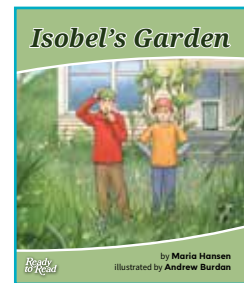


Isobel's Garden

by Maria Hansen
illustrated by Andrew Burdan

This text is levelled at Turquoise 1.



Overview

This is a true story set in the aftermath of the Christchurch earthquakes. When William and Sam kick their ball over the fence and go looking for it, they find themselves in an overgrown garden. Isobel, the owner of the garden, explains that her family have left Christchurch because of the earthquakes, and she has no one to help her keep it tidy. The boys and their mum help her out, but it's a huge job, and they call in the Student Volunteer Army.

This text supports the development of a self-extending reading processing system. The text requires students to “flexibly use the sources of information in the text, in combination with their prior knowledge, to make meaning and consider new ideas” and “draw on a wider range of comprehension strategies to think more deeply about what they read” (both from *The Literacy Learning Progressions*, page 13). As well as describing an authentic situation, this book provides opportunities for students to think critically about helping others.

There is an audio version of the text as an MP3 file at readytoread.tki.org.nz

Cross-curriculum links

Health and physical education (level 1, relationships) – Explore and share ideas about relationships with other people.

Related texts

Texts that feature helping or volunteering: *My Brother* (Green 1); *Guide Dogs, Duckling Palace, “Olly’s New Bike”* in *JJ 38* (Purple 2)

Texts about earthquakes: *Is That an Earthquake?* (shared); *The Night the House Shook* (Blue 3)

Text characteristics

The students are working at the standard for after two years at school. The characteristics of Turquoise texts are shown in boxes with a solid outline. Other boxes show additional characteristics.

Frequent use of dialogue and more than one character speaking on a page requiring students to use speech marks and attributions to track who is speaking and to make meaning

Some contexts and settings that may be outside the students’ prior knowledge but can be easily related to it

A variety of sentence structures, including compound sentences and a few complex sentences, so that students are required to notice and use punctuation as a guide to phrasing and meaning

A mix of explicit and implicit content that provides opportunities for students to make inferences. For example, page 5, where Isobel shows the family her pre-earthquake paintings, requires students to connect past and present events (to track shifts in time) and to make inferences about how the earthquake has affected her

Mostly familiar words, but some new topic words and descriptive language that are supported by the context, the sentence structure, and/or by the illustrations (for example, “peered”, “overgrown”, “Suddenly”, “plenty”, “gardening tools”, “messy”, “brought”, “poet”, “clippings”, “compost bin”, “fabulous”, “Student Volunteer Army”)



The next day Mum and the boys went back and spoke to the old lady about her garden. Her name was Isobel.

“It would be wonderful to have some help,” said Sam.

“There are plenty of gardening tools in the shed.”

“Great! We can start right away,” said Mum.

They got to work on the front garden. The boys pulled out weeds while Mum cut back the trees. Mum started the lawnmower and pushed it slowly through the long grass. They worked hard but the garden still looked messy.

Isobel brought out some lunch and, while they were eating, she told them about herself. She was an artist and a poet. Isobel showed them some paintings that she had done before the earthquakes.

“Wow, your garden used to look great,” said Sam.

“It’s going to take us ages to make it look like that again!”

Mum looked worried. “I think we need help,” she said. She took out her phone and made a call. “Help is on its way,” she smiled.



The clear narrative structure: introduction, problem, series of events, and resolution

Reading standard: After two years at school

The Literacy Learning Progressions

Suggested reading purpose

(What can the students expect to find out or think about as a result of reading this text?)

We are reading this to find out what happened to Isobel's garden and to think about the important ideas in the story.

Possible learning goals

(What opportunities does this text provide for students to learn more about how to "read, respond to, and think critically" about texts?)

The behaviours listed below link to *The Literacy Learning Progressions*. **Select from and adapt** them to set your learning goal. Be guided by your students' needs and experiences – their culture, language, and identity. (*Reading and Writing Standards for years 1–8*, Knowledge of the learner, page 6).

This text provides opportunities for students to:

- make connections between their own experiences and information in the story to form and test hypotheses and make inferences about Isobel's garden and the actions of the characters
- identify and discuss the ideas in the story about Isobel and helping others
- draw on multiple sources of information to make meaning
- monitor their reading and self-correct, using behaviours such as rereading or checking further sources of information.

Introducing the text

Use your knowledge of your students to ensure that the introduction activates their prior knowledge and provides appropriate support for a successful first reading.

- Tell the students this is a true story set in Christchurch after the 2010 and 2011 earthquakes. If necessary, explain that many people needed help to clean up their houses and gardens, and some people moved away. Allow students who experienced the earthquakes to share their knowledge and experiences – if they wish to.
- Introduce the concept of volunteering by asking the students to make connections to their own experiences of helping others. Tell them about the university students who volunteered to help and were called the Student Volunteer Army.
- Have the students read the title and discuss the cover illustration. Expect them to make a connection between the overgrown garden and the aftermath of the earthquakes. Ask them to predict what the boys' connection with the garden might be, then have them turn to the title page illustration and review their prediction. *What do you think the flower pot, trowel, secateurs, and watering can might mean in the story?*

- Have the students look at the illustrations on pages 2 and 3 and, keeping in mind what they have already seen on the cover and title page, ask them to think, pair, and share any questions that they expect will be answered in the story. For example, *Why are the boys in the garden? Who is Isobel? Why is the garden messy?*
- Tell the students that, as well as telling the story of Isobel's garden, this book has important ideas about helping others. Share the reading purpose and learning goal/s.
- English language learners will benefit from exploring the story orally before reading. Give pairs of students copies of the illustrations in random order. Have them discuss what they can see in each illustration, perhaps listing important vocabulary and ideas (in English or in their first language). Have the pairs decide on the correct order for the images and share their ideas as a whole group. Use this discussion to highlight, feed in, record, and clarify key vocabulary.

Reading the text

- Give the students the opportunity to read the text by themselves before you discuss it as a group. (The students will mostly read silently but may quietly verbalise at points of difficulty.) Only intervene on the first reading if it's clear that a student needs help. There will be many opportunities to provide further support with word solving and comprehension on subsequent readings.
- Ask the students to focus on finding out what happened to Isobel's garden. Remind them to form and test hypotheses about the story as they read. For example, on page 3, when they read about Isobel's problem, expect them to predict that the boys will want to help and to confirm their prediction as they read the boys' subsequent conversation with Mum. You will be able to check for evidence of students using this behaviour through their responses in the discussion after the reading.
- As students finish reading, they can quietly reread the story and review their predictions until everyone has finished.
- You may notice students doing some self-monitoring during the first (mostly silent) reading, but you can observe them more closely as they reread the text aloud, quietly to themselves or a partner. You may also use this time to do a quick running record with a student to provide more information on something you have noticed.

- Reinforce students' attempts to problem-solve whether they are successful or not by asking questions or giving feedback, for example: *How did you know that bit was wrong? Well done.* Or: *I noticed you reread that bit and corrected the word. What helped you?*
- If a student makes an error without noticing, wait until the end of the sentence or the page before intervening, unless they stop reading. Waiting gives them the chance to notice the error and fix it, for example,

Text	Student reads	Teacher prompt
He peered through a hole in the fence to look for the ball.	He peeped through a hole in the fence to look for the ball.	Prompt the student to search for more information. <i>You said ... in this sentence. It makes sense and sounds right. Read it again and check it looks right too.</i>
"We're just looking for our ball."	"We're just looking for your ball."	Prompt the student to attend to meaning. <i>Did that make sense? Whose ball were the boys looking for? Read it again.</i>

- For further suggestions to support students to self-monitor (to cross-check, confirm, and self-correct), see *Effective Literacy Practice in Years 1 to 4*, page 130.

Discussing the text

- You can revisit this text several times to explore and discuss its ideas. Select from the suggestions below according to your reading purpose and learning goals.
- Briefly discuss the information about the Student Volunteer Army on the inside back cover.
- Remind the students of the reading purpose and have them summarise the events in the story. If necessary, provide targeted support by getting them to look for evidence of a specific aspect or to reread to answer a specific question. For example on page 5, *Why was Mum worried?* Alternatively, you could provide support by helping them build a summary chart of what happened. Prompt the students to think critically about why these events were important to the story.

What happened in <i>Isobel's Garden</i> ?	Why was that important?
William kicked the ball into the garden, and the boys went into the garden to get it.	They saw the mess. There was long grass. There were weeds everywhere.
Isobel had no family to help make it tidy.	The boys wanted to help her.
Mum, Sam, and William worked hard. They mowed the lawns and pulled weeds, and the garden was still messy.	

- Ask the students to review their predictions: *Is that what you thought would happen? Tell me about a prediction that you changed. What helped you change your mind?* Support English language learners to respond to these types of prompts and questions by:
 - giving the prompts orally and in writing
 - checking they understand the questions and how to go about answering them
 - using think, pair, share to give students time to develop their ideas and to give them the opportunity to rehearse their use of the language.
- Ask the students to share what they have found out (or inferred) about Isobel, using evidence from the text as in the partially completed table below.

	What we found out about Isobel	How we know (our evidence)
Looks like:	Isobel is an old lady.	Page 3 – "an old lady came out" In the pictures, Isobel has grey hair and glasses, wrinkly skin, and a walking stick.
Acts like:	She is kind.	Page 3 – she said it was OK for the boys to look for their ball. Page 5 – she made some lunch for them.
She likes:	She likes her garden tidy. She likes to paint and write poems. She likes to talk to people.	
What else do we know?	She might be lonely and worried.	Her family has left Christchurch. She has no one to help her with her garden.

- Discuss why the garden had become overgrown. Encourage the students to think critically about the actions of the characters. *Why did the boys want to help Isobel?* Have them refer to the text to find evidence. Encourage them to form an opinion. *Why was it important for the boys and Mum to help Isobel?*
- Prompt them to also think beyond the text, for example, to speculate about why people choose to volunteer and why the Student Volunteer Army was established. Encourage them to make connections to their own knowledge or experience. You could draw attention to Mum’s comment on page 3 about the need to ask Isobel before helping.
- Reinforce the comprehension strategy of summarising. Have the students refer to the book and the summary chart developed earlier to draw and write about three things that happened in Isobel’s garden and why they were important to the story.
- Ask the students to use the character chart developed earlier to make a detailed drawing and write a character description of Isobel. They could use the same framework in a later piece of writing to describe another person they know well.
- Provide opportunities for students to find out more about the Student Volunteer Army on the internet. Search “Student Volunteer Army” and click on “Images”. There are numerous photos including one of the Volunteer Army with Isobel.
- Invite someone from a local volunteer group to talk to the class about their work.
- Have the students work in pairs to make a list of places they could volunteer and what they could do. They could write a letter to someone who needs help or plan questions to ask someone if they need help and what they could do to help.
- Have the students identify the language used to describe the garden before and after the tidy up (“overgrown with long grass and weeds everywhere”, “messy”; “great”, “wonderful”, “fabulous”). Generate more examples together, then have the students draw before and after pictures of the garden and add their own written description.
- In response to what you have observed of the students’ reading, you could plan a mini-lesson to support word solving. For example:
 - Explore how the students worked out the meaning of some of the less familiar vocabulary, for example, on page 2: *How did you work out what “overgrown” means? What helped you in the sentence?* Confirm that the rest of the sentence can sometimes help us to understand what the word means. You could repeat this with the word “clippings” on page 6.
 - Remind the students of the ways they can solve words, for example, breaking words into shorter chunks (“won-der-ful”, “vol-un-teer”, “fab-u-lous”), looking for parts of the word they know (“oke” as in “woke” to help with “spoke”), and checking the illustrations and/or rereading the sentence to check their attempt makes sense (for example, to confirm “Suddenly” or “earthquakes”, or to correct “used” for “asked” on page 3).

After reading: practice and reinforcement

After-reading tasks should arise from your monitoring of the students during the lesson and should provide purposeful practice and reinforcement. Where possible, make links to other reading texts, including texts generated from language experience and shared writing, texts from the wider literacy programme (oral language, writing, handwriting, word games and activities), and texts from other curriculum areas.

Select from and adapt these suggestions, according to the needs of your students.

- Provide many opportunities for the students to reread this text and to read other stories with similar themes (see Related texts). This also helps to extend their comprehension.
- Look for opportunities to listen in, for example, as the students reread the text aloud, quietly to themselves or to a partner. You may also use this time to do a quick running record with a student to provide more information on something you have noticed.
- Refer English language learners to the vocabulary list you created before reading. Support them to use some of this vocabulary in the written and oral activities after reading. Where appropriate, provide controlled and supported practice first. For example:
 - matching words and phrases to their definitions in card games, like Snap or Memory
 - filling the gaps in sentences with the correct word or phrase.
- The students can build their comprehension and fluency by rereading the text while listening to the audio version. Audio versions also provide English language learners with good models of pronunciation, intonation, and expression.



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