly a bittersweet day here after all of the hard work that you have put into the garden this spring and summer.

Curtis: *(sounding brash and confident)* You ain't kiddin'. I almost broke a sweat preventing that blight from destroying my Lateesha's tomatoes this summer. Not much can stop me or these biceps, but those tomatoes nearly did. However, they did win me back Lateesha.

Virgil: *(trying to impress the older Curtis)* For certain 'Ceps. My dad had me working from sunrise to sunset trying to grow those baby lettuce seeds. What a terrible idea that was. Speaking of the devil, there goes my dad down the street.

Narrator: A man in a yellow cab passes by, beeping his horn and waving out the window to the crowd.

Wendell**:** Nice to see you Mr. Virgil. Good luck today in that Cleveland traffic.

Narrator: Suddenly preoccupied, Mr. Virgil briefly nods before slamming on his horn at a car in front of him.

Nora: Well, I guess the community garden hasn't solved all of Cleveland's problems, especially rush-hour traffic.

Florence: Or Mr. Virgil's lead foot.

Virgil**:** What's a lead foot?

(The adults in the group – Leona, Sam, Florence, Amir and Nora – laugh)

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Narrator: Sam refocuses everyone's attention.

Sam: Let's get down to the reason we're all here. I've been a community organizer for my entire adult life, and never in my 60 years of service have I seen a neighborhood come together like this garden has done for Gibb Street. Give yourselves a round of applause.

(The group claps)

Sam**:** I wanted to thank you all for what you have done for the garden and this neighborhood this summer. We wouldn't be here if it wasn't for one courageous 10-year-old girl who got this all started. Kim, can you say a few words?

Gonzalo**:** *(interrupting)* Let me do it for her. A. Few. Words.

Gonzalo bangs on a nearby drum to signal his punch line.

Ana*: (annoyed)* Show some respect boys, especially towards a lady. Come on Kim, don't be shy.

Narrator**:** Kim, a reluctant girl, emerges from the crowd.

Kim: Um, I really…don't…know…what…to…say.

Sae Young: *(an English Language Learner)* Speak from heart. Tell truth. Be proud. Honor father.

Kim: Well, I never knew my father. He died before I was born.

Leona: You poor thing. Please go on.

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Kim: Back in April, my family was commemorating his death. My mother and sister were crying because they knew him. I was crying too, but felt really weird about it. I wondered, “Did my father even know me?”

Ana: He has always known you child. In fact, he is with you right now.

Leona: Your father’s spirit lives in your wonderful actions.

Amir*:* You have certainly made your father proud. We are all proud of you.

Kim: I am not sure about all that. At the time, the only thing I knew was that I wanted to know my father better. He grew lima bean seeds in Vietnam.

Gonzalo**:** Just like my Tio Juan grew crops in Guatemala.

Kim: As silly as this sounds, I decided to plant some lima bean seeds in this dirty lot to honor my father. It was something I learned in science class.

Virgil**:** It’s about time school taught us something cool.

Gonzalo: No kidding, brother. Wait until you take algebra class with Mr. Smoltz in eighth grade. B-O-R-I-N-G!

Sam: Okay boys. Continue Kim.

Kim: Well, there’s not much else to say. I vowed my father would know me, and that the garden would thrive. I came back for the first four days but forgot to check in the next couple of days.

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***Wendell*:** And that's when I scared the daylights out of you.

***Narrator*:** Kim nods and hangs her head.

***Curtis**:* She couldn't have been as scared as that guy who stole from my tomatoes. Or that guy who stole that woman's purse. Royce, Amir and I chased him all the way down until the cops came.

Amir: I don't know what came over me. I am usually not so brave.

Curtis: Maybe I should become a cop. I've got the body for it.

***Leona*:** Curtis, you certainly don't lack for confidence. Lateesha must have the patience of Mother Theresa. Tell us more Wendell.

Wendell: I remember getting the phone call from my neighbor below me, Ana. She said something about the plants dying. I thought she was crazy.

Ana: Trust me, I've been called much worse things in the half-century my family has lived on Gibb Street. This neighborhood has really changed for the worse. But I digress. Tell them more Wendell, just not everything, if you know what I mean.

Wendell: I know what you mean. I went to the garden and saw that the seeds weren't doing well. Luckily, the sun had been shining on that old refrigerator, which was reflecting heat onto the seeds.

Virgil: Here we go again. Another science lesson.

Wendell: I quickly formed a ring of dirt and poured water onto the seeds. The ring would hold the water. That's when I heard someone behind me.

Kim: I tried to be silent. But I must have flinched. I thought you were destroying the seeds.

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Wendell: Nope. I was protecting them. What had first seemed like an order or chore from Ana had a surprising effect on me. I soon took to those seeds as if they were my own family.

Narrator: There is a moment of silence.

Florence: Wendell, please tell everyone about your family.

Ana: Only if you want to.

Wendell: (sighing) There's no use keeping my feelings bottled inside. It's been a rough couple of years for me. I lost my wife and son in separate accidents.

Sam: I am very sorry to hear that.

Gonzalo: I never knew that Wendell. I thought I would have heard that at my school since you work there as a custodian.

Wendell: That's okay Virgil. I keep it pretty private.

Sae Young: I lose husband. He die of heart attack. My life sad before garden.

Wendell: I know how you feel Sae Young. Before the garden, I felt like I had nothing to live for. Strangely, the garden brought me back to life. For once, it was something I could control. I'll be honest. It has felt great being in control of my life again.

Nora: The garden has given all of us something to control. Think of my patient, Mr. Myles. Before the garden, he was just a terminally ill man living out the rest of the life. The garden brought him back in time. This

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summer he was able to get outside, plant and live again. He was a salmon traveling upstream to his youth.

Gonzalo: Or my Tio Juan. He doesn't speak English. He went from a grown man to a baby when coming to America. He used to garden back in his home country. Our garden got him out of our apartment. Soon he was showing people how to grow things. All of a sudden, he went from a baby back to a man.

Sae Young: Garden became my new home. Before garden I stay home. Right after husband died. And robbery at store. Now garden is my family.

Sam: You are right Sae Young. The garden is a family. Thanks again for donating all of those funnels so that we could water the plants from the garbage cans. That was a brilliant idea.

Florence: Speaking of brilliant ideas, don't leave out our sassy Leona. She is like the garden's mother. If it wasn't for her, this garden would have never been cleaned.

Leona: I was just doing what I learned from my feisty grandmother. I was truly inspired when walking down the street and first seeing this garden. People working together rather than fighting. In this neighborhood? What a concept! Anyways, I was mad that the city wouldn't pick up any of the trash. I knew I had to **LITERALLY** take things into my own hands.

Curtis: Watch out Cleveland Health Department. Here comes Leona. She's big, bad, tough, and she isn't going to take "No" for an answer.

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Leona: I kept calling the city to come clean up the garden. They kept putting me on hold. It must be because we're from the poor part of the city. To them, I was just another voice. I had to be seen.

Sam: I am not sure that I agree with what you did next, Leona, but I will admit that it certainly worked.

Virgil: Oh, this next part is awesome. Have you heard this Gonzalo?

(Gonzalo rolls his eyes at the younger Virgil.)

Leona: Not that I would advise Virgil or any of the other youngsters to do this, but here's what I did. I decided to visit the Health Department. I could have gone all by myself, but that wouldn't have worked.

Florence: You could have brought us with.

Curtis: Nah! That wouldn't have worked. We are not important to them.

Amir: We are now, thanks to Leona.

***Leona*:** I wondered, "How can I get them to pay attention?" Then it hit me. I'll bring something, rather than someone, with me.

Gonzalo: *(Now excited)* Oh yeah! This is the best part of the story.

Leona: I bagged up some of the trash from the lot and brought it down to the Health Department. When that dolled-up receptionist got a whiff of that garbage, I suddenly had everyone's attention. Within minutes, I was in a meeting with the most important sanitation people from the city.

Wendell: It's funny how the city came and cleaned the garden the garden the next day.

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***Sam*:** And every Tuesday from then on.

Leona: Isn't it ironic, don't you think?

(Everyone laughs)

Amir: Isn't that the amazing thing about this little garden? It has given us all a voice. And it's allowed us to move past our stereotypes of each other and get to know each other. We are no longer a million crabs living in a million different crevices.

Curtis: That's kind of lame but kind of cool. Think of my homeboy Royce. I wish he was here today.

Gonzalo: Yeah, where has Royce been lately?

Wendell: Well, Curtis and Gonzalo, I am proud to say that Royce just started his new job as a custodian at my school. I would have never recommended him for that job, that is, until I got to know him and see how hard he worked this summer.

Amir: Before we got to know Royce, everyone was scared of him. We didn't know about his difficult past. That he slept in the garden. And now think about how we view him.

***Leona*:** He's like a son to me.

Florence: And me.

Ana: And a grandson to me.

***Sam*:** Royce is another member of the Gibb Street family.

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Narrator: The group silently thinks about all the good that has come from the garden. Quietly, Ana starts to speak up. Something is clearly bothering her.

Ana: I want to thank everyone for all that they've done to make this garden so special. I hate to ruin the good feelings, but I need to come clean about something that I've felt guilty about for the longest time. Families should tell each other everything, whether it's good or bad.

Wendell: I think I know what you're going to talk about. Please listen closely everyone.

Ana: Kim, I need to confess. When I first saw you burying something in the lot, I thought you were doing something illegal. My suspicion got the best of me. I dug up your spot and found the lima bean seeds. I was horrified by my action. I called Wendell for his help. I am so sorry that I judged you. I should have known better.

Kim: Oh my goodness! I didn't know. It is okay Ana. I forgive you.

Sam: Just like the Bible verse said, "And a child shall lead them." Thanks for your honesty, Ana, and your forgiveness, Kim. And thanks to all of you for making this garden yours, mine and all of ours. I will never forget this magical summer and my new family.

Narrator: As the sun is starting to set and the autumn air is getting colder, the group realizes that it is nearly time to leave. With that in mind, Florence gets everyone's attention.

Florenc*e:* Before we all go, I wanted to say something real quick. When I was a kid, my parents told me about my great grandparents, who were

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the first African Americans to live in their county. My parents called my great grandparents our “seedfolks.”

Virgil: *(confused)* I don’t get it. What do you mean, Florence?

Wendell: Listen and learn, grasshopper.

Curtis*:* Don’t talk about grasshoppers, or crickets, or spiders. Those things are always getting up on Lateesha’s tomatoes. They’ve been causing me migraines all summer long.

Sam: Florence, you were saying.

Florence: Like my great-grandparents, we are the seedfolks of this community garden. We are the first to settle here and transform this lot into a garden that has brought some much-needed relief to this neighborhood. We should take pride in our accomplishments and make sure that the garden returns next year.

Kim: *(suddenly confident)* Let’s make a vow to return next year.

Virgil: I’ve got a great idea, much better than my dad’s idea of growing baby lettuce in the summer. Why don’t we all pick one thing that we’ve grown and place it into this basket as a promise to return next spring?

Gonzalo: That’s cool! They will be like our signatures agreeing that we will come back and do this all over again.

Sam: Like I’ve always said, when you need a creative idea, find a kid. They always have the best ideas.

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Narrator: The group agrees with Virgil and Gonzalo, and scatters around the garden. They soon return with different fruits, vegetables and plants in their hands.

Sam: Would anyone like to start?

***Narrator*:** Never shy, Leona volunteers.

Leona: I will. I, Leona, place one piece of goldenrod (it was always my grandma's favorite) into the basket as a symbol of my commitment to the Gibb Street Garden.

Curtis: I, Curtis, pledge that I will come back by giving up one of Lateesha's tomatoes. Just don't tell Lateesha. She loves these things.

Nora: I, Nora, place a hollyhock in the basket for Mr. Myles, who will hopefully still be around to garden next summer.

Amir: I, Amir, donate a squash to show that I will be back in the spring.

Sae Young: I give hot pepper.

Gonzalo: A hot pepper for a hot summer.

Virgil: *(Embarrassed)* Here's a piece of what's left from our baby lettuce. My dad and I will plant it much earlier next year. Maybe we will get rich quick after all, and I can finally get that 18-speed bike? Who I am kidding?

Narrator: The remaining members of the group place an item into the container, until Kim is the last person remaining.

Kim: I, Kim, honor my late father and the Gibb Street Community Garden with this fully-grown lima bean. Father, I hope you have gotten to know a

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little about the daughter you never met. I will be back in April, with lima bean seeds in hand, on the 10th anniversary of your death.

(Everyone claps)

All: We, all, will be back in April. See you then.

Narrator: One by one, the seedfolks of the Gibb Street Community Garden say their goodbyes, wish each other their best and make plans to return in the spring. Leaving, they are certainly sad that the garden is coming to a temporary end but even more hopeful about the new possibilities, relationships and discoveries that it will bring in the spring.

THE END

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