



# The Last Garden



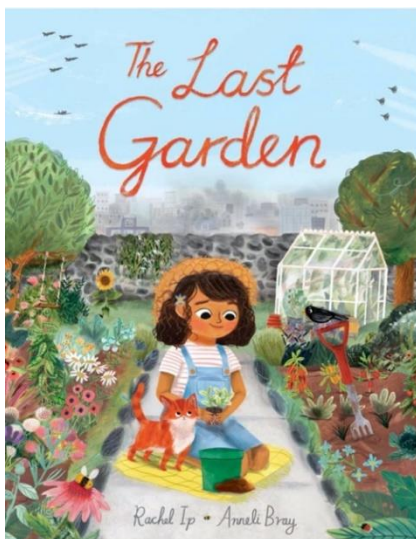
## Suggested Questions for Discussion

Prepared by Clare Hardy and Rachel Ip

As you read through the book together, take time to pause and ask questions to encourage the children to look at what they can see on the page.

These questions are suggestions and range in complexity and sophistication, so you can choose the appropriate ones for the age and ability of the children you are sharing the book with.

### Front Cover



1. What do you think this book is about?
2. What do you notice in the sky?
3. What can you see behind the garden?



Resources based on *The Last Garden*  
written by Rachel Ip and illustrated by Anneli Bray



# The Last Garden



## Pages 1 – 2



1. Can you spot the garden?
2. Why is this garden special?
3. What is happening in the city around the garden?
4. What has happened to the houses at the back of the picture? Why is this happening?
5. What two words (adjectives) describe the city?
6. What two words (adjectives) describe the garden?
7. Why is the city grey and sad now?
8. Can you think of any places in the news at the moment where this story could be set?



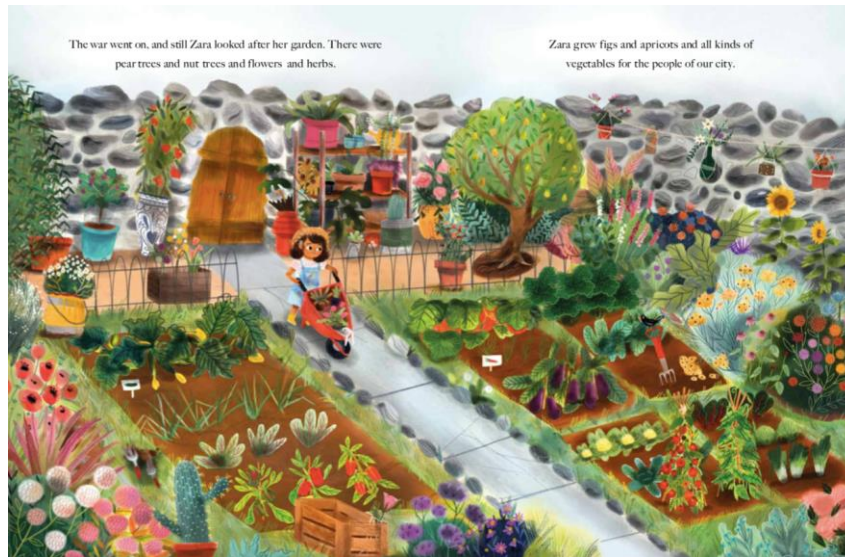
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# The Last Garden



Pages 3 - 4



1. What can you see on the fork / in the wheelbarrow? What is hiding under the shelves at the back?
2. Ask the children to point to plants they can identify - Can you find the...aubergines, leeks, sunflowers, pear tree, etc...?
3. What season is it in the garden?
4. Can you think of other special gardens in any other books you have read?
5. How do you think Zara is feeling?
6. Have you ever grown anything?
7. Do you have a garden or a green space where you can go? How do you feel when you are there?
8. Turn back to the previous page and look at the garden in the context of the city. What do you see all around the garden?



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# The Last Garden



Pages 5 - 6



She let us climb trees and build dens.

Sometimes we picked fruit and helped her water the plants.



We took Zara's flowers home to our broken houses.

We brought her figs and pears to our friends in hospital.



Ask what they can see and let the children explore the pictures for themselves. After they have offered ideas, ask more specific questions to draw out what they haven't noticed for themselves.

1. Can you spot Zara...her rabbit...the bird...the cat?
2. What did the children do in the garden?
3. What kind of a girl was Zara? In what ways was she kind? Encourage them to discuss: She let them play in her garden and she let them take flowers to brighten up their homes and produce from the garden to people in the hospitals

These two questions offer an opportunity to discuss war at an age appropriate level:

1. What adjective is linked to 'homes'? Why were they broken?
2. Why do you think their friends might have been in the hospital?



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Pages 7 - 8



1. Can you spot the bird? What do you think he is thinking?
2. Why are all the people inside their houses, looking out?
3. What do you think the people are feeling as they look out of their windows?
4. What is the change in atmosphere on this page?
5. How has the illustrator conveyed this to the reader? Encourage them to discuss: Darker colours; the weather has turned stormy; the words look like they are falling, like the bombs; the tiny faces at the window are huddled together; the playground has been destroyed; nowhere is safe in the city



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Pages 9 - 10



1. What is happening in the garden?
2. Can you spot the bird... Zara.... her rabbit...the cat?
3. What words can you use to compare the city with the garden?
4. What season is it in the garden now?
5. What have the children used to plant their seeds in?
6. Why is the garden particularly important to the children now?
7. What do the words 'bruised and tender' show about the plants? Why does the writer include this description of the plants growing in the garden?
8. Why were the children planting seeds in the garden during a war and there was so much destruction around them? This is an opportunity to explore how food supplies can be cut off during times of conflict; how people find solace in gardening and nature in times of stress and how planting seeds can be seen as acts of hope – the seeds will take time to grow, so it is an act of faith that the seeds they plant will not be destroyed and that the garden will remain as a place to come for the children



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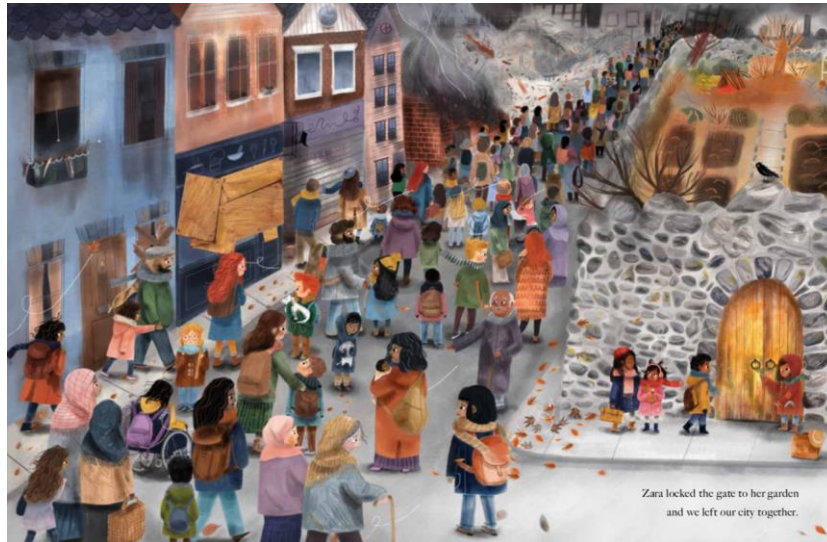




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Pages 11 - 12



1. Give the children time to absorb in detail what is happening on the page, then ask them to say what they notice in turn. Use leading questions to ensure that they haven't missed anything.
2. Can you spot Zara? What is in her pocket? Why do you think she wants to take her toy rabbit with her?
3. Can you spot the bird?
4. Why is Zara locking up the garden?
5. How do you think the people are feeling?
6. Why is the garden no longer bright and cheerful like before?
7. What is the boy with red hair carrying? You could think about the idea of people choosing what to take and what to leave. What would we take with us? With older children this could lead to thinking about having to weigh up the emotional and the practical in what we would take - link to Zara taking her toy rabbit to give her comfort, but how people would have needed to take food, maps, medicines, sensible clothes, etc
8. What are the ages of the people in the crowds leaving? Notice the range of ages and the girl in the wheelchair. Notice that they are all walking – discuss the difficulties that the elderly, the very young and those with disabilities may face in particular. Explore why they are not driving or taking a plane. Roads may have been damaged; people may be unable to afford transport because of the effects of the war



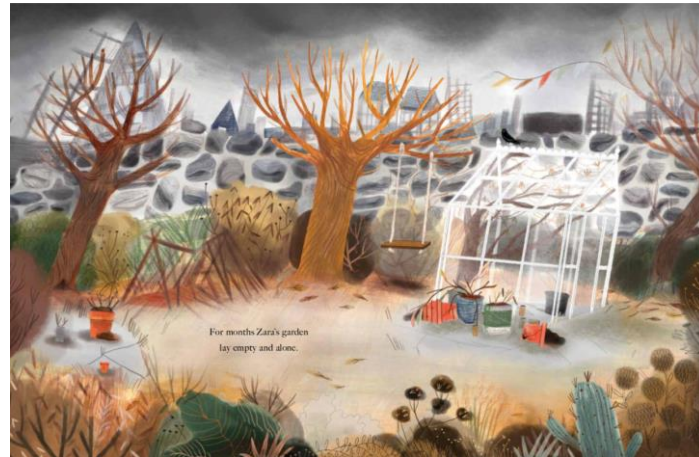
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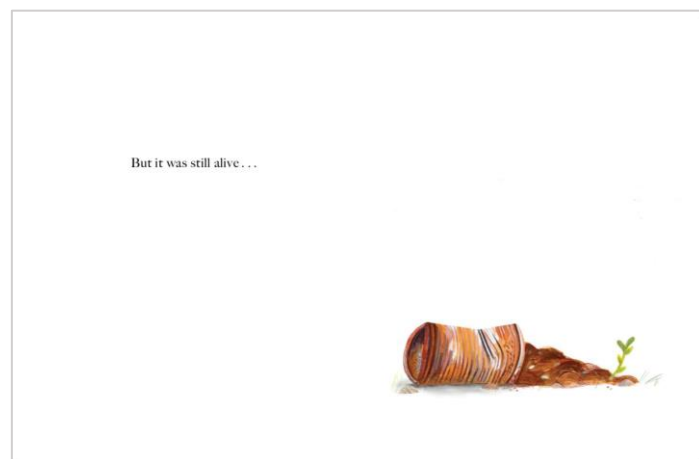


Pages 13 – 14



1. What season is it now in the garden?
2. How has the garden changed?
3. What describing words or phrases can you come up with to describe the garden?
4. What do you notice about the city beyond the walls?

Pages 15 – 16



1. What is growing in the rusty tin can?
2. What does this seedling represent? Discuss how the seed is growing, even though there is so much destruction around it. It is almost defiant – the beautiful green seedling growing from a rusted, bent can, showing that maybe the city can re-grow one day from the rubble

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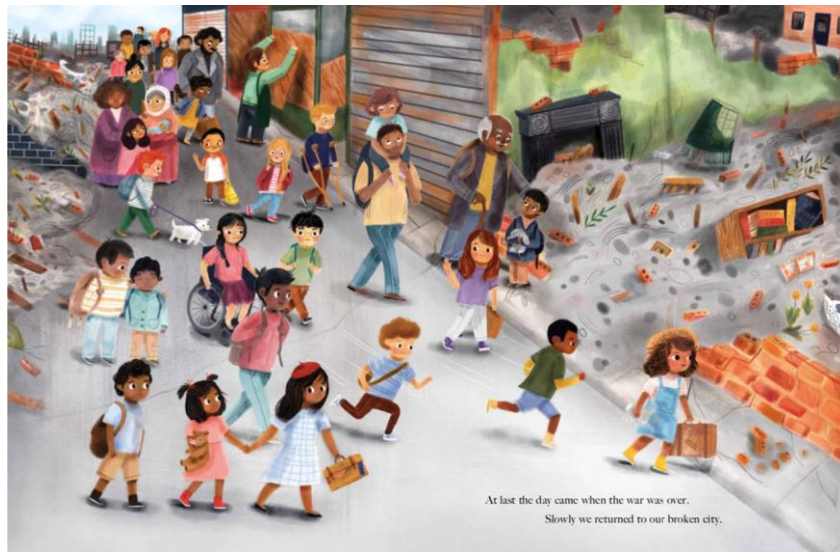




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Pages 17 – 18



1. Can you spot Zara? What is she carrying?
2. What is the man in the green apron doing?
3. In amongst the rubble, there are lots of flowers growing. Where could those seeds have come from?
4. What do you think the people are feeling? With older children you can move past feelings of relief and happiness to explore the job ahead of rebuilding the city – you could encourage the children to come up with ideas about defiance, resilience, working as a community. They will be pleased to be home, but there is much work to be done to restore their homeland
5. Why do you think the author said that people returned 'slowly'? Discuss ideas about how people may have been scared to return until they were sure it was safe; that people may have had long or difficult journeys back



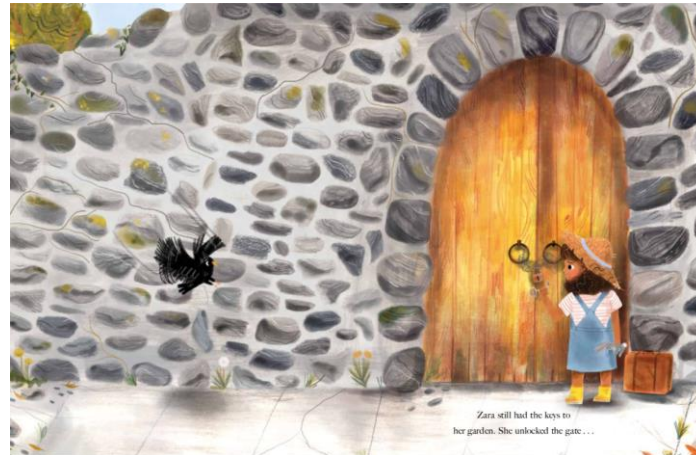
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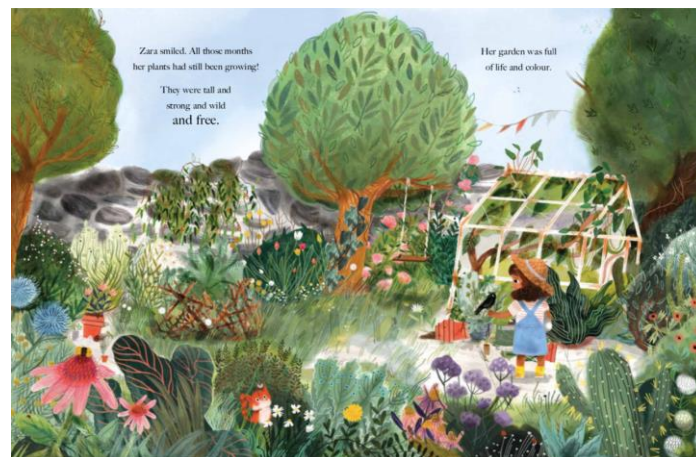


Pages 19 – 20



1. Who has come to see Zara?
2. What do you think Zara will find when she enters the garden?

Pages 21 - 22



1. Can you spot Zara...the bird...the cat?
2. Why is it significant that the garden had been growing tall and strong while Zara was away?  
This question helps to delve deeper into the idea of resilience and the ability to live and grow in the most difficult of circumstances
3. What do you think the author meant when she said the plants were free?

Pages 23 – 24

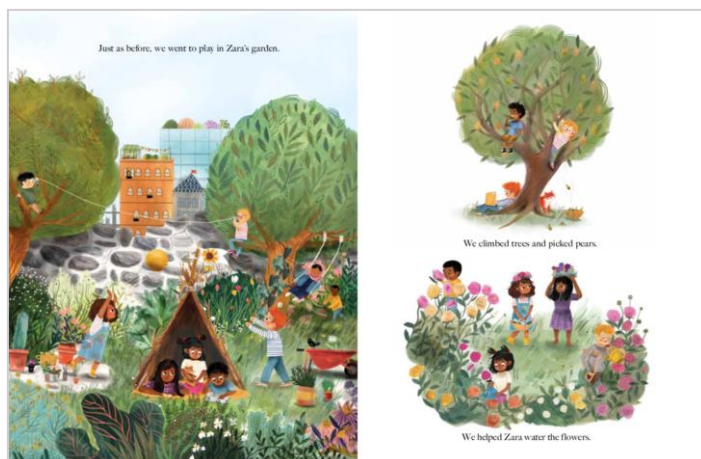
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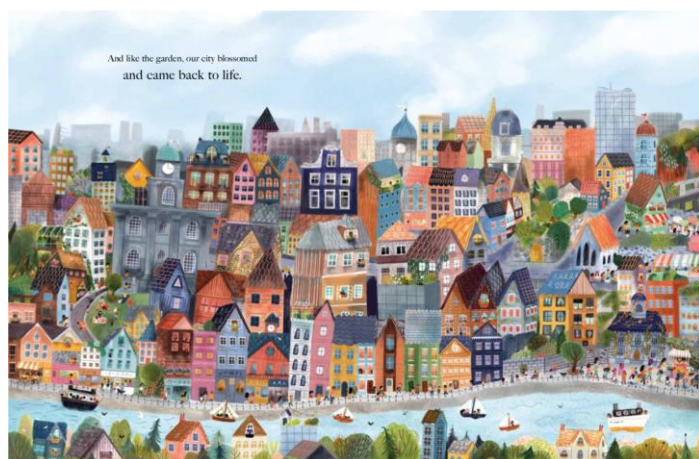


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1. Can you spot the bird...the cat...Zara...the rabbit?
2. What are the children doing in the garden? Encourage them to be specific
3. How do you think they feel to be back in the garden?
4. What do you notice about the city outside the walls of the garden?

## Pages 25 - 26



1. Explore the signs of regeneration in the city
2. Compare with the picture of the city on the opening page. Note the still-damaged buildings at the back of the picture showing that it takes a long time for a city to completely recover from devastation by war

## Pages 28

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1. At the end of the story, Zara is playing in the garden with her rabbit, the cat and the bird.
2. How do you think Zara is feeling?



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