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REVIEWS

TITLE INFORMATION

CLARE'S TOMATO

Written and Illus. by Ed Keller

Litprime Solutions (56 pp.)

\$14.99 hardcover, \$7.99 paperback, \$2.99 e-book

ISBN: 979-8887030913

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BOOK REVIEW

A young girl grows tomatoes in Keller's illustrated children's book.

Five-year-old Clare, who is fair-skinned and has shoulder-length brown hair, likes dolls, dress-up, and baking. She becomes curious about vegetables and starts asking questions about plants. Clare is particularly interested in how tomatoes begin as small, green balls that grow into large, red orbs. One day, her dad comes home with a tomato plant. They plant it and it begins to grow. Because the leaves and stems of tomato plants can be poisonous to animals, Clare decides she needs a cage around the plant. She names the first tomato "Greenie." When the tomato is ripe, Clare's parents discuss using it in a salad, which upsets her (happily, her parents agree that Clare can decide the tomato's fate). Later, Clare and her dad tour a neighbor's garden, and Clare tries snap peas. Eventually, Clare realizes that "the tomato is raised to be food, and we eat food." At the end of the book, she is planning to cultivate a larger garden the following year. The highlights of the book are the illustrations, which are bright, vibrant, and engaging. The author also includes questions to encourage readers to reflect on the material. However, much of the narrative is written in stilted sentences, with more telling than showing; when the neighbor's large dog jumps on the fence, the narrator tells readers, "That scared Clare," but it's unclear why, as the dog looks quite friendly in the illustration. There is also very little dialogue in the book—instead, the narrator fills readers in on what was discussed between characters after the fact. Gender stereotypes are evident, with a mother who tends to the home while the tie-wearing dad works. Large blocks of text will test the attention spans of younger readers, and a section that gives instructions on properly setting the table feels out of place given the book's theme.

A beautifully illustrated children's book in need of editing.

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