



Clare's Tomato

Ed Keller

LitPrime Solutions, 56 pages, (paperback) \$7.99, 9798887030111

Reviewed: May 2023

In *Clare's Tomato*, a girl learns about the ins and outs of growing and harvesting her first tomato.

Clare, described by the narrator as approximately five years old, learns about chlorophyll and wonders whether humans could also create their own food. Her parents tell her about gardening for food, and her father gifts her a tomato plant. Clare cares for it tenderly, even helping her father build a cage to protect it from predators.

When her plant fruits and ripens, however, Clare, who sees her plant as a pet, is horrified at the suggestion she put her first tomato into a salad. Her father lets her know it's her choice and takes her to their neighbor's garden to see what happens when tomato fruits aren't harvested. Clare learns the vines can break and views rotting fruit; with this, she determines to eat the tomatoes and dream of future planting seasons.

An uplifting story about growing your own food, *Clare's Tomato* also documents Clare's process of learning through dialogue, library research, and hands-on experience. Reading comprehension and engagement questions appear throughout the book, providing a built-in conversation guide to help adults who want to engage the young readers in their lives. The full-color illustrations are emotive and fit the subject matter.

However, the text is extremely lengthy for a picture book, and is often presented in dense paragraphs: for example, one paragraph on page 5 is 11 sentences long. Additionally, the story takes unnecessary detours (for example, when Clare's mother instructs her on how to properly set a table) that will test young readers' attention spans. Grammatical issues plague the introductory page (mixed tenses, missing apostrophe and commas, etc.) and distract in a few other passages.

Clare's Tomato contains a solid, teachable premise, but substantive editing to make it more consumable for early readers would help it better conform to the picture book format.

Also available in hardcover and ebook.