

THE ROUGH PATCH

BY BRIAN LIES

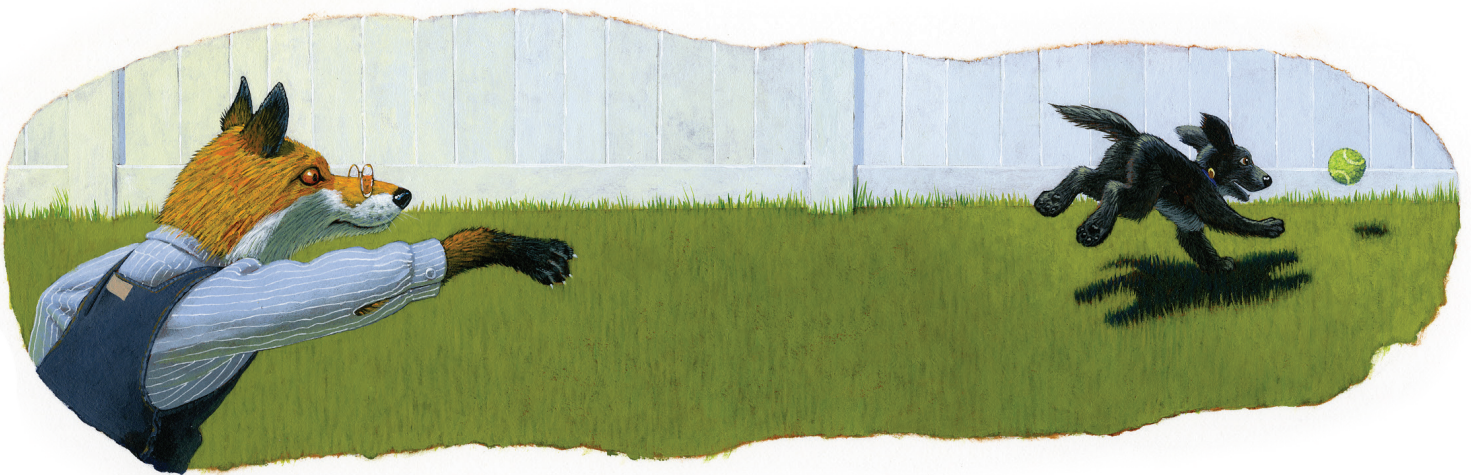
EDUCATORS' GUIDE

Interest Level: K-3
Guided Reading Level: M
Themes: Friendship, Death, Grieving, Life Cycle, Plants

ABOUT THE BOOK

Evan and his dog do everything together, from eating ice cream to caring for their award-winning garden, which grows big and beautiful. One day the unthinkable happens: Evan's dog dies. Heartbroken, Evan destroys the garden and everything in it. The ground becomes overgrown with prickles and thorns, and Evan embraces the chaos.

But beauty grows in the darkest of places, and when a twisting vine turns into an immense pumpkin, Evan is drawn out of his misery and back to the county fair, where friendships—old and new—await.

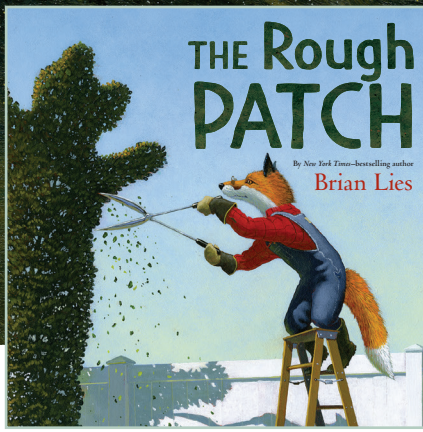


ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Photo courtesy of Brian Lies

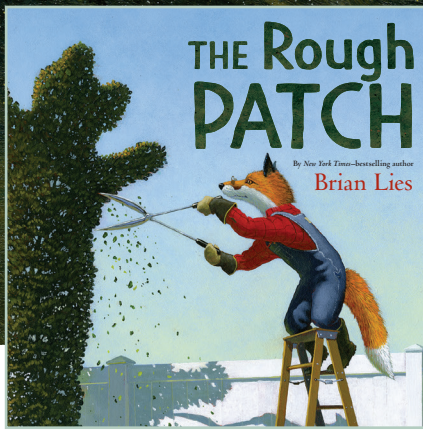
Brian Lies is the award-winning author and illustrator of the *New York Times*-bestsellers *Bats at the Beach*, *Bats at the Library*, and *Bats at the Ballgame*. He is the illustrator of more than 22 other books for children, including *Malcolm at Midnight*, by W. H. Beck, and *More*, by I. C. Springman. He was born in Princeton, New Jersey, and now lives in eastern Massachusetts with his wife and daughter.



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- What activities do Evan and his dog enjoy together?
- What is special about Evan's garden?
- What happens to Evan's dog? How does this make Evan feel?
- How can you tell that Evan is feeling sad, angry, and lonely?
- What happens to Evan's garden? How does it change? Why?
- What plant starts to grow in the garden? What does Evan do when he discovers the pumpkin? When it ripens, what does Evan do with it?
- How does attending the fair help Evan?
- What are the prizes Evan can choose for winning third place at the fair? What choice does Evan make?
- How does the story end?
- Why is this story called *The Rough Patch*? Does this title have more than one meaning?

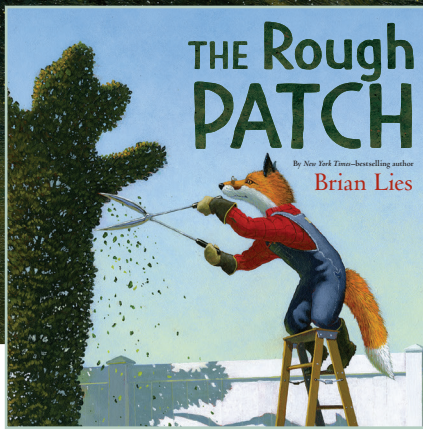




AFTER-READING ACTIVITIES

- VOCABULARY QUIZ.** Divide students into two teams. Alternate asking each team to define the following vocabulary words from the story, as well as use them in a sentence: adventure, magnificent, unthinkable, hoe, bitter, slashed, hacked, heap, sprouted, prickly, desolate, tendrils, responded, gobbled, claimed, scrabbling. The team earns a point each time they define the word accurately, and earns a second point if they can use the word correctly in a sentence. The team with the most points wins!
- HOW ARE YOU FEELING?** Discuss what happens to Evan's dog in the story and ask the students if they have ever experienced the loss of a family pet. How did it make them feel, or how do they imagine they would feel? What might help them feel better? Have the students write about their feelings and share their story with a partner.
- PLANT A SEED.** Discuss how animals and plants have a life cycle. Ask the students to explain why the pumpkin growing in Evan's garden helped him to feel less sad and lonely after his dog died. Discuss how new life brings hope, and that they will have the opportunity to experience the joy of planting themselves. Bring in an assortment of seeds (including pumpkin seeds), a bag of soil, and cups. Label the cups with student names. Help the students to plant a seed of their choice. They can write the name of the plant on a craft stick and slide it into the soil to identify their plant. Have them place their cups near a window and care for their seeds by watering them regularly. Encourage the students to be patient until their seeds germinate and their plants begin to grow.
- JUST BETWEEN FRIENDS.** Ask readers to think about one of their closest friends. Why is their friendship so special? What do they enjoy doing together? Have students write about their friend and add an illustration. Students can share their friendship pages with the class.
- AND THE WINNER IS . . .** Evan wins third prize at the fair for his big, beautiful pumpkin. Have the students choose a name from a basket and design an award ribbon for the student whose name they picked. Instruct students to acknowledge a special trait or talent in that classmate. Examples could include "Fastest Runner," "Great Reader," or "Amazing Artist." Pass out the ribbons and have the students applaud one another as they are awarded. Then have the students wear their ribbons during a special celebration. Reproduce the award ribbon template on the following page for students to complete.





AND THE WINNER IS . . .

Instructions: Use this template to design an award ribbon for a classmate. Use the center of the ribbon to acknowledge a special trait or talent your classmate has. Decorate the ribbon, and then cut on the dotted line and present the ribbon to your classmate!

