

Spring 2025

GRADE 5

**ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS/
LITERACY**

PTL051_DIR

Today you will read the excerpt from “Shi’s Special Seed” and the story “The Wheat on the Chessboard.” Then you will answer questions and write a response.

PTL051a

from Shi’s Special Seed

by Christie Chu

- 1 “Shi, stop singing to the flowers! You have a visitor,” Mui-Mui called. Shi’s little sister loved to tease him about his garden.
- 2 Shi broke off mid-song and whispered an apology to the flowers. Mud squelched between his toes as he hurried toward the house. Sweet-smelling blossoms and green leaves swayed as he passed. Shi’s mother stepped out into the garden, followed by a finely dressed stranger. Shi bowed politely.
- 3 “Greetings, Shi,” said the man. “The emperor has heard of your gardening skills. He has sent seeds to one hundred of the best gardeners in China, including some others from your village. Here is yours. Tend it and bring it to the palace in one year. Then the emperor will choose one of you to be the caretaker of his imperial gardens.” He dropped a small black seed into Shi’s palm. “Care for it well.” He bowed and left.
- 4 “What an honor,” Shi’s mother said, her eyes wide.
- 5 Shi planted the special seed in his best pot. He placed it in his garden next to his pink peonies, where it would get lots of sun.
- 6 “Hello, little one,” he murmured. “Ours is not a fine house like the palace, but I hope you like it here.”
- 7 After a month, no green sprout had pushed through the soil.
- 8 “Little one, what’s wrong? Do you miss your home?” The pot of dirt did not answer. Shi sang as he watered it, taking care not to pour too much water.
- 9 Months later, Mui-Mui stared into the pot. “That seed is defective,” she said.
- 10 Shi took the pot from her. “Don’t worry, little one. You take your time,” Shi said to it. “Mui-Mui is anxious to meet you, just like I am.” He moved the pot to the cool shade and began to sing. Mui-Mui rolled her eyes and stomped away.
- 11 But the seed did not grow. Shi transferred the seed to a different pot. He tried composts and fertilizers.

