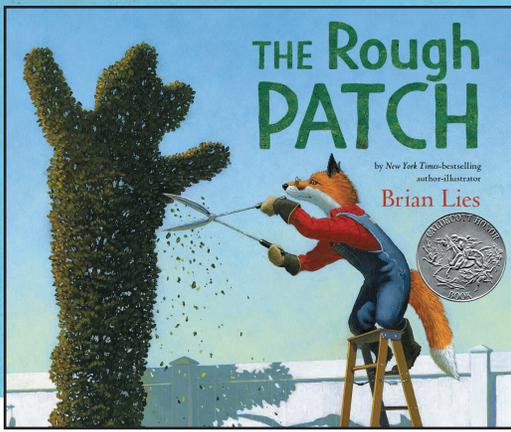


*A good place  
won't stay empty for long.*

*Something must grow.*





# THE Rough PATCH

by Brian Lies

## 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. A beautiful, accessible, and deeply personal story about love, loss, and hope, and the healing power of friendship and nature.

## 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?
- Have you ever lost something? How did it make you feel?
- What happens to Evan's garden? How does it change? Why?
- How does attending the fair help Evan?
- 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?
- 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?

## Extension Activities

**How Are You Feeling?** Discuss what happens to Evan's dog in the story and ask the students if they have ever experienced loss. 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. 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 in the soil to identify their plant. Have them place their cups near a window and care for their seeds by watering them regularly.

**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. They should design an award ribbon for the student whose name they picked. They should 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.

