

The Gardener

by Sarah Stewart

Caldecott Winner (1997). An ambitious young girl makes the best of her situation by creating a secret place filled with color and the fragrance from her favorite flowers.



Read

Before:

Introduce the book and tell the children a little bit about it. Follow with a comment or question that is related to the story such as, *Where do you plant your garden/flowers?* Encourage a discussion so the children can comment, ask questions, and express their feelings. Set the stage for listening by asking an "I wonder" statement based on the cover illustration.

- I wonder if she is planting flowers on the roof of the building?

During:

Encourage the children to comment on the illustrations, ask questions, and predict what will happen next in the story. Children gain confidence and a sense of achievement through being able to correctly predict how a story will end. Point out "rare words" (e.g., those words that are not commonly used in every day conversation) and help the children relate the meaning in a way that makes sense to them.

Rare Words in *The Gardener*

- doze: to sleep lightly for a short time
- adore: love somebody deeply
- bulbs: underground plant part
- knead: work dough until smooth
- vacant: without an occupant or contents
- sprouting: to grow from something
- sprucing: to make a person or place cleaner and neater in appearance
- entire: as a whole, absolute
- amazing: outstanding or good
- retire: to stop working, go to bed or withdraw

After:

Discuss the story. Ask questions...

- What did Lydia like to do with her family?
- Where did Lydia have to move to? Why?
- Describe what Lydia's new place looks like.
- What did Lydia like about the town?
- Where was her secret place?
- What kinds of flowers did she plant?
- What sorts of things did Lydia write about to her parents and Grandmother?
- Why did she worry that her Uncle did not smile?
- Did her father ever get a job? Was she able to go home?



Do

Pen Pals

Contact your local nursing home, high school or retirement community and ask if your students could be their pen pal. On the board, show your children the elements of a letter and they can fill in all the blank spots (you would write of course). Next, have the children draw a picture of themselves and dictate, in their exact words, what they want to tell their pen pal.