

RECURSO GRATIS • NIVEL PRINCIPIANTE

# El jardín de la señora Ruiz

A B1 story about neighborhood change, living memory, and finding a future for the places that hold our past.

MEMORY

CHANGE

ROOTS

APRENDE GRATIS EN [EZINGLES.COM](https://ezingles.com)

## ANTES DE LEER

# Prepare to read

When an apartment project threatens Mrs. Ruiz's garden, a neighbor tries to preserve it. He soon learns that saving a place does not always mean keeping it unchanged.

## Think before you read

What can a garden, building, or neighborhood preserve besides physical objects?

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## Reading goal

Notice descriptive vocabulary for gardens, memory, and development. Compare different ideas about what preservation means.

## THE STORY · PART 1

# A notice on the fence

Mrs. Ruiz's garden occupied an empty lot between two apartment buildings. No map gave it a name, but everyone in the neighborhood knew where it was.

Tall sunflowers leaned over the **fence**. Tomatoes climbed wooden frames, and narrow paths curved around herbs from Mexico, Guatemala, and the Caribbean.

Mateo had visited since childhood. Mrs. Ruiz taught him to rub mint between his fingers and recognize when a peach was ripe without squeezing it.

One April morning, he found a development **notice** attached to the gate. The landowner planned to build twelve apartments on the lot.

Mateo photographed the sign and immediately created an online **petition**. He described the garden as 'the green heart of the neighborhood' and promised to stop its destruction.

Within two days, hundreds of people had signed. Former residents shared stories of summer meals, first jobs, and vegetables Mrs. Ruiz had left anonymously on their porches.

Mateo expected her to be pleased. Instead, she studied the petition with a worried expression.

'You should have spoken to me first,' she said.

He was confused. The garden was her life's work. Why would she hesitate to protect it?

Mrs. Ruiz unlocked the gate. 'Come tomorrow morning,' she said. 'If you want to save this place, you must understand what it is.'

# What the garden remembered

At sunrise, Mrs. Ruiz handed Mateo a notebook. Beside each plant, she had recorded a name, a date, and sometimes a short story.

The purple beans came from seeds her sister had carried in a coat pocket. The white roses marked the birth of her first grandchild. A **stubborn** fig tree had survived three winter storms.

Yet the garden was not a museum. Plants died, families moved, and new gardeners replaced them. Mrs. Ruiz changed the paths every season according to who needed space.

‘The memories are alive because people continue working here,’ she explained. ‘Not because every stone remains in the same place.’

She also showed Mateo letters from families searching for affordable housing. One was from a nursing assistant raising two children in a crowded room.

The proposed apartments were expensive, but the city might require several **affordable** units if residents negotiated with the developer.

Mateo's petition presented a simple conflict: greedy construction against a beloved garden. Reality was less **convenient**. The neighborhood needed both homes and shared space.

At a public meeting, some residents demanded that the project be canceled. Others accused longtime homeowners of protecting plants more than people.

Mrs. Ruiz listened until both sides had finished. Then she asked, ‘What if the question is not which part of the neighborhood deserves to survive, but how they can survive together?’

# Transplanting the past

The developer's original design covered nearly the entire lot. Mateo, Mrs. Ruiz, and an architecture student proposed a smaller building surrounding a central **courtyard**.

The design preserved one mature peach tree and created raised garden beds on the southern side. In exchange for community support, the developer agreed to include four below-market apartments.

The compromise pleased no one completely. The garden would lose more than half its space, and construction would disturb it for a year.

Some petition supporters said Mateo had **betrayed** the campaign. He wondered whether they were right.

Mrs. Ruiz placed several seeds in his hand. 'A seed survives by leaving the fruit that protected it,' she said. 'Preservation sometimes requires movement.'

Before construction began, neighbors held a final meal in the old garden. They photographed every section and recorded Mrs. Ruiz telling the plants' stories in Spanish and English.

Volunteers moved soil, saved seeds, and **transplanted** the strongest herbs to temporary containers.

Eighteen months later, families moved into the apartments. Children played in the courtyard while residents planted the first spring beds.

The new garden was smaller and different. Nevertheless, the purple beans climbed again, and a plaque linked to the recorded stories.

Mateo understood that the old garden had not disappeared entirely. Its shape had changed, but its purpose—to connect memory, food, and neighbors—had taken root in new people.

**We honor our roots not by refusing to move, but by carrying forward what helped us grow.**

# Words for memory and neighborhood change

| <b>fence</b>        | cerca                    |
|---------------------|--------------------------|
| <b>notice</b>       | aviso                    |
| <b>petition</b>     | petición                 |
| <b>stubborn</b>     | resistente / obstinado/a |
| <b>affordable</b>   | asequible                |
| <b>convenient</b>   | conveniente              |
| <b>courtyard</b>    | patio interior           |
| <b>betrayed</b>     | traicionó                |
| <b>transplanted</b> | trasplantaron            |
| <b>roots</b>        | raíces                   |

## COMPREHENSION

# Read between the lines

## A. Choose the best answer

1. What does Mateo do before speaking to Mrs. Ruiz? a) Moves plants b) Creates a petition c) Calls the developer
2. What is recorded in Mrs. Ruiz's notebook? a) Plant stories b) Apartment prices c) Meeting votes
3. What does the new design include? a) A parking garage b) A central courtyard c) A larger garden
4. Why are some supporters angry with Mateo? a) He accepts a compromise b) He removes the plaque c) He sells seeds

## B. Interpret

1. Why does Mrs. Ruiz say the garden is not a museum?
2. Explain the meaning of 'A seed survives by leaving the fruit that protected it.'

## C. Write

Describe a place that holds community or family memories. Suggest one way it could change while preserving its purpose.

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## ANSWER KEY

# Review and reflect

A. 1. b 2. a 3. b 4. a

## B. Suggested answers

1. Its value comes from ongoing relationships and work, not from keeping every physical detail unchanged. 2. Growth can require leaving a familiar form; the essential life or purpose may continue somewhere new.

## Sample response

My grandparents' kitchen holds memories of holidays and long conversations. The house may eventually belong to another family, so preserving the room forever may be impossible. We could record their recipes and stories, photograph the table, and continue cooking the same meals in our own homes. The location would change, but its purpose would remain.

**KEEP GOING**

Discuss: What makes a compromise fair, even when nobody gets everything?