

The Garden Surprise

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This text is levelled at Blue 1.



Overview

In this story, Milly describes what happens when her class plants carrot seeds at school. Everything goes according to plan until Milly and Sunil notice that one of Milly's plants looks different from the rest. Her teacher, Mr Langi, shows her how to use an app to find out what the mystery plant is.

The Garden Surprise (the fourth story about Milly and Sunil) supports the development of a self-extending reading process, requiring students to “monitor their reading, searching for and using multiple sources of information in order to confirm or self-correct” and to use a variety of comprehension strategies to “engage more deeply with texts” (*The Literacy Learning Progressions*, page 10).

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

Related texts

Previous stories about Milly and Sunil: *Down the Slide* (Red 1); *The Lost Hat* (Red 2); *A Bird in the Classroom* (Yellow 2)

Stories and poems about growing plants: *Jack and the Beanstalk* (shared); “My Flower” (poem); “Michael Apple Seed” (a poem from *Splish Splash!*); *The Gardener and the Scarecrow* (Blue 2)

Stories that involve using digital technology to solve problems: *A Starfish for Oscar* (Red 1); *Walking to School* (Yellow 2); *Where is Aunty?* (Yellow 3)

Text characteristics

The Garden Surprise has the following text characteristics that help develop the reading behaviours expected of students reading at Blue.

Most content explicitly stated but also some implicit content that provides opportunities for students to make predictions and inferences

Illustrations and visual language features that support and extend the meaning but may not exactly match the words

A familiar setting and context (growing plants at school)

A range of punctuation, including speech marks, commas, and exclamation marks, to support phrasing and meaning

Many high-frequency words



We planted the seeds and gave them some water.
“Now we have to wait,” I said.



The use of a first-person narrator (Milly)

Sentences that run over more than one line but do not split phrases, and several lines of text on every page

Dialogue between easily identified speakers

Topic words and interest words (including a wide range of regular and irregular verbs and verb forms) that are likely to be in a reader's oral vocabulary and that are strongly supported by the context, the sentence structure, and/or the illustrations (for example, “carrots”, “dip”, “gave”, “grow”, “Hmmm”, “kept”, “laughed”, “leaves”, “photo”, “plants”, “problem”, “pulled”, “seeds”, “snails”, “strange”, “surprise”, “tomato”, “watered”, “wait”, “weeds”, “yummy”)

Reading standard: After one year 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 story to find out what happens when Milly and Sunil plant carrot seeds.

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 according to your students’ strengths, 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, over several readings, to:

- **make connections** between their own experiences and information in the story to **make predictions and inferences**
- identify the main events in the story (**summarise**)
- **make meaning** by searching for and using multiple sources of information rather than one source
- **monitor** their reading and self-correct where necessary, for example, by rereading text or checking further sources of information.

Introducing the story

- A short video on the importance of introducing the text is available at <https://vimeo.com/142446572>
- Use your knowledge of your students to ensure that the introduction to the story activates their prior knowledge and supports them for a successful first reading. This story uses vocabulary and language structures (for example, “Sunil”, “Milly”, “Here are”, “I love”, “Me too”, “I like”, “gave”, “some”, “water”, “grow”, “looked after”, “one”, “not the same”, “looked at”, “We can,” “Take a photo”) that the students are likely to be familiar with from previous reading and writing.
- A few days before reading this book, add the other stories about Milly and Sunil to the students’ browsing box for them to enjoy and also to remind them that these stories are being told by Milly. You could also read the poem card “My Flower”, which uses some of the key vocabulary of the book and describes the steps involved in growing a plant from seed.

- Before or after the reading, as a group or class language-experience activity, the students could make dip and eat it with vegetables (including carrots and tomatoes).

Activities such as the one described above are especially supportive for English language learners in building confidence with interest vocabulary. You can find further useful guidance about supporting English language learners at <http://esolonline.tki.org.nz/ESOL-Online/Teacher-needs/Pedagogy/ESOL-teaching-strategies/Reading>

- Tell the students that you have another story about Milly and Sunil for them to read. Encourage them to use the title and the cover illustration to make inferences about the characters, the setting, and the context (who, where, what). Ask the students to share any experiences they have of gardening, especially of growing plants from seeds. Encourage them to predict from the illustration what plants the children are growing. *What sort of surprise might you get if you were trying to grow something?*
- Use the title page illustration to confirm that the children are planning to grow carrots. *Does this change your thinking about what the “garden surprise” might be?*
- Share the purpose for the reading. Note that this purpose may become more specific as the students move further into the book and discover Milly’s problem.
- Browse through pages 2–5, clarifying the setting and what the children are doing. Draw out (or feed in) language structures and vocabulary that you feel may need support. Tell the students the teacher’s name.
 - On page 2, draw attention to Sunil’s thought bubble. *What is he thinking about?*
 - On pages 3 and 4, discuss how the children are caring for the plants.
 - Expect the students to notice (from the children’s faces) a problem developing on page 5. *Why is Milly looking confused?* Prompt them to look closely at the illustration of the plants. Encourage them to share their ideas about what it might be. *Could this be the garden surprise?*
- At this point, the students could begin reading the story themselves or, if you feel they need more support, you could also discuss the illustrations on pages 6–7. Leave page 8 so that the students can discover the answer to the mystery for themselves.
- Remind the students that Milly is telling the story.

Monitoring the reading

- Observe closely as the students read the story quietly to themselves. Note their confidence and perseverance with challenges, their attempts to solve unknown words, and any instances of self-monitoring, cross-checking, and self-correction. Provide support to individual students as necessary. You may need to remind them of the teacher's name.
- 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 opportunity to notice the error and fix it. Use appropriate prompts to draw their attention to the error. For example:

Text in book	Student reads	Teacher prompt
We planted the seeds and gave them some water.	We planted the seeds and give them some water.	Prompt the student to think about structure and to check the visual information. <i>Would we say it like that? What would make sense and look right with those letters?</i> (For an ELL student "give" may sound right, so you could say: <i>In English, we say "We planted the seeds and gave them some water."</i>)
We watered them, we pulled out the weeds	We waited them ... (student stops)	<i>You've noticed that didn't sound right. Think about how you can fix it. Prompt the student to think about the meaning. Look at the picture. What are the children doing to care for the plants? Now read it again.</i>
Take a photo.	Take a picture .	Prompt the student to check the visual information. <i>That makes sense, but if the word was "picture", what letters would you expect to see? Have a closer look.</i>

- Other prompts that you could use include: *Are you sure?; Does that look right and sound right?; You said ... Can we say it another way?; Look at the beginning of the word; Were you right?; Try that again; Look for something you know in that word; What else could you check? What can you see that will help you?*

- Remember to base these prompts on what you know about the students' prior knowledge. For example, asking an English language learner if a word or sentence sounds right may not be useful if they are not familiar enough with English phonemes and vocabulary or syntax. In this case, an explanation and further examples would be more effective.
- Reinforce the students' attempts to problem-solve, whether they are successful or not, for example: *I noticed you read "lighted" (instead of "laughed") and then you fixed it. Good thinking.*
- For further suggestions about ways to support students to self-monitor (to cross-check, confirm, and self-correct), see *Effective Literacy Practice in Years 1–4*, page 130.

Discussing and rereading the story

- You can reread this story several times, focusing on different aspects and providing opportunities for the students to build comprehension and fluency. Many of the discussion points listed here also lead naturally into "After-reading" activities.
- Remind the students of their purpose for reading. *What was the "garden surprise"? Is this what you thought it would be?* Discuss the different reactions of the main characters (Milly, Sunil, Mr Langi). *Do you agree with Mr Langi that it was a nice surprise?*
- Focus on the solution to the mystery. *How did Milly find out what the plant was?* Discuss the use of devices (phones, tablets, or computers) to find information and encourage the students to make connections to their own experiences. Provide an opportunity for the group to try out a similar app to the one Milly uses.
- Encourage the students to think critically:
 - Why do you think there was a tomato growing with the carrots? Could it be a true story?*
 - Why didn't Mr Langi just tell Milly what the plant was?*
- Have the students reread the story, stopping to discuss points of interest. You can revisit this story over several sessions, exploring such features as:
 - the clues as to who is telling the story.
 - the characters' thoughts and feelings as suggested in the dialogue and illustrations, including the two thought bubbles. Draw attention to the use of speech marks and speaker attributions to track the dialogue and encourage the students to read it in a way that matches what is happening in the story. Enjoy articulating the expression "Hmmm" and Sunil's final piece of dialogue (using appropriate intonation for "and" in italics).

- the sentences running over several lines on most pages. Remind the students to read on to the full stop even if the sentence sounds like it has finished. If necessary, model the appropriate phrasing and intonation.
- the things the children did to look after the plants. This also provides an opportunity to focus on the verbs that describe the children’s actions (“planted”, “gave [water]”, “looked [after]”, “watered”, “pulled [out]”, “kept”). You could compare this with the description in the poem card “My Flower”. Note that students, in particular English language learners, may need support with the irregular past-tense forms “gave” and “kept”. (See After reading).

After reading: practice and reinforcement

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

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

- Ask the students to reread the story to a partner. Listen in, noting their ability to use punctuation to support phrasing and expression. You may also use this time to do a quick running record with a student to provide more information on an aspect you have noticed.
- The students can build their comprehension and fluency by rereading the story while listening to the audio version. Audio versions also provide English language learners with good models of pronunciation, intonation, and expression.
- Provide opportunities for students to reread other stories about Milly and Sunil, as well as other texts (see Related texts).
- Have the students draw pictures of Sunil or Milly at three different times in the story and add speech bubbles or thought bubbles to show what they are thinking or how they are feeling.
- The students could work in pairs to create labelled pictures of what the children did to look after the plants.
- Have the students share their opinions of their favourite vegetable and how they like to eat it. They could draw and write, take photographs, create a video, or share their ideas orally.
- Take the students to visit the school vegetable garden and explore the different plants there. Students could go on a leaf hunt and use an app to identify the plants or take photos and write a description of each vegetable to create a class book.
- Provide opportunities for the students to find out more about vegetable plants – use gardening websites, visit the library, or provide books for students to use). You or the students could create photo cards of common vegetables and have students match them to their names.
- Make dip together and eat it with vegetables. Take photos and have the students write their responses to add as captions.
- Plant carrot and tomato seeds and watch how they grow. The students could create a diary about the progress of the plants and how they are looking after them.
- Focus on the irregular past-tense verb forms “came”, “gave”, and “kept”. Reread the sentences where the words occur and support the students in identifying the relevant present-tense forms. Explain that some verbs can’t have “ed” added (for example, “came” not “comed”, “gave” not “gived”, “kept” not “keepied”). Give the students cards with the present-tense and past-tense forms for them to match up. (You could include regular verb forms as well.) Provide further support, particularly for English language learners, by making up oral sentences together, using the irregular verb forms.