

The Gardener and the Scarecrow

by Dot Meharry
illustrated by Ali Teo

Overview

In this humorous narrative, the gardener needs to find a way to stop the greedy birds from pecking at his vegetables. Children will enjoy working out what the gardener has in mind! This text supports the comprehension strategies of forming and testing hypotheses, inferring, analysing and synthesising, and evaluating. It's also useful for monitoring children's integration of reading strategies at the end of the Blue level. There are two other books about this character, *The Gardener* (Yellow) and *The Gardener's Maze* (Green, also available as a big book). There is an audio version on the Ready to Read CD *Readalong 2004*.

Curriculum links: science, technology

Text features

(Focus on only one or two per session.)

- the initial consonant blends “cl”, “sc”, “st”, “tr”
- the digraphs “ch” in “chased”, “Stitch”, “stitch”; “sh” in “shed”, “shouted”; “th” in “That”, “The”, “the”, “They”, “This”
- the lively verbs – “chased”, “clipped”, “pecked”, “shouted”
- the irregular verbs “came”, “kept”, “made”, “put”, “said”, “was”, “went”
- the variety of word endings – “clipped”, “clipping”; “garden”, “gardener”, “gardening”
- the “y” ending in “scary”
- the compound word “scarecrow”
- the use of repetition for effect and to suggest time passing on page 7
- the sentences running over two lines
- the use of commas for phrasing
- the clear narrative structure
- the markers of time – “In the morning”, “That night”
- the gardener’s imperative language
- the way the gardener talks to himself
- the battle between the gardener and the birds
- the clues in the illustrations
- the surprise ending.

Setting the scene

Look at the cover. *Where have you seen this character before? What do you know about him? What can you see in the garden?* Find out what the children know about scarecrows and clarify what they're for. Remind them of the Ready to Read poem card *Scarecrow*. *Do you think that the scarecrow on the cover is doing a good job? Why/why not? What do you think will happen in this story?*

Alternatively, you could tell the children that the gardener has a problem with birds in his garden so he makes a scarecrow to scare them away.

The first reading

Ask the children to read the title. Read the names of the author and the illustrator.

Title page – *What's happening here?* Draw out the idea that the gardener has a problem.

Listen to the children read the text themselves, offering support as necessary.

Page 2 – *How is this illustration different from the cover?* Clarify that the cover shows the end of the story. Check that the children understand what “pecked” means. *What will the gardener do?*

Page 3 – Encourage expressive reading! *Has the problem been solved?*

Page 4 – Ask the children to try reading this page silently. *What vegetables are these? How do you know?*

Page 5 – If the children say “not” instead of “no”, prompt them to cross-check using visual information. *Where have we seen this picture before? Who is the gardener talking to? How is he feeling?*

Page 6 – *What do you think the gardener is doing?*

Page 7 – You may need to explain what “stitch” means. *Does this fit with what you were thinking?*

Page 8 – *Were you right? Who is the gardener talking to now?*

Page 9 – *When did the gardener put up the scarecrow? Why did he do it at night? What is the gardener thinking? Will it work?*

Pages 10 and 11 – *What time is it now?* You may need to reassure the children about the irregular verb “kept”. *Is the scarecrow doing a good job?*

Page 12 – Enjoy the ending together!

Ideas for revisiting the text

(Choose only one or two per session.)

Listen to the children reread the text to themselves. Observe their ability to read fluently over the run-on lines, using the commas for phrasing.

Focus on any consonant blends or digraphs that the children may have been unsure of. Locate examples in the text and list other words that start the same way. Look at the use of “ch” as an initial sound in “chased” and a final sound in “stitch”.

Write the words “gardener” and “gardening” on the whiteboard and identify the root word. *What would the word be if we added “ed”?* Repeat the activity with the words “clipped” and “clipping”. Talk about the need to double the “p” in “clip” before adding “ed” or “ing”. You could identify the root words in “chased”, “pecked”, and “shouted” and practise adding “ing” endings. Note the need to delete the final “e” in “chase” to make “chasing”.

Focus on the narrative structure. *What was the problem in this story? How was it solved? What did you think of the ending? How does the writer make this story seem exciting?* You could talk about the narrative structure, the way the reader has to try and work out what the gardener’s doing, the gardener’s imperative language, the way he talks to himself, the lively verbs, the use of repetition on page 7, and the surprise ending.

Focus on any of the irregular past-tense verbs that the children were unsure of. Talk about how they need to use their knowledge of spoken English to help them when they’re reading. *Does “keeped” sound right? Or “putted”?* Make up oral sentences using the correct verb forms. For ESOL children, who are less likely to be able to draw on their knowledge of English syntax, try to use these verbs often in subsequent conversations and reading sessions.

Talk about the “y” ending in the word “scary”. *What sound can you hear at the end of this word?* List other adjectives that are formed by adding “y” to a noun or verb, such as “messy”, “squashy”, “smelly”, or “lucky”.

Talk about the meaning behind the compound word “scarecrow”.

Suggestions for further tasks

Listen to the audio version on the CD *Readalong 2004*.

Reread *The Gardener* and/or share the big book *The Gardener’s Maze*.

Read the Ready to Read poem card *Scarecrow*.

Use the school library or the Internet to find out more about scarecrows. An extension activity could be to investigate other ways of keeping birds away from gardens.

Have the children use collage to create their own small scarecrows or images of the gardener. Add descriptive labels.

Make up thought bubbles for the gardener for pages 9 and 10.