

Teacher's Guide



By Laya Steinberg
Illustrated by Cris Arbo

About the book

With eyes wide open to the mysteries of nature, a child on a hike discovers that “grass is a bed for a deer” and “ a leaf is a boat for a beetle.” Tired from her long walk, she sleeps—and in her dream, flies like a bird and marvels at the beauty around her. This planet, home to so many beings, is magical when seen through the eyes of wonder.

About the guide

This guide includes discussion questions and projects appropriate for book clubs, literature circles, library, home and classroom discussions. It is intended to provoke thought and insight into the subject and themes of this book including nature appreciation and awareness, habitats, and imagination.

About the author

Laya Steinberg has been writing books for children since 2001, including Thesaurus Rex, published in 2003 by Barefoot Books. Trained as a graphic designer and illustrator, she enjoys the balance between creating visual and verbal expressions of ideas. Laya lives in the Boston area with her husband, two children, four rabbits, a guinea pig and two frogs.

About the illustrator

Cris Arbo is a native of Martha's Vineyard Island. She received her degree in art and theater from William Paterson University. Her art has appeared in books, magazines, greeting cards and on television. When not in her studio she enjoys nature in her rural central Virginia home.

Author Interview

Which image came to you first for this wonderful book?

The first image that popped into my mind was of a sapling in a forest of tall trees, prompting the line: “A forest is a family for a tree.” I was thinking about how trees are an integral part of a

forest. A tree provides a home for birds and animals, offers shade and protection from the weather; cleans the air and supplies food to animals and/or humans. Even a dead tree or hollow log gives shelter and also puts back nutrients into the soil as it decomposes. So the whole forest is depending on that tree—it's part of a family of living things that are bound together for survival. All of nature is that way—connected. I wanted to show how tied we all are to the living beings on this planet—both plant and animal.

How much revision do you do when you write?

It depends on what I'm writing. For my first book [Thesaurus Rex](#), I spent over a year revising maybe 30 or 40 drafts of the text. [All Around Me](#) had relatively few drafts, though I did write a few additional stanzas to accommodate the page layout. I start by getting thoughts down on paper. They're not usually in any order—though they make sense to me. Then I rewrite to make the concept that's in my head more organized and clear to the reader. If I am writing in rhyme I make sure that it doesn't sound forced and that it flows smoothly when read aloud. Often I have to put aside a story and give it some time to 'settle'. Then I can go back with a fresh ear and listen for problem words or sentences. I am lucky to be a part of two writers' groups whose members offer incredibly useful critique and support of my writing.

Which illustration is your favorite in the book?

They are all wonderful, so rich in detail and texture. There is something special about each scene, but if I had to pick one illustration I would say it is the one where the girl is flying in space surrounded by stars. I've always dreamed about being able to fly, but how magical it would be to have that comet's eye view of planet Earth.

What are you writing these days?

I'm focusing on revising a first draft of a young adult novel I recently finished, and I'm also polishing up a few picture book stories. I always write poetry—mostly for myself, but some I hope to publish someday.

Illustrator Interview

How did you begin illustrating books for young people?

As an illustrator I have created art for book, magazine, and album covers as well as posters, jigsaw puzzles, greeting cards, and advertising. Although early in my career I worked on a number of animated movies and TV shows for children, it wasn't until the mid-1990's that I began illustrating picture books, working with my husband, author Joseph Anthony. He and I have collaborated on a number of projects including two titles also in Dawn Publications' nature awareness series: [The Dandelion Seed](#) and [In A Nutshell](#).

Do illustrators face revisions similar to authors?

Typically the illustrator is given a manuscript which has already been edited and revised. The artist then creates a series of drawings which accompany each page of text. At this stage the book is called a “dummy”. The dummy is reviewed by the editors to make sure the words and art work successfully together. Any needed changes are suggested and the sketches are redrawn. Once all the drawings have been approved the illustrator creates the final art for the book based on the drawings. Sometimes final art will be returned to the illustrator by the publisher for minor changes.

Which illustration is your favorite in the book?

I have two favorites: When the family first leaves their car to set out on their hike there is that exciting anticipation of adventure. This picture brings back happy childhood memories for me of explorations of the New England coastline with my family. My other favorite is “The sky is a place to be free.” Like Laya (and probably most of us) I imagine how wonderful it would be to be free of our physical limitations. (Our editor at Dawn calls this painting ‘ecstasy girl’).

What advice would you give young artists?

Paint what you love and don’t be afraid to do so. There is a creative energy that makes the flowers bloom and stars shine which is inside all of us. Trust that energy, do what feels right and the rest will fall into place. Don’t give up!

Pre-reading Activity

Give each child a blank piece of paper. Then, ask them to close their eyes and think about their favorite place to be outside. After a minute of quiet reflection (where you ask them about what they see, hear, smell and can feel), have them open their eyes and draw (or color) that scene with as much detail as possible. Discuss.

Discussion Guide

- What types of things does the child notice? Do most people pick out these things in their daily lives? Why or why not?
- Explain how the author uses comparisons (mostly metaphors) to bring the story to life.
- Which line is your favorite? Why? How does it make you look at the world differently?
- What is the family doing in the book? What clues make you think this?
- Why do some pages not have words? Does it continue the story? How?
- Have you ever been camping? What was it like? If not, would you like to go?
- How are the animals and plants connected? What do they have in common?
What do we all depend on?
- How do humans impact nature in good and bad ways?

- Can you give any specific names for any of the flora or fauna pictured in the story?
How can you learn the specific names of plants, animals or birds?
- Which illustration is your favorite? Why? Is that where you would most like to visit in the book?
- If you were to write and illustrate a similar book set in your own region or climate what animals and plants would show up?

Projects Across the Curriculum

Language Arts

6+1 Writing

Laya Steinberg uses imaginative pairings of words to create images or “mind pictures” for her readers. She focuses on a single element and then makes a connection to something from her own life. Take writers on a nature walk (or assign as homework) and try to make metaphors or comparisons similar to the ones the author uses in the book. Illustrate them.

Art

The artist, Cris Arbo, uses many perspectives or angles to create the illustrations for the book. Choose a single animal, plant or bird from your own backyard or schoolyard and paint or draw it from at least three different perspectives—a close up, a wide angle, and from either a side or below view. Compare.

Music

In groups of no more than three have children try to create a tune or rhythm to go with the words. Consider giving children small instruments to experiment with as well.

Drama

Write a dialogue or an apostrophe poem (one in which the writer speaks directly to an animal or object that cannot respond) to talk with something that appears in the book. Act out.

Science

Choose one plant or animal from the book and create a pamphlet or poster about it. Find out where it appears naturally, what it needs to survive and how people can help it thrive.

This guide was created by Tracie Vaughn Zimmer, a reading specialist and author of *Reaching for Sun*. Visit her website www.tracievaughnzimmer.com to find hundreds of guides to children’s literature. Laya’s website: www.layasteinberg.com; Cris’ website: www.author-illustr-source.com/crisarbo.htm and Dawn Publications: www.dawnpub.com

All Around Me, I See *and search*

See if you can find these images in the book.

W R A L P O P P I L U T F H Q E S V G R V M Q
H H L E S S U M D T H R U P T E J U R I H H L
H B I Y A H D A G H O M Q E A B N N E V Q Q A
V C Z T W R N D R G P N L K H Y J O A E L X M
H E N U E D T V Z B Q T T Z N E P M T R S A E
A N Y I E T O H A X S N O O M N E L B O A K R
E J I L F K A C S I S P O E R O C A L T V R I
Z C I B K E K I H K M P Z L H H L S U T U K C
W O U U E W S T L E C A L S N N A N E E U Q A
N H Y R H L E U D E F K P E V E P E H R E F N
S B I A P L T B O M D P I C A M A N E S L I B
S Y L T P S U R B H W D N V H R S I R C K E U
L E G R E Y S Q U I R R E L G M U B O V N L L
R W U L R C C B Y T E K E E O C R M N O I D L
S P O E K W L A I W D L I O R A X U H X W D F
E K Q D Q P W O O T T E T G C J N L U H I A R
A T M B E Y O L V E T H T K P H L O X W R I O
S N G K K R F K E E S E E N R H S C J Q E S G
T K T L K N R B L U R N R I I D B D X U P Y R
A I I W R U Q A M U U L P N A A X L Y V L L E
R M Y O J U Y A B S E A G U L L P I D Z M Q C
B H C L H V C W O O D S O R R E L W C D B F A

BARRED OWL

BEETLE

BITTERN

BRACKEN

COREOPSIS

CORNFLOWER

DANDELION

EARTH

FIELD DAISY

AMERICAN BULLFROG

GREAT BLUE HERON

GREY SQUIRREL

HONEYBEE

HOUSE FINCH

HUMPBACK WHALE

MILKYWAY

MOON

MUSSEL

PAINTED TURTLE

PERIWINKLE

PHLOX

PINE

PURPLE THISTLE

QUEEN ANN'S LACE

RIVER OTTER

SALMON

SEAGULL

SEASTAR

SMOOTH SUMAC

SPRUCE

TULIP POPLAR

WHITE CLOVER

WHITE TAILED DEER

WILD COLUMBINE

WOOD SORREL