

Springboard^{into} Comprehension 4

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What REALLY Happened?



Written by Sally Odgers
Illustrated by Donovan Bixley,
Claire de Zoete, and Jenny Mountstephen



What REALLY Happened?



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When assessing what really happened, people often confuse facts and opinions. Because we see situations from different viewpoints, we often end up having different opinions about what happened. When something happens, there are often as many opinions as people involved. Opinions are not bad, but they are personal. We form opinions by interpreting what we think we saw and speculating about why something happened. Facts are not personal – they remain the same no matter who looks at them. To figure out the truth, it is good to know the difference between fact and opinion.

Angie's Unpleasant Surprise

As Angie stepped off the train, she wondered if the tomatoes would be ripe in the Greentrees School garden. The hot weather meant the peas should be ready to pick.

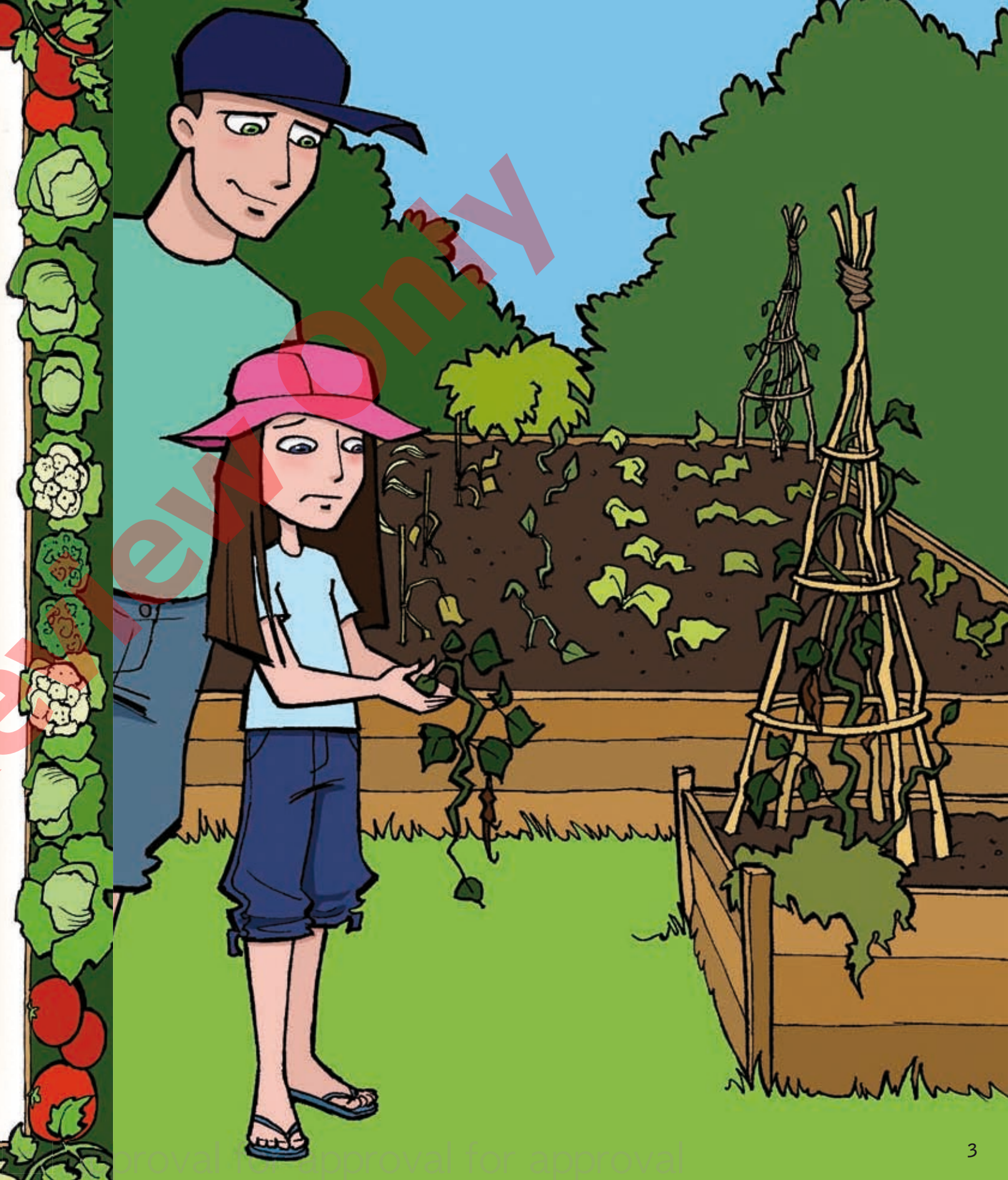
"Dad, can we stop at the school garden on our way home?" Angie said to Dad as they waited at the bus stop. "It's my turn to look after it next week."

"The bus stops there and we have hardly any luggage, so why not?" said Dad. "Who looked after it while we were away?"

"Mr Pease made up a roster of helpers," explained Angie. "Jake did the watering and weeding for the first week. Monica was down for the second. It's the best garden ever!"

At Greentrees School, Angie clicked open the gates and ran to examine the vegetable garden. Her smile died as she saw the devastation. The garden had been lush when she saw it last. Now, it was dry and starved. The tomato plants had wilted and dropped some of their unripe fruit. The pea vines drooped, displaying withered pods. The soil around the lettuces was dehydrated.

"Dad!" wailed Angie. "How could this have happened?"



Monica's Opinion

"It wasn't my fault no one watered the garden," said Monica defensively, when Angie stormed round to accuse her of neglecting her duty.

"You were supposed to cultivate the garden last week!" Angie reminded her. "Mr Pease arranged it on our last day at school." She held out her copy of the roster.

Monica frowned. "Yes, but Jake called me and said Mr Pease agreed I could do it next week, instead. I was away last Tuesday and Wednesday."

"But next week is my turn!" objected Angie.

"Mr Pease agreed I could be next week," repeated Monica. "Look!" She got out her own roster. "See? My name is written over yours. It's on the roster, so it must be right. The garden should have been all right without water for just one week. Jake looked after it before that."

"Are you sure?" asked Angie.

"That's what it says on the roster," said Monica with finality.



Jake's Opinion

Jake looked indignant when Angie waved her roster under his nose. "What do you mean it was my turn to look after the school garden?" he said.

"You must have known," said Angie.

Jake shrugged. "Mr Pease said you were changing weeks with Monica. He would have told me if it was my turn first." He looked at Angie's roster. "Monica did it last week, so it must be all right."

Angie sighed. "Monica didn't do it. I'll have to ask Mr Pease what happened," she said. "If I water the garden today, I hope it will be all right."

"Too much water is bad for gardens anyway," suggested Jake.

