

The Early Years Count Literacy Connection



In Our Garden

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Preschool edition

Overview of Book

A little girl in a new country and city longs for the fresh picked vegetables from the rooftop garden that was at her old apartment. She wants to start a garden. Can she get her new friends at school to see the possibilities?

Genre: Picture

Vocabulary

Books are a rich source of words new to children. Here are some words from *In Our Garden* to introduce in your classroom:

germination homesick
names of vegetables in story
wheelbarrow patient

Each time you read the book, choose 2 or 3 words to highlight.

Use age-appropriate definitions and/or the illustrations to help children gain an understanding of each word's meaning.

Use these new words throughout the day, reminding the children, "That's a word from our story!"

Connecting with the HighScope Curriculum

COR Advantage 1.5

Approaches To Learning
Item A (*Initiative and
planning*)

Social And Emotional
Development
Item D (*Emotions*)
Item F (*Building relationships
with other children*)

Physical development
and Health
Item K (*Personal care and
healthy behavior*)

Science and Technology
Item EE (*Tools and
technology*)

Reading Tips

Three readings are recommended to familiarize children with the story. Each reading provides an opportunity to introduce new vocabulary words, pose open-ended questions, and engage children in activities that make the story "come alive."

Ask the children if they have ever heard of "homesick". Let them know that the main character, Millie, is homesick because she is new to her city and school and misses where she came from. Stop reading at the part where Millie suggests in her class to have a garden. Ask, "How would having a garden help her not to be homesick?" Discuss throughout how the teacher and other children help make a garden for everyone. Ask, "What would you want to help doing to make a rooftop garden?"

Throughout the Routine

Refer to the book throughout the day and use new vocabulary words in meaningful ways. Active engagement with the story helps the content come alive.

Have bins of soil and child-sized garden tools for children to explore with at **Small Group Time**. Hide “vegetable” counters, stones or other small outdoor items in the bins for children to dig out and talk about.

If possible, bring child sized garden and digging materials along for **Outside Time**. Use real tools if these are available. Provide opportunity for the children to practice using these materials where their use is absolutely OK.

Around the Room

Highlight the book’s content and build on the children’s excitement in a variety of locations.

Add child-sized wheelbarrows and garden tools in the **House Area**.

Add pages from seed and garden magazines to the **Art Area**. Encourage children to locate and cut out items they like and make a pretend garden.

Add other Imagination Library titles to the **Book Area**. Consider “The Tale of Peter Rabbit” by Beatrix Potter and “The Little Gardener” by Jan Gerardi.

Open-ended Questions

Enhance active engagement and early critical thinking skills by asking open-ended questions. These questions encourage children to explain why or how things happen, make predictions, or brainstorm possibilities rather than give one “right” answer.

Here are some questions you might ask for *In Our Garden*:

How do you think Millie felt when she made the suggestion in class to have a garden and no one said anything?

Why do you think the teachers and other children were happy to help create the garden?

If you had a garden, what would you plant?

For more information on how to use books and stories with children to enhance your curriculum, contact
The Family Connection:

website—
www.famconn.org

Facebook—
@famconnsjc

phone—
574-237-9740

@ Home

Since many of the children in our county will have this book at home, use it as a way to further the home-school connection. In your daily contact—in person or by text, email or other notes home—encourage families to share *In Our Garden* with their child. Here's a sample message you can send:

As you and your child read this story together, linger on any pages that your child is interested in. Ask questions like, “What are you thinking about when you look at this picture?” or, “What is Millie thinking about? How is she feeling?” Talk about how Millie feels when her teacher and classmates want to help make a garden. Notice the hard work and patience creating and planting a garden takes, and how everyone in the story work together. Ask, “What job would you like to be doing? There’s designing, making the beds, pouring the soil, watering...?” Look at the vegetables in the story and talk about the vegetables your family likes. If there is a garden nearby that you can visit, take the time to go together. There are several *Unity Gardens* in town to visit and to pick from.