Caring

Discussion Guide and Activities for Students and Teachers

Age range: 5–9 Grade level: K–4
Written by Kobi Yamada
Illustrated by Elise Hurst

OBJECTIVE

Teach students that they can make a positive difference in the world.

SUMMARY

The latest in Yamada and Hurst's award-winning series (following *Trying* and *Noticing*), *Caring* is a story about how one person's good deeds really can make the world a better place.

It's the tale of a boy who stumbles upon a beautiful, lush garden—and meets the inspiring gardener who transformed it from a wasteland to a sanctuary. As the boy curiously asks how the garden came to be, the gardener shares the story of how she found the land, barren and abandoned, and decided that she would be the one to help when no one else seemed to care. Inspired by her lessons of hard work, caring for others, and doing good, the boy is filled with hope and ultimately sets out to make the world better in his own way.

Yamada and Hurst's book explores the power we each have to create change. Readers will learn that what they do matters and feel encouraged to imagine bright possibilities.

DISCUSSION GUIDE

With so many big problems in the world, it might be hard to imagine how one person can make much of a difference. *Caring* teaches readers that our actions really can help make things better.

Yamada and Hurst offer the uplifting message that we all matter, and that when we care about something, we can make a big difference. Yamada's narrative weaves in reflections from the gardener, a woman who has dedicated years of her life to caring for the earth. When the boy tries to plant some seeds himself, his plant never grows, and he wonders if he did something wrong. The gardener encourages the boy that even if our efforts don't always work out how we hoped, it's still worth it to do good. In her experience, one act of goodness can often be more powerful than we know. Hurst's striking illustrations of the garden, filled with greenery and light, convey the beauty that results from caring. Elaborate hidden pictures reinforce the idea that caring involves paying attention and taking time—and can bring unexpected joy too. The key takeaway is that we all have the power to make the world a better place when we truly care.

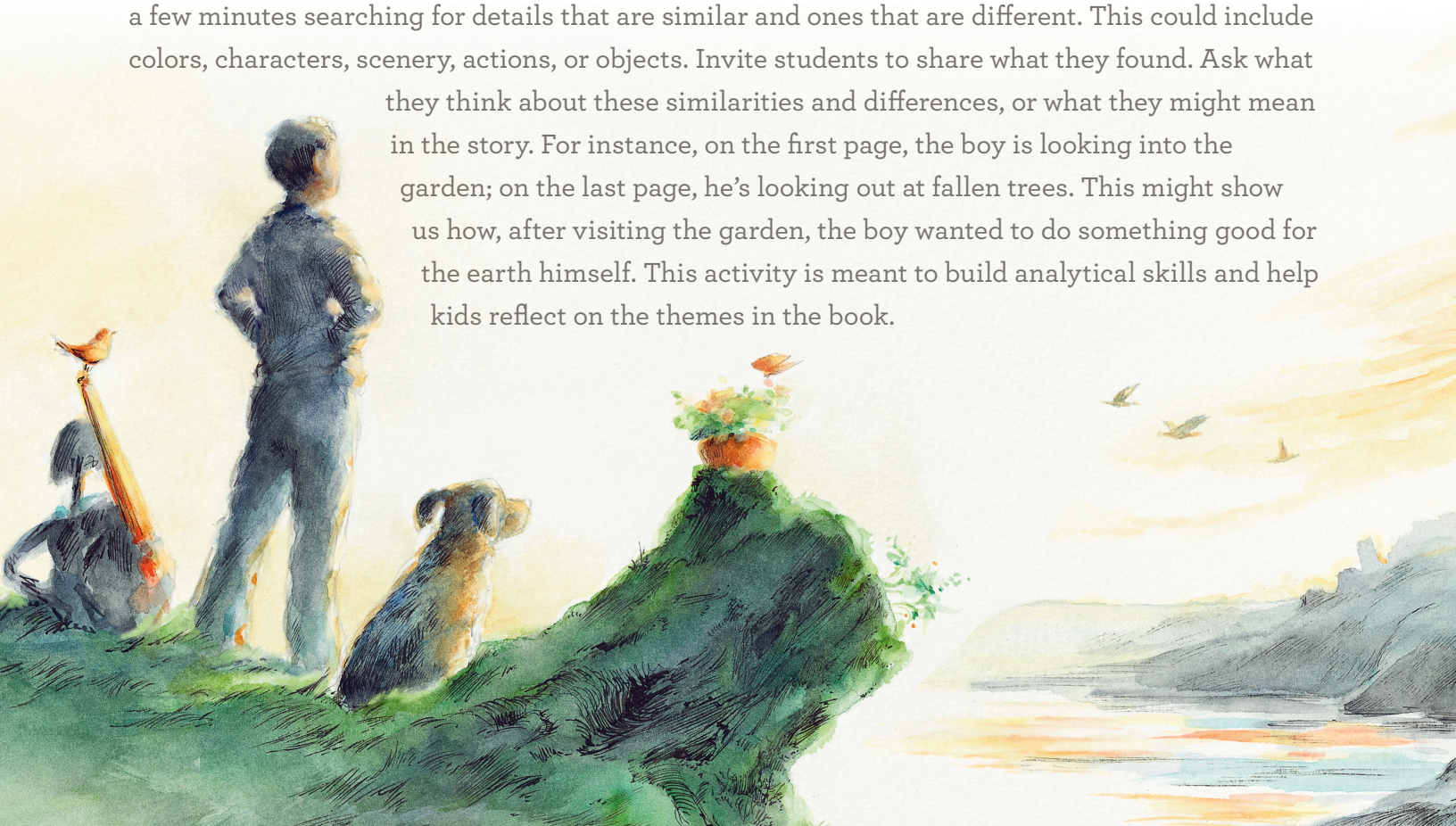
DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- What is something you'd like to do to make the world a better place?
- What does it mean to take care of each other? Why is caring important?
- When the boy first saw the gardener, he said, "I want to be happy like that." Why do you think the gardener seemed so happy?
- What's something or someone you care a lot about? What kinds of things can you do to show your care?
- Can you think of any examples of when doing one good thing could lead to more good things happening?
- Are there any problems that you've noticed in the world? What do you hope will be better about those things in the future?
- Why did the gardener work so hard to plant the garden? Do you think her hard work was worth it?
- What do you think the boy is doing on the last page of the book?
- Have you ever put a lot of effort into something, but it didn't turn out how you hoped or expected? How did you feel? How did you keep going after that?

ACTIVITIES

Compare and Contrast

Have students examine the illustrations on the first and last page of the story. Ask them to spend a few minutes searching for details that are similar and ones that are different. This could include colors, characters, scenery, actions, or objects. Invite students to share what they found. Ask what they think about these similarities and differences, or what they might mean in the story. For instance, on the first page, the boy is looking into the garden; on the last page, he's looking out at fallen trees. This might show us how, after visiting the garden, the boy wanted to do something good for the earth himself. This activity is meant to build analytical skills and help kids reflect on the themes in the book.



Make Your Own Garden

Ask students to imagine what their garden would be like if they were to plant one. Prompt them to think of what plants they'd grow and what creatures would live there. On a sheet of paper, have students draw or paint their creations. Encourage them to be imaginative—they can even draw themselves as a gardener. Afterward, ask students to share some ways they would care for their garden, and ways they might share this space with someone else. This activity is meant to foster imaginative thinking and help students build compassion.

Do Something Good

Challenge students to think of one good thing they can do this week to make the world a better place. To help get them started, you can provide a list of options, such as recycling plastic containers, donating an old toy, offering to help a friend or family member with a task, picking up litter, or giving someone a compliment. Ask students to write down their goal and record how they felt after completing it. The following week, have students share their experiences. This activity is meant to encourage kids to make an impact in their own way.

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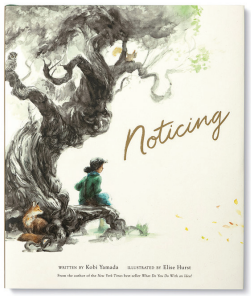

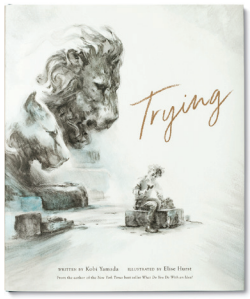

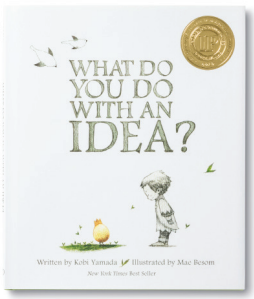

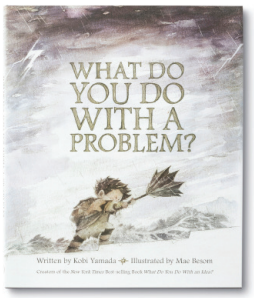

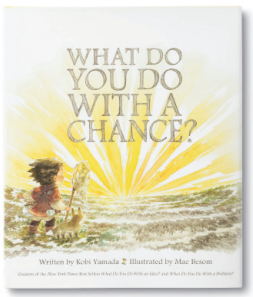

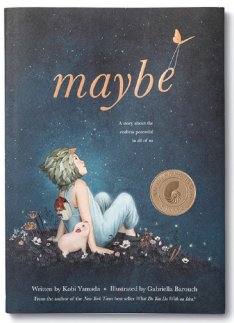

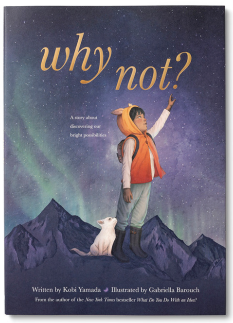

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