



## ***THE FORGIVENESS GARDEN***

by Lauren Thompson  
Illustrations by Christy Hale

**Louisiana Young Readers' Choice Nominee 2015**  
**Grades 3-5**

*Submitted by Mary Jo Kelly*

**Title:** *The Forgiveness Garden*

**Author:** Lauren Thompson

**Illustrator:** Christy Hale

**Publisher:** Feiwel and Friends, New York: 2012

**Pages:** unpagged (32pp)

### **SUMMARY**

This simple parable tells what happens in two warring villages when one child, who has been injured in the combat, refuses to retaliate against the boy who threw the rock that scarred her face. Instead, she asks the people of both villages to help her plant a garden of forgiveness. Her aggressor, at first, refuses to join in the creation of the garden and its planting. Finally he decides to join her and begins to speak with her. Thompson shows readers that there are better ways to solve differences and settle conflicts than with violence and aggression. Her inspiration came from the Garden of Forgiveness in Beirut, Lebanon, created by humanitarian and psychotherapist Alexandra Asseily after a fifteen year civil war there claimed the lives of 300,000 people. In 2005 Reverend Lyndon Harris, the priest whose church was directly across the street from the World Trade Center, traveled to Beirut with family members who lost someone in the 9/11 bombings in New York in order to plant an olive tree there. Because of that trip, he founded The Gardens of Forgiveness Foundation, a nonprofit educational organization committed to teaching the world forgiveness as imagined by Asseily.

### **AUTHOR'S BIOGRAPHY**

Born in 1962 in Oregon, Lauren Ann Stevens moved to Massachusetts when she was three years old. The oldest of four children, she grew up in the Netherlands, where she became fluent in Dutch (though unfortunately she has forgotten it all). She was always a good student, attending college at Mount Holyoke where she majored in mathematics and took many English and writing classes. This led her to pursue a master's degree in English at Clark University, where she also taught after graduation. She became interested in publishing, and in 1988, she moved to New



York, where she edited children's books for eighteen years and began writing her own books. In 2006, she decided to become a full time writer. She is married to poet, musician, and English professor Robert Thompson. They live in Brooklyn with their son Owen. With each of the books she writes, she tries to figure out a way to help the world become a better place.

Biographical information taken from the author's website,

<http://www.laurenthompson.net/contact/giveback>,

Accessed August 27, 2014.

### **ILLUSTRATOR'S BIOGRAPHY**

Christy Hale has been illustrating books since she was a child. She tucked her drawings into the books she read where those pictures belonged, not wishing to deface the books. By the time she was ten-years-old, she had decided to become a writer/illustrator. She received her BA and Masters degrees at Lewis and Clark College in Oregon and moved to New York. She continued her education at the Pratt Institute where she received a B.F.A. and later taught. She also taught at the Center for Book Arts while she pursued a career in design and art direction. She, her husband, and their daughter have relocated to northern California where she continues to teach, illustrate, and write books. She has also written numerous magazine articles and teacher resource publications with Scholastic.

Biographical information taken from the illustrator's website at

<http://www.christyhale.com/biography.html>,

Accessed August 27, 2014.

### **ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

Author website <http://www.laurenthompson.net/>

### **OTHER TITLES BY AUTHOR**

*A Christmas Gift for Mama*, illustrated by Jim Burke (2001)

*Hope Is an Open Heart* (2008)

*Leap Back Home to Me*, illustrated by Matthew Cordell (2011)

*Polar Bear Morning*, illustrated by Steven Savage (2013)

### **OTHER TITLES BY ILLUSTRATOR**

*The Ancestor Tree*, written by T. Obinkaram Echewa (1994)

*Juan Bobo and the Pig*, written by Felix Pitre (1993)

*You're Not My Real Mother!* written by Molly Friedrich (2004)

### **RELATED TITLES**

*Bully* by Patricia Polacco

### **CLASSROOM CONNECTIONS**

#### **Writing:**

Students write about a time when they forgave someone or someone forgave them before reading the book.

#### **Literature:**

Students could read and compare the myths and folktales suggested on this site:

Generosity of the Spirit: Myths and Folktales  
<http://www.learningtogive.org/materials/folktales>

**Art:**

Students could engage in any of the ideas for art projects involving the topic of forgiveness:

[http://humanityquest.com/topic/art\\_activities/index.asp?theme1=forgiveness](http://humanityquest.com/topic/art_activities/index.asp?theme1=forgiveness)

**Math and Science:**

Students could combine mathematics and science by planning and creating their own garden of forgiveness using materials available from these sites:

- Create a Garden--<http://loveandforgive.org/loveandforgive/take-action/create-a-garden>
- Elements of Good Garden Design--  
<http://www.bhg.com/gardening/design/styles/line-garden-design>

Their designs would involve measurement as well as investigation of materials to be included. If a large-scale garden is impossible, students could do dish gardens or create scale models or maps.

**History and Geography:**

Students could research the Garden of Forgiveness that is in Beirut, as well as the one Rev. Harris founded in New York. They could research the conflict in Lebanon and the events of 9/11 that inspired Reverend Harris's trip.

**Vocabulary:**

Sanskrit	brooding	scoffed
argument	scowl	murmured
revenge	captive	apologize
scheming	grumbled	forgiveness

**DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

1. Have you ever had difficulty forgiving someone? What did you do to repair the relationship?
2. Why do you think the boy who hurt the main character did not want to help build the garden at first?
3. Why do you think the boy changed his mind later and helped create the garden?
4. Something as simple as planting a garden with someone can obviously have major effects. Major conflicts can also be started by things that seem insignificant. Why do you think this is?
5. What can you do to help people the way Reverend Harris and Alexandra Asseily did? In your own community? In the world?
6. Explain what a random act of kindness is. Here are some examples for children: <http://www.eatsleepbe.com/2012/02/acts-of-kindness-for-kids/>. Brainstorm together ways that they can show kindness. Challenge your students to do some random acts of kindness this week with classmates and their family.

Further discussion questions available through the publisher's website:  
<http://us.macmillan.com/theforgivenessgarden/LaurenThompson>

## **RELATED WEBSITES**

### **Storypath Website**

<http://storypath.upsem.edu/the-forgiveness-garden>

for Forgiveness Garden with additional discussion questions

### **No Future Without Forgiveness Lesson Plans for Teachers**

<http://www.bookrags.com/lessonplan/no-future-without-forgiveness>

Lesson Plans based on Desmond Tutu's *No Future Without Forgiveness*

### **Gardens of Forgiveness video**

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9xqjGoZ7wPQ>

An interview with Alexandra Asseily

### **Gardens of Forgiveness Video**

[http://wn.com/garden\\_of\\_forgiveness](http://wn.com/garden_of_forgiveness)

A short film about the garden

### **Giving Back**

<http://www.laurenthompson.net/contact/giveback>

Suggestions from the author about making a difference