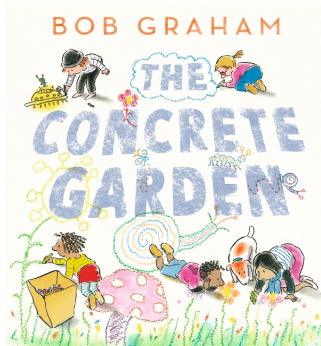




# Walker Books Classroom Ideas



## The Concrete Garden

Author: Bob Graham  
Illustrator: Bob Graham  
ISBN: 9781529512649  
Publication Date: August 2023

\*Notes may be downloaded and printed for regular classroom use only.

Walker Books Australia      Ph +61 2 9517 9577  
Locked Bag 22                      Fax +61 2 9517 9997  
Newtown, N.S.W., 2042

For enquiries please contact:  
educationwba@walkerbooks.com.au

Notes © 2023 Walker Books Australia Pty. Ltd.  
All Rights Reserved

## Outline:

After a cold, dark winter, doors opened. Children spilled out like sweets from a box. Amanda was last one out of the tower block. She brought some chalk with her. On every inch of the concrete outside, the children drew pictures of everything they could think of, from flowers and snails, to spaceships and queens. Before long, a beautiful and exotic garden spread out across the concrete.

From master storyteller Bob Graham comes a charming, and gently post-pandemic story about finding optimism after a dark spell, and the nurturing power of community friendships in an urban setting. *The Concrete Garden* will resonate with anyone who has been apart from their loved ones, and will encourage us all to find the brightness and colour within ourselves.

## Author/Illustrator Information:

Bob Graham is a Kate Greenaway-winning bookmaker who has written and illustrated many acclaimed children's picture books including *Jigsaw: A Puzzle in the Post*, *Ellie's Dragon*, *The Poesy Ring*, *Home in the Rain*, *How to Heal a Broken Wing*, *How the Sun Got to Coco's House*, *Max, Maxine*, *Jethro Byrde: Fairy Child* and *The Underhills*. His 2011 title, *A Bus Called Heaven*, is endorsed by Amnesty International UK and was the winner of the 2012 Children's Book Council of Australia Picture Book of the Year Award – a prize Bob has won an unprecedented seven times. He has been awarded the prestigious Prime Minister's Literary Award in Australia twice, in 2014 for *Silver Buttons* and in 2017 for *Home in the Rain*. Bob lives in Melbourne, Australia.

## How to Use These Notes:

This story works on many levels. The suggested activities are therefore for a wide age and ability range. Please select accordingly.

Ages: From 3 to 7 years

Key Learning Areas: English

Genre: Picture Book



# Walker Books Classroom Ideas

## Discussion Questions and Activities

### Before Reading

Before reading, view the cover and title of the book. Identify the following:

- The title of the book
- The author/illustrator
- The publisher
- The blurb

What do you think the story might be about from looking at the title only? Do your ideas change after seeing the cover?

#### *Activity:*

Write your own story using the title of the picture book.

Based on the cover, what do you think this story is about? How do you think it will begin/end? Revisit your answer after reading the story to see if your predictions were correct.

Discuss the title of the book. Do you think this is a good title? Why or why not? If you were asked to choose an alternative title for the book, what would it be? Remember, a good title should capture the audience's attention and give them some idea of what the book is about.

### Exploring the Text

#### Exploring the Text

##### *Discussion:*

- Who do you think the audience for this book is? Why?
- Is the book an imaginative, informative or persuasive text? How can you tell?

Literary techniques allow a writer to convey a deeper meaning in their text.

- What techniques can you find in this text? e.g. metaphor, imagery, alliteration, personification
- What deeper meaning can you draw from the text?

#### Exploring the Illustrations

##### *Discussion:*

- How do the illustrations add to the story?
- Do you think the illustrator has effectively told his story visually?

##### *Activity:*

Cover the text in the book and write your own story following the illustrations.

##### *Discussion:*

Choose one of the spreads and have a class discussion about the following illustration decisions:

- How do the illustrations add to the story?
- How do you think the people are feeling? What clues might there be in the pictures?
- Is there a main colour in this spread? How does it make you feel?
- Do the colours change from spread to spread? Why might that be?
- Do the pictures take up the whole page, or are they framed?
- Are any of the words bigger on the page than the others? Why could that be?



# Walker Books Classroom Ideas

## Exploring the Text in Depth:

1. As a class, research Bob Graham. How many awards has he won? Where does he live? How old is he? How many books has he written? Get some other Bob Graham books out of the library and ask the class to read them. What do they like about his stories? Why do they think he wins so many awards?
2. Concrete Garden was written as a post pandemic story. Look for the clues in the illustrations that remind us of the pandemic. Were there any positive things that happened in your community during the pandemic? What were the hard things? Do a giant mindmap of the positive things that you remember and one of the hard things.
3. In Bob's stories a lot of the story is in the illustrations not in the words. There are often other things going on in the background that Bob does not mention but that add to the story. Ask the students to work in groups to find five things in the book that happen without the author talking about them. Discuss with the class how this adds to the story.
4. The story is set in a little community in a street in a city that could be anywhere. Nasrin sends a picture of the street drawing to her mother, who lives in another country. Ask the class to discuss why so many people liked the picture and sent it to each other? What does the picture represent to the people looking at the photo?
5. After discussing the book with the class take some chalk out to the playground and let the class free draw in a space to create their own picture. Send the picture to their parents. Take some time after the activity to talk about working together and some of the challenges that they encountered. Did they feel bossy? Did everyone have a chance to draw etc.