

I left my job in London to grow food. This deep connection with nature gives my life meaning

Level 1: Elementary / Pre-Intermediate

## 1 Warmer

a. Discuss the questions below with a classmate.

1. Do you know anyone who grows their own vegetables?
2. What do you think people can learn from growing vegetables?
3. How do you spend time in nature? Would you get a different job to spend more time outside?  
Why / Why not?

## 2 Key words

a. Fill the gaps in the sentences using these key words from the text.

bee

harvest

organic

soil

rooftop

1. A \_\_\_\_\_ is a flying insect that has black and yellow bands and can sting.
2. The word \_\_\_\_\_ is used for describing something produced or practised without using artificial chemicals.
3. \_\_\_\_\_ is the substance on the surface of the Earth in which plants grow.
4. The adjective \_\_\_\_\_ is used to talk about something that is built, made, or done on a roof.
5. To \_\_\_\_\_ means to collect plants, animals, or other things that can be eaten or used.

connected

feed

meaning

seed

sow

6. When people \_\_\_\_\_, they plant seeds in the ground.
7. A \_\_\_\_\_ is a small hard part produced by a plant that can grow into a new plant of the same type.
8. If you \_\_\_\_\_ someone, you give them food.
9. \_\_\_\_\_ is the special importance or purpose of something.
10. If you are \_\_\_\_\_ with someone or something, there is a relationship between you, a person or thing.

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**b. Discuss the questions.**

1. I love camping. It makes me feel \_\_\_\_\_ with nature.
2. Food doesn't grow in cold areas because the \_\_\_\_\_ is not very fertile.
3. My cousin says he only eats \_\_\_\_\_ fruits and vegetables.
4. The Beatles gave a famous \_\_\_\_\_ performance.
5. Many philosophers try to explain the true \_\_\_\_\_ of life.

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- 1 In July 2016, I was sitting on top of an office building in London, listening to bees, when I realized that my life had changed. I didn't mean to quit – it just happened. After eight years of working in the media, I was becoming an organic food grower and keeping bees.
- 2 Not long before, I worked behind a desk or with camera equipment, but now I am taking care of the soil and growing plants for food.
- 3 I was tired of my life in London and I wanted to go somewhere new, so I went to New York. That is where I first saw people growing food. It was at Brooklyn Grange – a rooftop farm in the city. There were so many vegetables of all shapes and colours. I was interested.
- 4 From that day, I wanted to join the other farm workers while they harvested, planted out and worked the earth for the next sowing of seeds. After two seasons of working there for free, I wanted to make growing food a bigger part of my life. So I went back to London.
- 5 Back in Hackney, I had an evening job – during the day, I looked for spaces where food plants grew in the city. After a year, I quit and tried to get many jobs – each day a different one – so I could be outside, with my hands in the soil. Each job taught me something different.
- 6 Working as a school gardener showed me how schools taught children very little about how food gets to their plate. Working with bees taught me that growing flowers is the best way to help bees. And growing organic salad leaves for people in Hackney showed me how normal and amazing it is to feed people.
- 7 I left London in 2019. Now I have my own garden and I grow the vegetables and fruit I want. I write and talk about how important this is and tell other people to try it.
- 8 It's not all wonderful. It is a difficult job. It is very tiring and pays little. But it is the most important thing I've ever done. It has given my life more meaning than I have ever known.
- 9 Learning how to grow the plants that feed us has helped me feel connected with the natural world for the first time. I found my way back to the soil.

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### 3 Comprehension check

a. Answer these questions about the text.

1. How was the writer's job different in 2016 to before?
2. What did the writer see on a roof in New York?
3. How long did she work in New York?
4. Why did the writer want lots of different jobs in Hackney?
5. What did she learn about schools?
6. What did she learn about bees?
7. What does she talk and write about now?
8. Does she think growing food is an easy job? Why?

### 4 Key language

a. Match the words to find compound nouns from the article. Then find other possible combinations.

- |            |           |
|------------|-----------|
| 1. office  | leaves    |
| 2. food    | equipment |
| 3. camera  | gardener  |
| 4. rooftop | building  |
| 5. school  | farm      |
| 6. salad   | grower    |

b. Fill in the gaps with compound nouns from the previous activity.

1. I worked in a tall \_\_\_\_\_.
2. We buy \_\_\_\_\_ from the farmers' market.
3. The \_\_\_\_\_ teaches the children about growing food.
4. \_\_\_\_\_ is very expensive.
5. There is a \_\_\_\_\_ on top of the building.
6. Pete is an organic \_\_\_\_\_.

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## 5 Discussion

a. Answer the questions.

- Do you think everyone should grow their own food? Why / Why not?
- Should all cities have free rooftop vegetable gardens?

## 6 In your own words

a. Open an internet search engine and find as much information as you can about growing vegetables at home.

- Which vegetable is the easiest to grow?
- Where can you plant it?
- When should you plant it?
- How much water does it need?
- How much sunlight does it need?
- When can you harvest it?

b. Report your findings to the class.