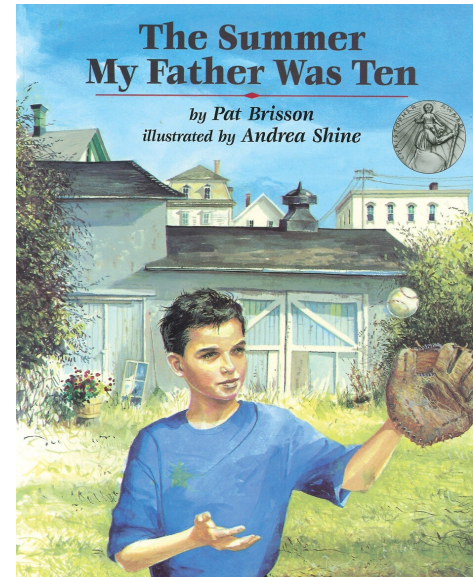




# THE SUMMER MY FATHER WAS TEN

PAT BRISSON

When the narrator's father was ten, he was playing with friends and ruined a neighbor's garden. When he went to apologize, he learned a lesson in gardening... and a lesson in empathy.



## Questions:

1. Have you ever planted a garden? Is it easy or is it hard work?
2. How do you think their neighbor feels when they bring her flowers?
3. How did Mr. Bellavista feel when he heard the kids making fun of his accent? Does the accent he speaks with make his words, ideas, or feelings less important?
4. How did the boys feel playing with tomatoes, onions, and peppers, destroying the garden? How do you think Mr. Bellavista felt when he saw what they had done to his garden?
5. Why do you think it was so hard for him to say he was sorry? Do you think an apology would have made a big difference?
6. How do you think he felt the following spring when Mr. Bellavista didn't plant his garden as usual? How do you think Mr. Bellavista felt when he had someone to plant his garden with?
8. Was it better before the boy and his friends destroyed the garden, when he made fun of Mr. Bellavista? Or is it better now that they are friends and spend time together?
9. How do you think he felt when Mr. Bellavista got sick and had to leave?
10. Why do you think he tells the story every year when he plants his garden? Why do you think it's so important to him to remember his old friend Mr. Bellavista?
11. When he first saw and spoke to Mr. Bellavista, did he want to be his friend or did he make fun of him with his friends? If he had never apologized, never asked Mr. Bellavista if he could help with the garden, would he have learned to make delicious spaghetti sauce from scratch? Would he know how to plant a garden? Would he have all those wonderful memories?

**ACTIVITY:** Have students discuss all their favorite foods that they could grow themselves! Even if they live in a small apartment, they could grow herbs to flavor their food. How else could they grow food to share with others who are hungry?