

The Gardener

by Dot Meharry

illustrated by Ali Teo

Overview

This humorous narrative portrays a gardener's delight in expressing his creativity. Children will enjoy making predictions from the intriguing illustrations. The element of repetition in the text provides support for children who lack confidence in their reading. An audio version is available on the Ready to Read CD *Readalong 2001*.

Curriculum links: science, technology

Text features

(Focus on only one or two per session.)

- the high-frequency vocabulary
- the initial consonant blends “cl”, “fr”, “sm”, “tr”
- the digraphs “ph” – “elephant”; “sh” – “shouted”; and “th” – “the”, “This”
- the different endings for the word “clip” – “clippers” and “clipped”
- the use of “too” as an adverb
- the use of direct speech to begin and end the story
- the clear beginning, middle, and end of the story
- the use of repetition in the text
- the question mark on page 2
- the humorous, exaggerated illustrations.

Setting the scene

Talk about the children's experience with gardens. *Do you have a garden at home? Do you help in the garden?* If there are children in the group who lack experience of home gardens, provide a photograph of a public garden. City information pamphlets usually include photographs of notable gardens. You could arrange to visit the school caretaker to have a look at their gardening tools.

There may be trees, bushes, or hedges at the school that need to be clipped regularly. Introduce the word “clippers” into the discussion.

If possible, show the children an example of topiary. You could use the illustration on page 4 of the book.

The first reading

Look at the cover of the book. The quirky illustration of the gardener suggests that this might not be a straightforward story. *What is this man doing? What is he using?* Read the title and the names of the author and the illustrator.

Title page – Listen to the children read the title again. Take the opportunity to reinforce the word “clippers”.

Page 2 – *Why is the gardener standing like that? What do you think he’s shouting?* You may need to review the children’s knowledge of other words starting with “cl”, such as “click”, “clock”, “class”, and “clap” to support them in their decoding of “clippers”.

Page 3 – *What did the gardener do with the clippers?* Focus on the ending of the word “clipped”.

Listen to the children read the text themselves, encouraging them to use the illustrations on pages 5, 7, and 9 to predict what the gardener might be making. Note which children are cross-checking the visual features of the interest word on the following page to confirm their predictions.

Page 10 – *Why is the gardener scratching his head? Is he happy with the frog?*

Page 11 – Note which children independently notice the change in the text structure. *What might happen next?*

Page 12 – *Were you right? What will the gardener do now? What shape did you like best?*

Ideas for revisiting the text

(Choose only one or two per session.)

Identify specific high-frequency words in the text.

Focus on any of the initial consonants or blends that the children may have been unsure of. Locate the words in context and make a list of other words that start the same way.

Focus on the initial consonant blend “cl”. Reread the text and note where a “cl” word has been used. Make a list of other words that start this way.

Explore endings that can be used with “clip”. Note that the endings “ed”, “ing”, and “er” all involve doubling the final “p”. Repeat the activity with the words “slip”, “drip”, or “trip”.

List words that rhyme with “clip”.

Look at the illustration on page 11. *Why does the tree suddenly appear bigger?* Draw out the idea that the close-up illustration, the flying leaves, the gardener’s tongue, and the extra repetition of the word “clipped” all work together to create a sense of the gardener getting carried away with his own ideas.

Suggestions for further activities

Listen to the story on the Ready to Read CD *Readalong 2001*.

Innovate on the text, using the names of the children in the class, for example, “Nathan clipped and clipped. He made a dragon.”

The children could write a group or individual response to the outcome of the text.

The children could use dough or clay to model a shape from the book and add a label.

The children could make a list of the jobs a gardener would need to do.
Illustrate and label a list of gardening tools.
Find out more about topiary.