

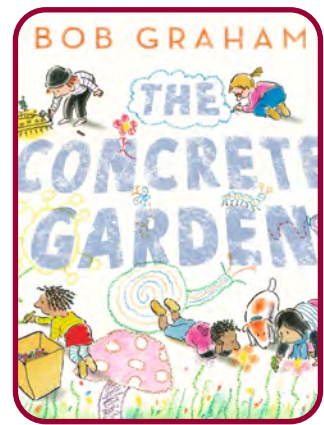
THE CONCRETE GARDEN

By Bob Graham

Publisher: Walker Books

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\$27.99



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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.

NOTES

Teacher Notes have been based on those supplied by the publisher. A full version is available on our website.

Themes:

Community; Friendship; Optimism; Imagination.

Discussions Questions and Activities:

- 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?
- *The 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.
- 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.
- 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?
- 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 - e.g. Did they work together? Did everyone have a chance to draw?

