

## Using Children's Literature to Enhance Environmental Literacy

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Children's literature is fun. It's interesting, informative, and imaginative. Children's literature breathes life into concepts that, in textbooks, are often perceived as being dead. It gives words and pictures to help us think about issues and situations. Also, they provide stories. Through story, children's literature is powerful. "Once upon a time," invites the reader to share the content inside. These invitations become even more compelling when the words are combined with pictures. Through the use of picture books, children of all ages are able to learn about the many facets of their environment and better understand the interrelatedness of their lives with it. Through this *Green Paper*, Linda and Louise share with those who love the environment — teachers, naturalists, parents, librarians— how they can use picture books with children to develop their knowledge of environmental literacy.<sup>1</sup>

### Why We Should Use Picture Books to Teach Environmental Literacy

While we often think of picture books in the context of primary grade "read alouds," they are extremely versatile as they can be used in a variety of settings with a wide range of individuals. These books, termed "picture storybooks" by Mitchell (2003), are those books "in which the pictures and the text are tightly intertwined. Neither the pictures nor the words are self-sufficient; they need each other to tell the story" (p. 87). Whether written as nonfiction or realistic fiction, a number of the texts are more appropriate for older readers, those in grades four and above as the books "are usually distinguished by a more sophisticated theme, more reflective text, or more academically oriented topic" (Mitchell, 2003, p. 92).

In a time of assessment and standards-based curricula, teachers may believe that using picture books is a nonproductive use of instructional time in the classroom. In reality, using the books can be a valuable addition to students' learning experiences. Students may find them more interesting than textbooks as picture books enable students to explore a single topic in depth (Martinez, Roser, & Strecker, 2000). Picture books meet the needs of a variety of learners, in and out of the classroom. They engage not only those who are visual learners, but a generation of children who are adept at interpreting video and computer images. Additionally, the books can be used successfully with less able readers or those whose first language is not English (Galda & Cullinan, 2002). They can provide the "glue" that allows teachers to teach a variety of content standards within a given topic or theme. By reading from a selection of 5 to 15 books with similar themes and varying perspectives and completing critical thinking activities, students are able to make personal connections to the text (Mathis, 2002).

#### Guidelines for Selecting Picture Books

While children's picture books can be an excellent vehicle for teaching students about environmental literacy, educators must take time to discuss issues related to the content so that the historical, scientific, or ecological principles associated with a given topic can be fully explored. If those conversations are to be meaningful, educators need to examine books for specific criteria when determining if they are appropriate for use. These include the following.

1. *The book provides a balanced perspective that does not oversimplify the issue.* Monhardt and Monhardt (2000, Discussion section, para. 4) cautioned that "Environmental topics are common ones in the elementary school, but there is a danger that rather than developing critical thinking skills, in students, we turn them into

advocates for a particular point-of-view based not on the principles of science, but solely on emotions.” Meyer (2002) noted that

Often a major criticism of environmental literacy is that the materials are biased toward a doomsday perspective and oversimplify complex environmental issues. Critics contend that such curricula can lead to the production of school-aged ‘eco-warriors,’ rather than children who have the ability to examine issues from multiple perspectives (p. 280).

2. *The books’ content is accurate.* “Nonfiction picture books must be accurate, up-to-date, and consistent with current knowledge” (Cullinan & Galda, 2002, p. 75). This requires that the educator be knowledgeable of the content to be taught.
3. *The message conveyed through the text and illustrations is developmentally appropriate.* Younger children may not have the background knowledge or ability to understand the various issues encountered in environmental literacy. For example, young children who have little understanding of forests and the habitat found in them will not fully understand the value of preserving the rainforests.
4. *The book’s illustrations and text support each other.* Nodelman and Reimer (2003) noted that picture books actually have three stories; the one provided through the text, a second interpreted through the illustrations, and the third – a combination of the two.
5. *Use picture books that have settings situated in the students’ local or regional area.* Whenever possible, locate books that connect to students’ given locales. This can be especially important when students have limited knowledge of a given concept.

No matter how educators use picture books when teaching about environmental literacy, the experiences should be positive and rewarding for the students. Educators, whether classroom teachers or naturalists, need to allow students opportunities to explore texts and provide a variety of approaches to reading activities. Students may read the texts themselves, read them to younger audiences, or have an adult read the books aloud to them.

### Using Picture Books to Teach Environmental Literacy

Sandy, A Second Grade Teacher

Sandy Shields teaches second grade at Kilbourne Elementary School in Bucyrus City Schools. When I interviewed her in March 2006, she was in her 26<sup>th</sup> year of teaching. She has been awarded several honors and grants, and in fall 2004, she was a Fulbright Memorial Scholar to Japan. Sandy took a Project Wild workshop 20 years ago, and she facilitated workshops in the Bucyrus area, as well as around Ohio. Council for Environmental Education's Project Wild brought together her two passions: teaching and nature. She immediately began integrating Project Wild's lessons into her second grade curriculum and continues to this day. Sandy has found children's literature to be helpful for her students to learn the concepts that she is teaching. Since then, she has compiled a six-page document, "The Best of Children's Picture Books for Environmental Education, A K-4 Guide." To receive a copy of this bibliography, contact Sandy at shields\_s@bucyrus.k12.oh.us.

Sandy likes to begin the school year teaching earth science and fossils. The children read *A Dinosaur Named Sue: The Story of the Colossal Fossil* by Pat Reif and *A Dinosaur Named Sue: The Find of the Century* by Fay Robinson. She then buries some fossils. The children dig them up and use toothbrushes to clean them. She also recommends such books as *Rocks in His Head* by Carol Otis Hurst, *Crawdad Creek* by Scott Russell Sanders, and *If You Are a Hunter of*

*Fossils* by Byrd Baylor. She follows that activity by having her children dissect owl pellets. The children put together what the owl ate. This teaches the students how to prepare fossils, figuring out how to put together the jumble of bones that have been left behind. At the same time they begin to learn about predator/prey relationships. Other owl books that they read include *Owl Moon* by Jane Yolen, *The Barn Owls* by Tony Johnston, and *Animal Lives: The Barn Owl* by Sally Tagholm.

Sandy teaches Project Wild's lesson, "What's Wild?" This lesson helps children to distinguish between wild and domesticated animals. She follows that by reading to her students the *Our Changing World* series by David Bellamy: *The Rock Pool*, *The Forest*, *The River*, and *The Roadside*. She uses that as a springboard for the concepts of habitats and diversity. Sandy has found that Project Wild lessons reinforce vocabulary that she wants the children to learn. To help her teach the concepts of nocturnal and diurnal, she uses "Habitat Lap Sit" and "Oh Deer" from Project Wild. For these concepts she also recommends *The Goodnight Circle* by Carolyn Lesser, a book in which animals are going to sleep as others are waking up and *North Country Night* by Daniel San Souci.

A video that Sandy likes to use to teach about habitats is *A Home for Pearl*. It is a story about taking responsibility for the earth: an eagle is rehabilitated, and children research habitats that are appropriate for releasing the eagle. She suggested that the video can be shown in small segments, in order to discuss the vocabulary terms. Sandy also has her students conduct research habitats, each group choosing a different habitat. She supplies books that pertain to woodlands, water, arctic, and desert. The children then make a diorama to display their habitat.

Some of her habitat books include the following: *The Tree in the Ancient Forest* by Carol Reed-Jones, *My Favorite Tree: Terrific Trees of North America* by Diane Iverson, *In a Nutshell*

by Joseph Anthony, and *Someday a Tree* by Eve Bunting. She also recommends *The Giving Tree* by Shel Silverstein. Other habitat books include *Box Turtle at Long Pond* by William T. George, *The Salamander* by Anne Mazer, *The Waterfall's Gift* by Joanne Ryder, *A Drop Around the World* by Barbara Shaw McKinney, *A Swim Through the Sea* by Kristin Joy Pratt, and *Butternut Hollow Pond* by Brian J. Heinz. For desert habitats, she uses *Hawk, I'm Your Brother* by Byrd Baylor and *Saguaro Moon: A Desert Journal* by Kristin Joy Pratt-Serafini. Sandy also has a number of nonfiction books, field guides, *Zoobooks* for the children's use.

Another concept that Sandy teaches with literature is fact/fiction. She will pair two pieces of literature, one fact and one fiction. For example, she will read a Jack Prelutsky poem, "The Manatee" and follow it with a nonfiction book about manatees. Another pairing is *Stella Luna* by Janell Cannon and a nonfiction book about bats. Sandy enjoys including nature poetry. She recommends the *Earth and Me* series by J. Patrick Lewis (*Earth and Us Continuous*, *Earth and You*, *A Closer View*, and *Earth and Me, Our Family Tree*) and *101 Science Poems and Songs for Young Learners* by Meish Goldish.

Sandy also likes to stimulate children's imaginations. She uses "Stormy Weather" from Project Wild. In the lesson children choose an animal and role play what it does or feels during a thunderstorm. This activity helps children to realize that an animal's response to a thunderstorm may be different from their own. She follows this guided imagery with *The Snail's Spell* by Joanne Ryder. Then her children role play a snail. Role playing helps children to understand phenomena from the viewpoint of an animal.

Sandy advises anyone who is beginning a collection of children's environmental literature to look at Dawn Publications. They have books that are geared to certain vocabulary and grade levels. She uses and enjoys many of their books. Another tip that Sandy recommends

is to invite authors and illustrators to the school. Her school has had Carolyn Lesser and Christopher Canyon. She also recommends Ohio author, J. Patrick Lewis. Sandy's final recommendation to teachers is not to be afraid of the Ohio Academic Content Standards. She finds that she easily adapts her literature and activities to the standards, making her curriculum both standards-based and meaningful.

Pam, A Park Ranger

Pam Barnes is a park ranger and naturalist at the Cuyahoga Valley Environmental Education Center (CVEEC) in the Cuyahoga Valley National Park. Her teaching environment differs from Sandy's—she teaches in the outdoors, and she only has children for one day to one week. Like Sandy, Pam believes literature enhances children's understanding of environmental concepts. Pam uses literature mainly to get children to think about a topic differently.

The Cuyahoga River is the theme of the four-day program the CVEEC does for school children. In order to get children to think differently about the Cuyahoga River, the CVEEC curriculum team chose *A River Ran Wild: An Environmental History* by Lynne Cherry. The book is about the Nashua River in Massachusetts. The story begins with a wild river, habitat to numerous species. European settlers founded industries along the river, turning it into a filthy, stinking mess. One person with a vision inspired others, and they passed laws to control discharge into the river. Today, the river is again beautiful. People enjoy boating on it, and, once again, it provides habitat for animals.

The story of the Nashua is similar to the story of the Cuyahoga, a river that burned numerous times during the 1950s and 60s because of waste from factories. The burning of the Cuyahoga spurred the Clean Water Act. Since then, factories act responsibly, and the river hosts numerous species, and people are able to boat in sections of it. Pam has asked students to rewrite

the book, using the story of the Cuyahoga River. She has also had the children paint a mural of the river's story on canvas. They included a border, as Lynne Cherry does in her book. They then took the mural back to their school to hang. Pam also uses "The Negro Speaks of Rivers," a poem by Langston Hughes (see Appendix A) and then has children write their own poetry.

To teach about trees, Pam recommends *Have You Seen Trees* by Joanne Oppenheim, *The Big Tree* by Bruce Hiscock, *The Giving Tree* by Shel Silverstein, and tree field guides. Children are led in a hug-a-tree activity, in which they are blindfolded and led to a tree by another child. The blindfolded child then has to explore the tree—its bark, its circumference, because later he or she will be asked to pick that tree out of several choices. They almost always find their tree, Pam states. Following this activity, Pam has children make leaf rubbings and bark rubbings, write a note to their tree, and spend some time with it. She is pleased that several children like the activity so much that they ask to return to their tree on successive days. Some even take their parents to meet their tree.

One of Pam's goals is to help children to establish a connection with aspects of nature. The tree activities are one way that she accomplishes her goal. Another is to trace the water cycle back to the water bottle that she is drinking from. The students then think about where that water might have been, before it was in her water bottle. Another concept that Pam tries to communicate is change—"nothing in nature ever stays the same," states Pam. For this concept she likes *The Backyard* by John Collier, which depicts images of that back yard back in time and *In My Own Backyard* by Judi Kurijan. The latter features a boy looking out his window, and the landscape changes to reveal scenes from as far back as time goes.

Another goal for Pam is observation. A poem that she likes to use with school children is "How to Be a Writer and Artist," by Gina Rester-Zodrow (See Appendix B). She has the

children read it aloud, a stanza at a time. The poem gets children to think about nature differently from usual. She then asks the children to write poetry based on their nature observations. With preschoolers, Pam begins by reading *Brown Bear, Brown Bear, What Do You See?* by Bill Martin Jr. and Eric Carle. She then gives them pieces of colored paper to take on their nature walk. Their job is to find those colors in nature. The children make binoculars out of toilet paper rolls and take hand lenses to help them observe. When they return from their walk, the children write their own books: [*Child's Name*], *What Do You See?* Pam tries to help children to see and duplicate the real colors that are in nature. People usually depict grass as green and water as blue. Seeing true colors is a step toward good observation.

The teaching staff at CVEEC are very aware of the Ohio Academic Content Standards and embed them in all of their lessons. They focus on science and social studies content, using language arts and math as the processes. They insist on accuracy in the books that they use. So, for example, if they use a stylized book such as *Brown Bear*, they will pair it with a nonfiction book that teaches natural history. They also focus on the positive aspects of the topics, such as the improvement in the Cuyahoga River. If children always are taught about problems, they begin to feel hopeless. Rather, at CVEEC, they invite children into nature and its complexity. Falling in love with nature will help to turn children into advocates for nature more quickly than overwhelming them with environmental degradation.

I saw Pam in action when I was a student in Language of Nature, a workshop co-sponsored by CVEEC and Environmental Education Council of Ohio. It was the last day, and Pam read us *I'm in Charge of Celebrations* by Byrd Baylor. This is a book about a girl who lives in the desert. People wonder if she is lonely, but she is anything but! She is a careful observer of the nature around her and celebrates natural phenomena that she observes. Green Cloud Day and

Dust Devil Day become her holidays. I was taken with the book's simplicity. What's important isn't our daily battles; what's important is being in touch with our surroundings and celebrating that. I read this book to a class of incoming freshmen at Ashland University. I could tell that some of them were wary—why was I reading a children's book to them. By the time I'd finished they were all listening intently. I told them that they were the ones who could determine the outcome of every day, that their success in college depended on their attitude. I don't know if the book made a difference, but all of them passed the semester, not only my class but their others as well.

For teaching ideas, Pam recommends *A Sense of Place: Teaching Children about the Environment with Picture Books* by Daniel A. Kriesberg and *Science and Writing Connections* by Robin Lee Harris Freedman. I have actually used the Kriesberg book for ideas for my own teaching and am looking forward to seeing my students' responses.

#### Louise's Recommendations

The following is an annotated list of some books that I like. It isn't an exhaustive list, but it will give teachers and naturalists some more books to add to their repertoire. I would like to emphasize that, like the teaching staff at CVEEC and like Sandy, I insist on correct natural history. Even when my children were little, although we read silly or imaginative stories, we always had books that were accurate scientifically or historically. Another lens I use for choosing books is that they can be used to build a sense of place in Ohio. So I prefer books about animals, for example, who are native to Ohio than a book on rainforest animals, although sometimes rainforest ecology is appropriate.

I suggest that teachers pay very close attention to the books they choose and the messages they give to their students. We want children to learn to love their local places in order to care for

them. If they learn about nature in other places, they may begin to think nature is somewhere else, not in their own back yard. Also, I am very careful about barraging children with messages about environmental issues. They can't do anything about situations far from them. They can, on the other hand, make a very large difference at home. They need to know they can make a difference and be provided with ways to enjoy and conserve their natural surroundings. It is important always to give children hope.

One hopeful topic is farms. Good farming is an important part of conservation, and healthy food is produced on healthy farms. *Night in the Country* by Cynthia Rylant is a cute way to introduce children to the sounds of a farm at night. Rylant focuses on animal sounds you might hear at night. She ends with the nocturnal animals beginning their sleep in the morning—then they will listen to you. I like this book because it incorporates animals and people. Another farm book that I like is *Sugarbush Spring* by Marsha Wilson Chall. In it, a whole family participates in the sugaring process. The pictures are very realistic and beautiful. They take the reader through the entire process, from tap to the jar. I purchased this book from the Ohio Farm Bureau.

The following are a few tree books that I like because of the story and the natural history. Any of these could be used for teaching about wooded ecosystems or, like Sandy, habitat research. *Oak Tree* by Gordon Morrison tells the story of an oak tree through the seasons. In small print on each page are informative insets about species that you might find on or around an oak. The pictures are realistic and beautifully drawn. *Around the Oak* by Gerda Muller features children who visit the woods during different seasons and the wildlife they encounter. Muller has included pictures of forest creatures with interesting pictures of them. In the end, the children throw a birthday party for the oak tree. *Someday a Tree* by Eve Bunting tells an all-too-true story

about an oak tree that is poisoned by dumping of chemicals. The family has enjoyed the tree for many years. It ends with the child planting acorns from the dying tree.

*Owl Moon* by Jane Yolen is absolutely one of my favorites of all times. I read it to my children, and they loved it too. It is about a father and daughter walking into the woods to see a great-horned owl. It is late at night and wintertime. The dad calls in the owl, and they both get a great look. Of course, after we read the book, my daughter dreamed about going on an owl walk. When she was old enough, I took her whole Girl Scout troop. They fidgeted and were loud, but, in response to Jan Ferrell of the Ohio Bird Sanctuary, a Barred Owl flew onto a nearby branch . It was an unforgettable experience for all of us!!! This book piques children's interest to learn more about owls, but also to experience them closely and personally.

*Turtle Spring* by Deborah Turney Zagwyn tells the story of a girl who is going through a difficult time—she has a new baby brother, and her dad goes away for a job. In the midst of this, her uncle brings her a turtle. She enjoys it during the summer, but when winter comes, she realizes she has forgotten it. She finds it in her compost pile and buries it back in the compost. She is sad because she thinks the turtle has died, but one day she and her brother are outside, and the turtle comes out. The author includes a note at the end about turtles and hibernation. I like both of these books because they include a connection between children and nature, both of which will make students long for that connection.

*Country Road* by Daniel San Souci and *Granddad's Prayers of the Earth* by Douglas Wood tell stories of a dad and a granddad introducing children to nature. *Granddad's Prayers* is sad, but it is also realistic and may help children to deal with the death of a family member. Granddad teaches the boy about the “prayers” of streams, rocks, trees, grass, birds, and people. One day granddad dies, and the boy is inconsolable until one day he goes out into nature, and

finally the world is right again. *Country Road* is the story about a dad taking his reluctant son on a walk. They encounter wildlife, and they watch horses in a pasture. Their walk ends at a new road and a new housing development. The father refuses to be sad about it. The boy, by this time, is enjoying his nature walk and looks forward to the return trip with Dad.

Another of my very favorite books is *Flute's Journey: The Life of a Woodthrush* by Lynne Cherry. The story begins in the Belt Woods of Maryland where two children watch a newly-fledged woodthrush whom they name Flute. Cherry surrounds each page with pictures of plants and animals which might be in the location. The thrush, prompted by its hormones, begins the journey to Costa Rica. On its way back, Flute encounters dangers. It's an excellent book for understanding habitats, migration, and some human-caused reasons for species decline. It is full of Cherry's beautiful art work. My favorite part is the author's note—both the Belt Woods and the part of Costa Rica where Flute over-winters have been saved by the efforts of school children. Children need to see how they can make a difference, and here is an example. Although *Flute's Journey* is a picture book, I suggest this book for older children. Its concepts and artwork are complex. I know I learned from it, and so did my college students when I've used it in class.

In addition to *I'm in Charge of Celebrations* by Byrd Baylor, I also recommend her book, *The Best Town in the World*. Baylor writes about the way towns used to be, a way of life that has disappeared in America. I like it because of the community in it, the way life should be with people who know and care about each other. It's the story of her father as a boy and the people and experiences that influenced him—the best cooks, the best blackberries, smarter dogs, taller wildflowers, swimming in the ice cold creek, a nickel's worth of candy, and the Independence Day picnic. The pictures are beautiful and lots of fun. The other book is *The Table Where Rich People Sit*. The girl brings her family together to talk about money. They begin to catalogue all

of what they have, such as getting to work outdoors, hearing the coyotes in the hills, watching the shadows of the mountains and the cactus bloom, seeing the tracks of a mountain lion. All of this adds up to four million and fifty thousand dollars, without adding in their cash. So she concluded that, instead of being poor, they are really quite rich.

Some of Joanne Ryder's books are excellent choices. Two of them include *When the Woods Hum*, which is a story about periodical cicadas over the generations. The other is *The Waterfall's Gift*, about a family's trip to the grandfather's cabin. The girl can't wait to explore the woods and find the waterfall. The pictures by Richard Jesse Watson are beautiful. Everything about this book invites the reader into the secrets of nature. Another book about secrets is *Secret Place* by Eve Bunting. A boy lives in the heart of a city, and one day he finds a secret place near his father's workplace. It's close to the freeway and warehouses. He watches green-winged teal, buffleheads, mallards, coots, a coyote, and an opossum in his secret place. I love the pictures and the message: even in the middle of concrete and industry, animals need food and places to live or rest during migration. These often are hidden "special places" that few people know about.

In our culture, we expect boys to camp and hunt, but we don't always encourage girls to enjoy the outdoors. I recommend the next three books, which tell the stories of women who grew up to be naturalists or who influenced environmental policy. *Girls Who Looked Under Rocks: The Lives of Pioneering Naturalists* by Jeannine Atkins tells the stories of Maria Sibylla Merian, Anna Botsford Comstock, Frances Hamerstrom, Rachel Carson, Miriam Rothschild, and Jane Goodall. The stories include anecdotes and provide a lens on the difficulties women faced in earlier times. I love the book and think it will inspire girls to pursue their love of nature. The pencil drawings are realistic and beautiful. *She's Wearing a Dead Bird on Her Head* by Kathryn Lasky uses fiction and humorous artwork to tell the story of Harriet Hemenway and Minna Hall,

the women who founded Massachusetts Audubon Society, the first Audubon Society to endure and have an impact on social mores. At one time hunters would raid nesting colonies in order to collect feathers, or even birds, to decorate ladies hats. Harriet and Minna decide to change fashion. *Rachel: The Story of Rachel Carson* by Amy Ehrlich is written as short vignettes by date. Rachel's love of nature began with finding a fossil and subsequent nature walks with her mother. The reader learns about Rachel's life, her understanding about the intricate connections within nature, her book *Silent Spring* and the controversy that followed, and her death from cancer. Her story is an inspiration. It reminds the reader that one person can make a difference. Her research started an environmental movement and environmental laws. The pictures are as captivating as the story. The art is realistic but spare, matching the style of the author.

Anyone who teaches Ohio history should be interested in two books by Scott Russell Sanders. It is so hard for children to imagine a time or place different from theirs, but *The Floating House* and *Aurora Means Dawn* do a great job of inviting children into a way of life during European settlement. *The Floating House* is about a family of European settlers who navigate the Ohio River in a flat boat. The other book is about a family who settled in Aurora Ohio. It pictures their covered wagon and depicts the difficulties of pioneer life. The pictures in both books are beautiful—both realistic and artistic. A chapter book that I like is *Danger along the Ohio* by Patricia Willis. It is about a family who are migrating to Ohio. The children have to dive into the river for safety, and they end up rescuing an Indian boy. While not environmental, the book does show how the children live in nature until they are taken to their father.

Another Ohio book is *McCrephy's Field* by Christopher A. Myers and Lynne Born Myers. This is more of a natural history book. It tells the story of a farmer from Ohio who moves to Wyoming to raise goats. His farm, vacated by humans, begins to recover from the corn

monoculture. In the spring wildflowers grow and birds eat their seeds. Trees and bushes grow, and a family of rabbits moves in. As the years go by, the trees outcompete the meadow, and different species of animals and forest wildflowers populate the area. One day Joe McCrephy returns. He almost doesn't recognize the place, but he likes it so well, that he lies down by what's left of the barn and takes a "short summer nap" (p. 32).

### Conclusion

Picture books are an excellent choice of literature when teaching children of all ages about environmental literacy. The books provide a balance of illustrations or pictures combined with text and allow readers of all ages to enjoy them. That combination allows readers to become engaged with the books, resulting in motivated learners who want to learn about the environment.

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## Appendix A

## The Negro Speaks of Rivers by Langston Hughes

To W.E.B. Du Bois

I've known rivers:  
I've known rivers ancient as the world and older than  
the flow of human blood in human veins.

My soul has grown deep like the rivers

I bathed in the Euphrates when dawns were young.  
I built my hut near the Congo and it lulled me to sleep.  
I looked upon the Nile and raised the pyramids above it.  
I heard the singing of the Mississippi when Abe  
Lincoln went down to New Orleans, and I've seen  
its muddy bosom turn all golden in the sunset.

I've known rivers:  
Ancient, dusky rivers.

My soul has grown deep like the rivers.

## Appendix B

## How to Be a Writer and Artist by Gina Rester-Zodrow

Look at the world  
and wonder why.  
Pay attention to details.  
Find the adventures  
that scream  
to be explored.

Think about living --  
all that you have learned,  
all that you've been told.  
Consider  
the what-ifs.  
Invent problems.

Squat  
and take another look.  
Touch the earth regularly.  
Rub texture  
from the grass,  
the wind and the clouds.

Pull colors  
from rain puddles,  
then use the mon  
as a canvas.  
Leave your wordprints  
on the wet landscape.

Watch people closely.  
Follow the lines  
on their faces.  
Listen to conversations,  
you have permission  
to eavesdrop.

Live fairy tales.  
Uncover mysteries.  
Remember  
your childhood,  
it is rich.  
Dream often.

Be brave.  
Take risks.  
Jumping without parachutes  
is part of the process.  
Most importantly  
be honest.

Even strangers  
will know  
your truths.  
Your heart  
was meant  
to be shared.

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<sup>1</sup> Elsewhere Linda and Louise have recommended chapter books for environmental literacy. Please see the following articles:

Fleming, L.C., & Billman, L.W. (2005). Are you sure we're supposed to be reading these books for our project? *Middle School Journal*, 36(4), 33-39.

Fleming, L.C. & Billman, L.W. (Fall, 2004). Literature and environmental studies: Connecting students to the environment through powerful stories of real-life issues. *Green Teacher*, (74), 13-16.