

“A masterpiece of English children’s literature” John Rowe Townsend

Using this book in your classroom

Quick summary

This is the story of Tom, who has been sent to stay with his uncle and aunt for the summer. He is bored and very lonely. Then, in the depths of the night, he hears the old grandfather clock in the hall striking thirteen ... Tom creeps down and opens the back door, expecting to see his aunt and uncle's grim concrete yard, but instead he steps out into a beautiful garden in full bloom. A magical garden, in the middle of the night, and where no garden should be!

Tom explores the garden, and becomes friends with one of the children living in the big house to which the garden belongs – Hatty. At first Hatty thinks Tom is a ghost, because she's the only one who can see him. But is Tom a ghost, or is Hatty? Or perhaps neither of them is?

In any case, there is certainly something odd about time in the garden, because Hatty seems to be growing up rather fast. And Tom is growing fainter and fainter. But before they lose each other entirely, there is time for one final adventure...

Story themes

This is a rich and complex book with many themes and ideas, including **loneliness** and **friendship**, and the nature of **time** and how things change with the passage of time.

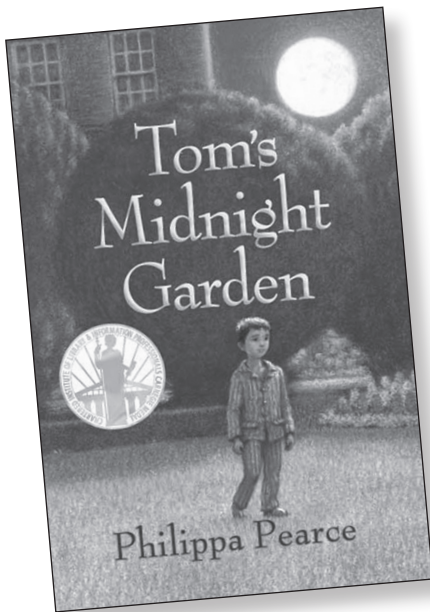
The story session

1. Introducing the story

- Ask the children to imagine how they would feel if they opened the back door in the middle of the night and saw a completely different garden instead of their own garden or yard. What would they think? Would they want to explore the garden, or not?

2. Reading the story

- Explain that Tom crept downstairs when he heard the grandfather clock strike thirteen, and he found that he could get out of the back door into a magical garden that wasn't there in the daytime. Then read Chapter 6 (Through a Door).



Price	£5.99/€8.70
Case	Read On Age 8+
Author	Philippa Pearce
Publisher	Puffin

3. Follow-up

- Ask: "What do you think is happening in the garden? Is it a ghost garden? How could a tree that had fallen down one night be standing up again the next night?" Ask the children what questions they had in their minds as they listened to the story, and discuss these.
- Say: "Does the story make you want to read on?" Talk about how we might want to read on in order to find out the answers to these questions and to discover what will happen next for Tom.
- Children could write notes about what they think will happen next in the story.

Did You Know?

- The garden in Tom's Midnight Garden is based on the one Philippa Pearce played in as a child, when she lived with her family in a mill house on the banks of the River Cam in Cambridgeshire.
- Philippa Pearce won the Carnegie Medal for Tom's Midnight Garden. She died in December 2006.
- Philippa Pearce said, "I prefer talking to children than adults. Adults are so polite you never know when they are bored or not. Children always yawn if they are bored."