

Realistic
Fiction

FIRST EDITION

BY SUSAN PARIS - ILLUSTRATED BY DAVID LOWE



Mc
Graw
Hill

PAIRED
READ

Magnolia Leaves

STRATEGIES & SKILLS

Comprehension

Strategy: Visualize

Skill: Problem and Solution

Vocabulary

bouquet, emotions, encircle,
express, fussy, portraits,
sparkles, whirl

Vocabulary Strategy

Similes and Metaphors

Word Count: 2,573



Education

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Essential Question

In what ways do people show they care about each other?

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CHAPTER 1

NEWS AND VIEWS

Ms. Carcetti has an announcement to make. Before she says anything, I realize what it's going to be about. My heart bangs crazily against my ribs because I desperately want to be the editor of the new school newspaper. Mom used to be a journalist, and I've always wanted to be one, too. I figure that means I should get the job, though Mom's warned me countless times that wanting something and getting it aren't the same thing.

I've already thought of a name, *News and Views*, and I have tons of ideas for articles.

Ms. Carcetti waits for everyone to settle down, but she glances over at me and gives me a smile. I smile back. My smile sparkles from deep inside because now I am confident that I know exactly what she's going to say.





Once she finally has everyone’s attention, Ms. Carcetti explains that there were a lot of applications for the editor’s job and the teachers had difficulty making a decision. “In the end, one applicant stood out,” she says. My heart beats faster. “The editor of the school’s new paper is ... Mia!” The other kids all look at me and applaud. “Congratulations, Mia! I know you’ll do a great job,” says Ms. Carcetti.

I’m so happy I feel like I’m going to burst. My best friend, Kelly, claps the loudest. She gives my arm a friendly squeeze, and we both start laughing.

“I knew you’d get it,” she whispers. “It’s so cool!”

“Thanks, I’m really excited,” I whisper back.

I can't wait to tell my mom my news as soon as I get home that afternoon. She's outside in the sandbox playing with my little sister, Emily.

"I'm so happy for you, honey," she says, brushing sand off herself before giving me a big hug. "What's your first story going to be?"

"Probably about the kids doing the school garden," I say.

"And what's your angle?" That's my mom the journalist talking.

"They need more volunteers," I say, "and people to donate seeds and other garden supplies."

When my dad gets home, he has a few story suggestions, too. "What about interviewing the principal?" he says.

"And the angle?" my mom asks predictably.

"Well, Ms. Soto can offer a unique perspective on the school," my dad says, "and she's pretty funny too."

Talking with Ms. Soto isn't something I'd thought of, and I'm not convinced it's a good idea. "Maybe," I say. "But it's not really news."

It seems everyone has ideas and views about what should go in the school newspaper.

“Hey,” says Kelly, plopping down beside me on the bus the next morning. She’s running late as usual, but I can tell she’s excited about something.



“I could write a book review for the paper,” Kelly says. “I’ve just finished this book by Louis Sachar, which is about some kids at this crazy school ...”

Kelly describes the plot, but I get distracted as my thoughts flip back to organizing the interview about the school garden. I need to find Mr. Fitzsimons, the supervising teacher, plus I need to think of some interview questions. I take out my notebook and start writing a list.

“Hey, you’re not listening!” Kelly says indignantly.

“I was,” says Sam, who’s sitting behind us. “A book review is a great idea.”

“So shall I write it?” Kelly asks.

“Well, maybe ... it depends how much space I have.”

“Oh,” Kelly says. “Well, you’ll have space sometime, won’t you?”

“I guess,” I say halfheartedly. I’m wondering whether I’ll have time to find Mr. Fitzsimons this morning.

CHAPTER 2

MY WAY

My mind is preoccupied all morning, and twice Kelly has to remind me what we're doing.

When the lunch bell rings, I'm out of my chair right away, racing to the teachers' lounge to find Mr. Fitzsimons before he disappears for lunch. Once we've agreed on a time to meet tomorrow, I relax.

On the bus after school, Kelly invites me over to her place.

"Actually, I've got stuff to do for the paper," I say.

"Great! I've got lots of ideas!"

"Yeah, you and everyone else," I say.

Kelly's face falls, and she looks upset, although she doesn't express it—probably because she's not big on talking about her emotions. Instead she says, "Well, you're the editor."

I feel bad, but she's right—I am the editor, aren't I? "It won't take long," I promise her. "I'll call you when I'm through."

When I get home, I take my dad's laptop up to my room, along with a snack, and shut the door in case Emily comes to investigate. I work on the interview questions I need to have ready for tomorrow. I'm so absorbed that I don't remember my promise to call Kelly until my dad says dinner's ready.

"I'm really sorry," I tell her when we're on the bus the next morning. Kelly plays with the zipper on her backpack. "I forgot, really. Please don't be mad."

"What are you mad about?" Sam asks Kelly, poking his head over the seat.

"Nothing," replies Kelly. "She just forgot to call me, that's all." I start to speak. "Yeah, we know, you were working on the newspaper," she interrupts, but then she smiles. She asks me about the garden interview questions.

"I'm meeting them after lunch. I hope I'll have enough time to take some photos," I say.

"I could take the photos," Sam offers. "My brother taught me a lot about composition and some cool techniques too."

But in my head, I already know I want the kids to all stand around the scarecrow, leaning on their shovels. Sam would probably do it differently.

"No, that's okay," I reply. "Maybe next time."

Sam looks disappointed. "Fine," he mutters.



Lunchtime arrives, and when I look at my questions, I realize they're not in a logical order, so instead of eating, I do some last-minute organizing. When I arrive at the garden, I feel confident and like I can handle anything.

I start out by asking the obvious "W" questions that my mom reminded me of last night. Mr. Fitzsimons gives me a strange look when I ask the "what" and "where" of the garden, but he has lots to say when I ask "why." I write frantically, scrambling to keep up.

"It's all about a sustainable future," he says, "and growing your own food is the perfect place to start." I get stuck on spelling "sustainable" and miss some of the last things Mr. Fitzsimons says. I've already asked him to repeat a few things, and I don't want to ask again.

"So I guess you'll want to take our official gardeners' portraits?" Mr. Fitzsimons asks cheerfully when we're finished. Unfortunately, I haven't thought about photos since talking to Sam, and I don't have a camera with me.

"Can we do that tomorrow?" I ask.

"Sure," Mr. Fitzsimons replies. "We're picking our tomatoes tomorrow. It'll be good advertising!"

DISASTER

Transcribing the interview is a nightmare. My notebook is a mess of half-finished sentences, and I have quotes with no names, and names with no quotes. It takes over an hour to decipher my scribble and type everything on the computer. I don't even begin to write the actual article, and I'm guessing I won't have time to be overly fussy about the final result. I have another interview scheduled tomorrow.

I slump downstairs and poke around the kitchen, looking for something to eat.

"Why are you so hungry?" asks my mom.

"I didn't have time for lunch," I say, stuffing bread into my mouth. "I was too busy interviewing."

"That's not good," says my mom. "Didn't Ms. Carcetti tell you to appoint a deputy editor? And who else is on the team?"

While I eat a banana, my mom gives me a lecture about spreading the work around, only she calls it delegating.



I keep my mom's advice in mind the next day, but my brain is starting to whirl like a top. I just want to get things done, and it's much easier doing it on my own without interference.

I try to explain this to Kelly, but I don't think she understands. We're supposed to be writing book reports, but Kelly's quizzing me about my next interview, which is with Hana, who recently went on vacation to Japan. I haven't planned the interview well, and I figure I'll just make the questions up as I go along. I'll probably ask about Japanese food, customs, and the long flight, of course.

"Why don't I come along, too?" Kelly whispers. "I'll take notes while you do the interview."

"I won't be able to read your notes," I say, not mentioning the fact that I can't even read my own.

"Fine," Kelly says, "whatever you want." She turns away before I can think of something nice to say.

She sits at another table during lunch, ignoring me, and I try not to show that I care. Maybe she can help next time.

It's much easier interviewing someone my own age, and I have time afterward to take the photo at the garden.

"Where shall we stand?" Mr. Fitzsimons asks.

I reach into my bag for the camera, only it isn't there, and I suddenly realize it was never there in the first place. I totally forgot to bring it. Again.

"Perhaps you need an assistant," Mr. Fitzsimons suggests. I feel pretty silly about my mistake but try to laugh it off.



On the bus ride home, Kelly sits with Sam instead. I tell myself it's because I got on the bus last, but I know that's not the reason. Usually Kelly would save me a seat. I know I've made a mistake, but I definitely don't want Sam eavesdropping on my apology, so I decide to leave it until tomorrow.

Writing up the second interview is much easier—I'm getting the hang of it. When I think about Kelly again, I decide to take a break to call her, but nobody answers. When I return, Emily is at my desk, her little fingers tapping on the keyboard.

"Emily!" I yell. "Get away from the computer!" She gets down in a hurry, but it's too late. My interview with Hana is ruined with Emily's random typing.

DEADLINE

When she hears me yelling, my mom comes running. She attempts to help, but it appears my draft has disappeared forever.

My mom understands about deadlines. She helps me write a list of the things I need to do by Friday morning, when the copy is needed for the newspaper. I sleep with the list under my pillow as if that might help. I lie awake for hours, tossing and turning, feeling like that princess who couldn't sleep because of a pea under her mattress.

The next day at school, I can't concentrate. At lunch, I shut myself in the girls' bathroom and finally let it all out. I'm crying so hard I don't hear the gentle taps on the door at first. It's Kelly—and when I can finally talk again, I tell her everything.

"It's bad," she agrees. "You've lost the interview with Hana, you haven't finished writing the article about the school garden, and you haven't taken photos of anyone—right?"

"That pretty much sums it up," I admit.

"Maybe you should let me help you."

"But I don't deserve your help," I wail.

After school, we go back to my house and swing into action. Kelly calls Sam and arranges for him to take the photos the next day, and then she starts on her book review. We've decided that will replace the article about Hana. Then I work on my interview with Mr. Fitzsimons.

"'Growing Tomatoes: The Perfect Place to Start.' What do you think about that for a headline?" I ask Kelly.

"Are they actually growing tomatoes?" Kelly asks.

"Of course," I say, "but it's a good question. You should be my deputy editor."

"I think I already am," Kelly says with a grin.



Sam takes some great photos the next day. They show Mr. Fitzsimons and his students dangling tomatoes by their ears like enormous red earrings. Sam's caption reads: "Too good to eat?" There's no sign of the scarecrow, but that's okay—Sam's idea was way better than mine.

Kelly likes my suggestion for the name of the newspaper. When everything's finally ready to e-mail to the school office, she says, "Send it." She practically pulls me away from the computer to keep me from making any more changes.

"Honestly," she says. "You really are a control freak!"

"That's why I got the job," I protest.

The first edition of *News and Views* is delivered to our classroom the next day. My name is under the masthead as editor, and beneath that is Kelly's as deputy editor. Sam's name is under his photo, although he complains the font's too small.

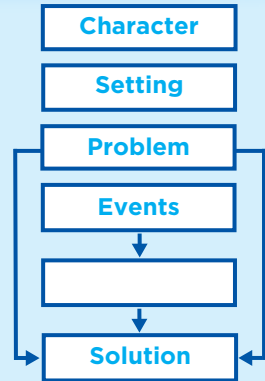
"We'll make it bigger next time," Kelly promises. Already she's the perfect deputy.



Respond to Reading

Summarize

Summarize how Mia's friends show they care in *First Edition*. You can use your graphic organizer to help you.



Text Evidence

1. What features of *First Edition* tell you that it is realistic fiction? **GENRE**
2. What problems did Mia have with her interview with Hana? **PROBLEM AND SOLUTION**
3. What does the simile “my brain is starting to whirl like a top” mean on page 11? **SIMILES AND METAPHORS**
4. Write about the problems Mia faced putting together the newspaper and how she solved them. **WRITE ABOUT READING**

Compare Texts

Read about how a boy got to know his neighbor.



Magnolia Leaves

The house is one of the few on Magnolia Street that actually has any magnolias, but it gives Michael the creeps. The big trees encircle the place as if they're trying to hide it, but in the winter, you can see directly through the bare, twisted branches anyway. No one comes or goes, and no one rakes the magnolia leaves, which gather in deep drifts.

One day when Michael is walking past, he is surprised to see an older woman at the mailbox. He's never seen her before—not even a glimpse—although obviously it's her mailbox. He edges back, hoping she won't see him, but she gives a small wave and calls out, "Could you help me, please?"

He looks behind him, but there's no one else around. He can't just ignore her, so with apprehension, he walks over.



The woman smiles at him. “I find the catch tricky,” she says apologetically, holding up her hands. “Arthritis,” she explains.

Michael nods, remembering how his grandmother had the same problem. He pulls at the rusty catch, which struggles a little before it opens.

“Thank you!” the woman exclaims.

“The catch needs fixing,” Michael says, then immediately regrets it—now she’ll want him to help again. The woman is

watching him with bright eyes like a sparrow.

“I guess,” he mumbles, “I could bring some oil tomorrow.”

“I would appreciate that,” the woman says. “You’re Angela’s boy, aren’t you? Tell her you’re helping Thea.”

“You know my mom?” asks Michael, surprised.

“We used to run into each other at the store,” says Thea, “but I don’t get out much these days.”

The next day, Michael returns with oil and a screwdriver, as well as a bouquet of flowers his mother collected from her garden. Thea invites him inside while she puts the flowers in a vase. It's a nice old house, not creepy at all.

While he oils the mailbox catch and tightens the screws, Thea watches, wearing mittens that make her hands look like woolly brown paws. She asks him questions about school and his hobbies. When she asks if he would rake her leaves, he agrees right away.

Michael uses an old rake to drag the leaves into piles.

“Well done,” says Thea. “How would you like to earn some money doing chores for me?”

Work at the spooky magnolia house? “I’d love to,” Michael says with a grin.



Make Connections

Why did Michael’s attitude about his neighbor change?

ESSENTIAL QUESTION

What things do Kelly in *First Edition* and Michael in *Magnolia Leaves* do that show they care? **TEXT TO TEXT**

Focus on Genre

Realistic Fiction Realistic fiction is a story that could be true. Writers use believable characters and settings, and the plots usually involve the kinds of problems that many of us share. As readers, we can identify with the characters and their problems almost as if we knew them ourselves.

Read and Find In *First Edition*, Mia's problem is finding time to do all the tasks she set herself. Why does that seem believable?

In *Magnolia Leaves*, Michael is reluctant to go near the house. Why does that seem believable?

Your Turn

Compare yourself to one of the characters in *First Edition*. Think about the ways you are similar and different. What is another problem the character might have to deal with? What would you do if you were in their situation?

With a partner, discuss your characters and how they resolved the problems you gave them. Are your problems and solutions realistic?

Literature Circles

Fiction

Thinkmark

Characters

How did Mia change during *First Edition*?

How would you describe Kelly?

Sequence of Events

What happened first, then, next, and finally in *First Edition*?

Plot

What was Mia's problem in *First Edition*?

Why was Kelly mad at Mia?

Conclusions

What are some of the different ways that people show they care about each other?

Make Connections

What sports, hobbies, or interests do you have that you can share with a friend or family member? Compare this with the way a character in *First Edition* shares an interest they have.

Making It Happen

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